



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace 124

Our Lady's message of 25 October 1995:

Dear children, I invite you today to go out into nature because there you will meet God your Creator. I invite you my children to thank God for everything He gives you. Through thanking Him you will discover the Most High and all the good that surrounds you. Children dear, God is great and His Love for each creature is great. So pray to understand God's Love and Goodness. In God the Creator's Goodness and Love I too am with you as a gift. Thank you for responding to my call.

Thank you for God's gifts which reveal His love to us

An invitation to go out into nature; nature is God's open book, which in this time of transition is showing off its glorious and varied colours. Our Lady invites us to go out into nature, to read the pages of God's marvels: "Great God, wherever I look I see you, in your works I admire you." We are invited to purify ourselves of all that does not come from the hands of the Creator, but which was deposited in us by the man of sin.

In October Israel celebrated the feast of harvests (Deut 16) where God invited His people to spend a week out in the open under grass huts to enjoy His gifts and recall the journey of 40 years in the desert: symbolic of the precarious pilgrimage of our life on its journey towards God. The Word of God helps us praise and thank God Who manifested Himself in the creation: O Lord our God, how great thy Name throughout the earth! (Ps 8; see also Ps. 64, 103, 148, Dan 3). We see how in the last two messages Mary offers us the two visible sacraments with which God makes Himself present among us: the Eucharist (fall in love with the sacrament of the Altar - 25/9) and nature (25/10). Contemplating God is made difficult for us because of all the idolatry in our eyes for things of the flesh and man's works. Simple and pure hearts are able to discover God; hearts which know how to pray, which are united to God. Only He can open our eyes, enabling us to see. It is possible to study nature to learn her secrets and never understand the whys, the love which lies behind it. Of course this love is God's love through which He desires talking to us. Likewise with the Eucharist: only the pure in heart can see Jesus our Friend and only joy in the Eucharist and so become witnesses to His love (25/9).

Why did Mary choose these words? First, She would like to see us return to the simplicity of nature because we have become too exacting and sophisticated. Second, She doesn't want moss to grow on us as we sit in front of a television or magazine or other diversion. Our Lady wants us to get outside and meditate on the marvels of nature and become ourselves again.

Above all, Mary wants us to be able to thank God for everything that He gives us. Surrounded as we are by so many obvious gifts, both within and around us, it should be natural for endless gratitude to flow from our hearts. Often, though, all we do is complain: "I haven't got this or that," and we keep on "wanting." Yes, thank you is the first word an intelligent person should say. Jesus came to the world to say thank you for us in the Eucharist, which is thanksgiving. And a continuous thank you becomes a conscious and loving admiration for the gift [received], thereby removing one's heart from a state of transgression, allowing the desire to collaborate with God's work grow in us.

Through thanking Him you will discover the Most High and all the good that surrounds you. First gratitude, then discovery of how God and His love is so great for each of His creatures! And not the contrary, i.e., discovery then gratitude? No, only through prayer, i.e., stopping to reflect and meditate, do we see the Infinite around us, do we see God Who probes me and knows me... Who behind me and before me hems me in and rests His hand upon me, that I may live (Ps 139). It is true then, my children, that you must pray to understand God's love and goodness. You will then be healed from the atheism that generates in your heart solitude, ill-feelings towards fellow men, negativity and in the end desperation. God's love, once discovered and lived, generates in us joy and optimism.

Among God's gifts to be discovered in prayer is Mary our Mother. I am also a gift for you, She reminds us so that we may take advantage of Her presence while She is still with us: yet more proof of God's love for each of us. Fr. Angelo

Alone, you destroyed all the heresies in the whole world

Our Lady's message of 25 Nov. 1995

Dear children, Today I invite each of you to begin again to love; to love first of all God Who saved and redeemed each of you, and then the brothers and sisters who are close to you. Without love, my children, you cannot grow in holiness, nor can you do good works. Thus, my little children: pray, pray without ceasing, so God may reveal His Love to you. I have invited you all to be united to me and to love one another. Also today I am with you and I invite you to discover the love in your hearts and in your families. For God to live in your hearts, you must love. Thank you for responding to my call.

This message brings Christmas to us a little in advance, that we may reap the fruits and be holy like Mary Immaculate. Holiness is loving God and the brothers and sisters close to us in a concrete manner, but this is not so easy. It takes prayer: we must begin again to pray, pray without stopping, so God can reveal His love to us, and make it possible for us to love like Him.

The love Mary talks about is not human love, but as She has often said in the messages (see 20 Nov. 1986) it is divine love which was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rm 5:5), which makes us grow in holiness to become perfect in Christ (Col 1:28) in the image of He Who created us and Who makes us do the good works God prepared for us (Eph 2:10). Our Lady wants this love so great to be revealed to us so that like Her, we too can participate in it.

Mary also tells us why we should keep the greatest of commandments (love God and our brothers and sisters) and: love each other as He has loved us (Jn 13:14). We must love God for all that He, our Saviour, has done for us, through sending His Son not for all of us in general, but for each of us (a point which Mary stresses). When the kindness and generous love of God our saviour appeared, he saved us out of His mercy (Tt 3:4); he delivered us from the power of darkness which kept us paralyzed and unable to do good and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col 1:13). Once redeemed we are able to love also our brothers.

Then with the tenderness of a mother, Our Lady indicates to us some practical ways that will help us love God and the others. Through being united to Her to love the way She is able to love. Through the love in our hearts: in our Baptism we received faith and hope (which will end) and love (which will never end). Through the love in our families: made holy by the sacrament of marriage, it has the power to love and to develop divine love which is always alive and can always rise, while human love is subject to corruption. You must love. Must not desire, because She wants to convince us that without love there is no life. Whoever does not love remains in death (1 Jn 3:14). If we must we can. How? Pray without stopping with me.

Fr. Angelo

Pope to UN: build a future world which is like one big family of peoples

It was the Pope's fourth visit to the US and second to the UN. Over these 16 years the magisterium of the Church has often clashed with the UN; the last two cases being the Conferences in Cairo and Beijing and the way of "managing" the war in the Balkans. Despite this, the Pope, who presented himself as a "witness to human dignity," still desired acknowledging the fundamental task of this institution which is: "to be a centre of effective mediation to guarantee peace, protect the rights of individuals and peoples and help men build a world where the various nations feel part of a family."

To the UNO the Pope proposed that besides a charter of human rights there be a "charter of nations where peoples are guaranteed the right to their own languages, culture and traditions in a spirit of peace, respect and solidarity with other nations." The reason is that: "there is a re-emergence of a certain ethnic and cultural consciousness - a need for identity and survival... in a world of great mobility which has blurred the ethnic and cultural frontiers... The human condition thus finds itself between two poles - universality and particularity - with a vital tension between them." The Pope stressed the difference between 'nationalism' and 'patriotism' where the "the former teaches contempt for other nations or cultures" and the latter is "a proper love of one's country which never seeks to advance its own well-being at the expense of others."

The UN is called to defend and bring harmony to what the Pope calls: "the basic spiritual 'sovereignty' of each nation" so that "a true culture of freedom is affirmed with its roots sunk well into the truth."

Lesson of freedom in the land of freedom - "Freedom is the measure of man's dignity and greatness. The basic question is the responsible use of freedom. Detached from the truth about the human person, freedom deteriorates into licence in the lives of individuals, and in political life it becomes the whim of the most powerful and the arrogance of power. Far from being a limitation upon freedom or a threat to it,

reference to the truth about the human person is, in fact, the guarantor of freedom's future." The Pope concluded with the hope for a world where each person is a welcome guest to the banquet of life: "A Christian's hope is centered on God's love and care for all creation which was revealed in Jesus Christ's Death and Resurrection... With the capacities for wisdom and virtue which are in every man and with Christ's grace, let us build in the next century and the next millennium a civilization worthy of man, a true culture of freedom: a civilization of love."

Is there room in the metropolis for the mystery of God of life?

On the 6th October John Paul II celebrated Mass in Brooklyn. He asked: "Have those who live in this huge metropolis lost sight of the blessings which belong to the poor in spirit? In the midst of the magnificent scientific and technological civilization of which America is proud, is there room for the mystery of God - that mystery which is revealed to the merest children, the mystery of divine love which is the source of everything? Is there room for the revelation of life - that transcendent life which Christ brings us at the price of His Cross and through the victory of His Resurrection?" A request for reflection, thus, on the real effect of faith in Christ in our daily lives.

The day after, in New York, he gave a reply to that question: "God's Spirit, which is the Spirit of life present in every living being, is what makes us different from every other creature. With our bodies we are but a grain in the vast universe; with our souls we go above and beyond the material world. I invite you to reflect on what makes each of us truly wonderful and unique... Only human beings are able to love. Love is what makes us look for what is good, love is what makes us better people, it urges men and women to marry, form a family and have children; it urges others to embrace religious life." This capacity to love comes from God Who sent into our hearts the Spirit of His Son Who cries: Abba, Father (Gal 4:6).

Fortified by this Spirit, Christians can fight the attacks on their identity. "Like Mary, you must not fear to let the Holy Spirit help you become intimate friends of Jesus. You must leave aside every fear so that, in your every action, you take Christ to the world." So, Christians can and must defend their Christian identity and spiritual life from the present anti-Christian culture, and fight in favour of pureness to counteract the culture of death (euthanasia, abortion, all forms of violence).

But what is in this Catholic identity?

The Pope explained this too while in Baltimore, Maryland where the Catholic Church of America was born more than 360 years ago with John Carroll as the first and a model bishop. "Faith is always demanding because it takes us beyond ourselves, leading us directly to God. Faith also imparts a vision of life's purpose and stimulates us to action. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a private opinion, a remote spiritual ideal, or a mere programme for personal growth. The Gospel is the power which can transform the world! Christ has commanded us to let the light of the Gospel shine forth in our service to society. How can we profess faith in God's word, and then refuse to let it inspire and direct our thinking, our activity, our decisions and our responsibilities towards one another?"

"Today, some Catholics are tempted to discouragement or disillusionment, like the prophet Habakkuk. They are tempted to cry out to the Lord: why does God let us see ruin and misery? Why does God permit evil? Yes, like the prophet and the thirsty Israelites in the desert, also our trust can falter; we can lose patience with God. We too can harden our hearts. Yet the prophet gives us the answer: 'If God delays,

wait for him; he will surely come, he will not be late' (Hab 2:3). Our waiting for God is never in vain. And Paul tells us: 'Bear your share of the hardship which the Gospel entails.' This is an invitation to enter more deeply into the Christian vocation. There is no evil to be faced that Christ does not face with us, no enemy that Christ has not already conquered, no cross to bear that Christ has not already borne for us and does not now bear with us. And on the far side of every cross we find the newness of life in the Holy Spirit.

This is our faith." It is fundamental that we keep this faith alive through a constant response of fidelity to the gifts received. For this reason the Pope recalled the history of Catholicism in the US, urging Americans to become part of their great tradition and protect its patrimony, especially now that it is being so fiercely challenged by a materialistic culture and a permissive mentality that reduces freedom to licence.

Fruits of the visit - The Pope's words and gestures were so effective that four bishops have notified a new wave of enthusiasm and fervour in their faithful. "Not even the sophisticated Central Park in the heart of New York was able to resist the Pope who sang a Polish Christmas hymn in the middle of his homily," said Card. J. O'Connor of New York. "I am still receiving mail from Jews, Protestants, Catholics and Muslims telling me of how they were moved by the words and presence of the Holy Father!"

Above all, the Catholic communities found new spiritual strength: "The pastors of the 413 parishes tell of the greatly increased numbers at Sunday Mass and long lines of penitents are now forming in front of the once deserted confessionals. What happened? Simple: millions of people who were starving for the truth were nourished": particularly noticeable among the young people who are far more annoyed by the world's falseness.

"The same rebirth was noticeable at the UNO," say Card. O'Connor. "I often have the privilege of meeting UN delegates from all over the world; I have never seen them show so much enthusiasm as they did for the Holy Father." The reason being that: "before them was a man without any personal interest or objective. He is a man who shows sincere concern for them and for each of the world's inhabitants."

Marco

"Holy Mass is centre of my life" said Pope in private speech

27 September 1995: 30th anniversary of the Conciliar Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* on Priesthood. In the special Eurovision transmission of the event one of the Pope's private speeches was made public, allowing us to see more deeply into the heart and mind of this extraordinary man. Among other things he said: "On the 1st November I will begin my 50th year of priesthood. When I think of my vocation I must confess that it was an 'adult' vocation, though in a certain sense it was felt back in my adolescent years. After graduation from high school in Wadowice, in 1938, I began studying Polish philology at the Jagellonica University of Krakow. That was what most interested me at the time. But in September 1939 I had to interrupt my studies because of WWII. In September 1940 I began working, first in a stone quarry, then in the Solvay factory.

My priestly vocation began maturing because of that difficult situation. It matured amid the sufferings of

my country, amid the physical work and the workers; it matured also thanks to the spiritual direction of various priests, in particular of my confessor.

In October 1942 I asked to be admitted to the Seminary Major of Krakow. From then on, though I kept on working in the Solvay factory, I became a clandestine student in the Faculty of Theology at the Jagellonica Uni and the Seminary Major of Krakow. I was ordained on 1 November 1946 by Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapicha in his private chapel."

The priest is the man of the Eucharist. "During these near 50 years of priesthood the most important and sacred moment has always been the celebration of the Eucharist. It is still very much alive in me the awareness that I am celebrating Christ in person. Never, over these years, have I abandoned the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, and if it did occur it was for reasons totally independent of my will. Holy Mass is in an absolute way the centre of my life and my every day..."

To the Priests: more time for God, so excessive activity may not empty you spiritually

Cardinal Ratzinger on the priest of the Second Vatican Council: "a priest is pressed by multiple activity which can risk emptying him spiritually and make him lose the joy of his vocation, to the point of it becoming a terrible burden." To overcome this: "it is of utmost importance that every priestly action be accompanied by intimate communion with Christ, and then by priestly asceticism because it is through this that one learns to lose or donate one's life. It is of utmost importance also, that priests have specific moments of prayer and spiritual respite.

More than a few priests who begin their mission with great idealism fail because of lack of spirituality. Having time for God, remaining before Him in a personal encounter, is the number one priority, it is greater than all others."

Beginning January a Commission for equal distribution of clergy will become operative to face the imbalance of vocations in countries poor in vocations (the West and Nth America) and countries rich in vocations (the Third World and eastern Europe). Despite the growing number of vocations (within 6-7 years these should equal the number of deaths, thereby halting the decrease), there is still this great imbalance to be sorted out.

In recent years "several hundred priests who left the ministry to marry have asked to be readmitted." The procedure is not so simple: if their marriage was a civil one, it has to be dissolved; if it was a religious one, or if there are children, readmittance becomes impossible. Moreover, the reason for their desire to return must be convincing.

Revelation's 1900 years

What is the Spirit saying to today's Churches?

The Greek island of Patmos was made famous by the Apostle John who was sent there in A.D. 95 as a type of punishment during the reign of terror by Domitianus. It was beneath the skies of that island that the disciple (by now on the 100 mark) had the visions of Christ's definite victory over the hate of the world (Rev 1:9). That revelation was written down immediately and sent to the seven Churches of Asia Minor and became the last book of the New Testament. On this island with its 150 little churches and three monasteries (one of which contains the grotto where John had the visions), the Patriarch of Constantinople met all the Orthodox Primate from the 23rd to the 26th September to celebrate the 1,900 years of Revelation. Sadly, the Patriarch of Moscow chose not attend.

Bartholomew I used these days to re-examine the words of the Apostle and call the faithful to: "listen to what the Spirit is telling the Churches (Rv 2:11) today, so we may see the great danger of being neither cold nor hot (Rv 3:15), to understand how God sends afflictions to correct us because we abandoned our first love (Rv 2:4), and to see the modern day characteristics of the Beast..."

On speaking of the clash between faith in Jesus and the non-faith of the world, in his first homily the Patriarch lifted up a cry of thanksgiving to God for His mercy for having protected the Orthodox faith... and for having given as guides the Fathers and Doctors of the Church who traced out a sure path amidst the sirens of the world.

At the meeting for patriarchs and representatives of the Orthodox Church, Bartholomew I said: "The Church's mission does not depend so much on the doings of the Church's primates. To four of the seven bishops of the [aforesaid] Churches, Jesus' command is to repent. This is usually said to the flock, but Jesus is saying this to us." Second: the mission of evangelization is not done through effective-looking strategies planned by the leaders. "We, as pastors, have a great treasure in our Churches: the souls of the simple-hearted faithful, who every day anonymously offer their martyrdom. They are the immense, inexhaustible treasure that we must make good use of for the reform of our Church."

On the 26th September the Orthodox Church celebrates the passing of the Apostle. On this day the solemn celebrations were held outside, by the grotto of the Revelation. "The Lord, knowing how we thirst and hunger, invites us to His mystical Supper. Since He is the friend, not only of the disciple, but of each of us, He is constantly by our side and knocks on the door of our heart: Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door I will come in to share his meal, side by side with him (Rev 3:20).

He does not force open the door of our freedom, though. If we do not wish to lose our contact with Him and remain excluded from the Supper, we must keep our mind and our senses on the alert so that we are able to grasp His presence and His Spirit."

Bartholomew I in Lourdes to pray for the unity of Christians -

The Bishops of France were in Lourdes for their plenary Conference and on the 6th November they welcomed the Patriarch of Constantinople. "The nostalgia is very much alive in us for the old unity between East and West when the Church was undivided and when, for instance, St. Irenaeus came from Asia to be the first bishop of Lyons," said the 55 year-old Patriarch who warmly embraced each of the bishops.

From among the many who greeted him, the Patriarch lifted up into his arms a young child. The gesture

seemed to reflect the Gospel of simplicity, a theme which was brought up shortly after by Msgr. Duval, President of the Conference: "We are called to give back life to the Church through a witness of life more similar to that of Jesus'." He added: "In the 13th century St. Francis did more for the revival of the Church than the many Councils of his time."

Bartholomew I announced his intention to reunite the pan-orthodox Council before the end of the century; the first one after 30 years, hoping that there may also be: "a re-examination of the principle of Peter's primacy to permit that the undivided unity of the first centuries be found again." This desire was also expressed during a meeting he had with the Pope.

Polish Primate includes Medjugorje among great Marian shrines -

Fatima, 13 October, Cardinal Glemp said in his homily: "Through the Mother of God and Mother of the Church people draw closer to one another. People who meet one another in prayer - at Lourdes in France, Saragossa in Spain, Fatima in Portugal, Alötting in Germany, Einsideln in Switzerland, Medjugorje in the Balkans, in front of the image of Our Lady of Mercy at Vilnius in Lithuania, in the House of Loreto, before Our Mother of tears at Siracusa in Italy, in the mountains of Lewocza in Slovakia, at Jasna Gora in Poland and at many other places of prayer - these people not only renew their own spiritual energy, not only do they encounter divine peace, but they strengthen the life of faith in their families and they fortify the ties of friendship among men, without which we cannot make society grow."

Africa teaches: seven days with Jesus, like in Palestine -

The large missionary parish of Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire is run by a young missionary community from Rovigo in Italy. A one-week retreat was recently held for all who desired participating in the courtyard of the school not far from the mission. Whole families spent the days sitting on the ground, beneath the sun and rain, to listen to the Word of God, to dance and praise in His honour. The meeting concluded with a night-long prayer vigil. About seven thousand attended.

The experience made us think what Jesus must have felt before the crowds of people who sat at His feet to meet Him, listen to Him and ask to be healed. The same happened here, and the Lord did not hesitate to manifest His presence in a powerful way. One example: a woman who had been blind for six years felt a warmth in her eyes during the Eucharistic procession. Now she can see.

Fr. Mario Maniero

Lay people lead Marian pilgrimage all through France

Le Puy was the Marian heart of France well before Lourdes became famous, and it is where Mary was proclaimed Mother of God after the Council of Epheso in the year 430. On 8 September a pilgrimage named Tour de France de la Sainte Vierge began its journey. For one year this pilgrimage will take to 36,000 towns and cities of France 108 faithful reproductions of famous statues and icons of the Blessed Virgin - thanks to the painstaking work of 90 artists. There will also be the copy of the Holy Shroud of Turin. The initiative came from the "Notre Dame de France" fraternity founded by Edmond Fricoteaux

and which counts 22,000 members. These will assure non-stop prayer for the 12 months' duration of the "Tour" (day and night) from two of Paris' shrines.

What is the reason behind the pilgrimage? It is a reply to the Pope's invitation to live these last years of the 20th century as a New Advent of Jesus Christ's 2,000th birthday. From this came the idea of a great prayer for unity and peace for all God's people. Behind it all are lay people who desired a prayer in which everyone, particularly the poor and the little ones, could take part.

In procession, then, on carts decorated with flowers and lights, the statues and icons will journey through the cities and towns, and medals and rosary beads will be distributed. The pilgrimage will be accompanied by nights of Adoration and prayer in the churches, hospitals, prisons and town halls which will open their doors to Mary, or in people's homes. The entire country has been involved; the automobile house, Peugeot, donated 108 vehicles to carry the statues and icons along the 2 million kilometres from one end of France to the other. The idea is to bring the 60 million Frenchmen closer to Mary, the Mother who comes to prepare our hearts to meet Jesus.

The pilgrimage may continue beyond the borders, Italy included, as far as the grotto of Bethlehem on Christmas night of the year 2000.

Our French correspondent writes: "Mary has taken up Her walking stick to visit Her children. We had the grace of having Her at our house... In the first Advent there was no room for them... In the second Advent Mary is going from house to house, knocking on the doors of the little ones and the humble where She knows She will find help for Her children."

Some observations - The pilgrimage is meant to be a humble and sincere witness, not a challenge or a show of triumph which could stir up negative reactions. Mary comes to bring hearts to Jesus, to His Word, to true conversion, to grace. The organizers themselves are there to ensure a true and correct devotion. Her passage will be a chance for a full return to the Church. The Catholic daily, La Croix, reported: "This is why the organizers are being careful to link it to the initiative to re-launch the Bible and to an attempt to re-evangelize the country."

True ecumenism should not suffer from it, as some fear, because it will be a sharing of common wealth, just like Mary's role in Christ's mystery. Mary's role in the Church has always been perceived by the faithful and not by chance this time too, lay people are the promoters. Mary has come to refill the arid fountains of today's theology so that God's people may once again draw from the abundance of life.

Like Jesus, Mary is a sign of contradiction, and the devil fears Her power. Thus, it is easy to see why such a fuss has stirred up around the pilgrimage. These well-meaning lay people are being criticized by fellow Catholics, including some of the clergy. What should they do? The Gospel says: if they keep silent, the stones will cry out! And: Woe betide those who do not recognize the time of their visitation (cf. Lk 19:39-44). We are certain that Mary in Her humility, with the help of Her little children, will defeat Her enemy outright and bring many children of France back to Jesus.

Mary's cry for help...

Ten thousand gathered for the prayer meeting in Milan on 19 November. After the joyful mysteries in the morning and reflections by Fr. Leonard and Jelena, Fr. Pablo (parish priest of Civitavecchia, Rome) moved the hearts of all with his reflections on the sorrowful mysteries: "Sorrow," he said, "expressed also by Mary who presented Herself with one hand on Her heart to mean love and the other hand opened to ask for prayer and conversion... If the Pope has been unable to go to Medj., Our Lady came to him," he said "from Medjugorje to the doors of the Vatican. Prejudices, scientific studies and the foolishness of the mass media prevail. We have not understood that Mary wants help," he told the crowd.

Those tears, laughed at and by now forgotten, are asking for help. They are a sign of immense love which

must be returned... "It is time we stopped with prayers of continuous requests - heaven gives us all we need; what do we give in return?"

Fr. Jozo spoke of the Eucharist, which is not a symbol, but the Body. He connected the conversion of 20,000 Anglicans to Catholicism to Medjugorje, because they believed in the Eucharist and not in the empty rites. He said how they envy Catholics for the priests who are true ministers of God. He compared the great value of priesthood to the sad statistics, adding that God is all powerful if we say "yes" to Him, like Mary and the saints did. If we tell Him "no," it's like tying His hands behind His back.

The day concluded with Adoration and Holy Mass concelebrated by 14 priests.

Civitavecchia: miraculous healings. Experts from the Vatican are studying 4 or 5 of these cases, while the theological commission continues with its work.

In the meantime, the flow of pilgrims increases. "Every Sunday," explains Bishop Grillo, "there are about 40 bus loads, and each week from 4 to 6 thousand people make their way here. Now with winter upon us I am concerned for the pilgrims who will be out in the cold and damp. Many already complain about the lack of lavatories. A big tent is needed where people can pray, listen and confess..."

Since this interview in October an Italian Catholic weekly has offered to promote a campaign to raise the funds to supply the bishop with the tent.

Fr. Slavko's missionary voyage to America and Ireland

After last year's meeting in Costa Rica, 100 representatives from 17 Latin American countries participated in this year's meeting in Quito, Ecuador. The theme: "With Mary, teacher of peace." Fourty km from Quito, after the Rosary, the Consecration to Mary's Immaculate Heart was renewed on behalf of the entire world. The main celebrant for the evening Mass was Archbishop Josè Mario Riuz Navas, President of Ecuador's Episcopal Conference.

On day two Cardinal Echeverria, OFM, who is responsible for the Marian Movements in the Episcopal Conference, was the main celebrant in the solemn Mass. He said during his homily: "(...) My presence here wishes to confirm my certainty that the impetus for a renewal in the Church comes from the Medj. groups, in Ecuador and the world over."

Day three: Holy Mass with Quito's Archbishop, Msgr. Gonzales. The theme of his homily was "Peace, fruit of the Holy Spirit."

A conclusion was made by the participants: "All Peace Centres must be consistent with Marian spirituality, according to Our Lady's teachings... avoid all forms of sensationalism and criticism and remain the sound core of parochial communities." A letter was also conveyed to the Holy Father.

After Ecuador, Fr. Slavko went to Germany and Austria for prayer meetings in Munich, Innsbruck and Passau. Many participated. Particularly moving was the Munich meeting: prayers and songs were in Croatian which the faithful had learnt.

At the end of his voyage Fr. Slavko met Bishop Emeritus Msgr. Antun Hofman in Passau. He has already been to Medjugorje and he expressed his desire to visit again.

* Mary's message on Krizevac, one October evening. After 16 minutes of apparition, Vicka transmitted

the following message by Our Lady: Dear children, I have new messages for you, but I cannot give them to you because you are not living those I have already given you. My children, look over the ones I have already given you and put them into practice. Then I will be able to give you other ones so that you may walk on ahead.

Ireland: vocations and fidelity to Church thanks to Mary

Ten years ago the first great prayer meeting was held in Bannilasloe. This year Fr. Slavko attended. We recall that the Irish were among the first to respond to Mary's call and to arrive in Medjugorje on pilgrimage.

The same priests that spoke ten years ago were there this time too. Fr. Paddy Devine, professor at Dublin's Black College, noted how people in Medjugorje make a full conversion: to God and to the Church. There were many testimonies of physical and spiritual healing and of priests who rediscovered their vocations in Medj. On the first evening, Msgr. Kirby, bishop of Clonfert, celebrated Mass with 30 priests. In his homily he stressed how Marian devotion is Christ centered and open to man's needs. A high point were the two young priests, Martin Carlez and Oliver Devine, who were young boys ten years ago when they went to Medjugorje. They are now working as assistants to parish priests. They publicly thanked Mary for their vocations.

Nigeria - a new family of nuns will work to spread the Medj. message of peace. The founder, Msgr. John Bosco Akam, is rector of the Memorial Seminary in Enug and chaplain to the Governor. He took the Governor, members of the government and Bishop Gonsum Ganaka (see interview in Echo 118) to Medjugorje. He said: "I am a priest who teaches seminarists in Nigeria. We are a youthful Church: only 100 years old. My people thirst and hunger for God. My pilgrimage to Medjugorje was the most beautiful experience of my time in Europe."

Christians and... Muslims greet Fr. Jozo in Australasia and S.E. Asia

We met Fr. Jozo in Siroki Brijeg on his return from his recent tour of 46,000 km, 67 hours of flight and 25 meetings in 18 days in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore. Six bishops, an archbishop, more than 350 priests and religious and 35,000 faithful opened their arms and hearts to Our Lady, Mother and Queen.

From Brisbane, Australia Fr. Jozo took Our Lady's message to Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in New Zealand. In Auckland he was greeted by Bishop Rodgers. In Wellington the meeting was organized by a Serbo-Orthodox family who took refuge there in 1993, while in Christchurch Fr. Jozo was greeted by the Maori community: fervent Catholics and faithful to the Medj. message. Bishop John Cuneen celebrated in the Cathedral Saturday evening.

Back in Australia, his first meeting was held in Hobart, in the Cathedral, where many people gathered to listen to the message of peace. In Melbourne, one of the five meetings was for priests and religious during which two seminarists (to be ordained in two years) told of their conversion in Medjugorje. In two other meetings he met the Croatian and Italian Catholic communities and told the Italians to be like missionaries who must give example of a consistent and live faith.

Fr. Jozo also went to Albury to greet the parents of Anthony Burnside whose vocation was born in Medjugorje and who is studying in Zagreb. Since the local bishop was not very favourable of Medj., Msgr. Kennedy of whom we have written in past editions, asked him to welcome Fr. Jozo. "He is doing today what we should have been doing for years." A fruitful meeting was able to be organized for the faithful in a public hall.

At Kilaben Bay, Newcastle, Fr. Jozo was greeted by and spoke to an Aboriginal community. The evening Mass was celebrated in the city's Cathedral. Msgr. Kennedy concelebrated.

Four different meetings were held in Sydney. The one for the clergy was held in a centre dedicated to Mary MacKillop: Australia's first saint, recently canonized by Pope John Paul II. And in Sydney Fr. Jozo was delighted to meet up with old cell-mate, Josip Dabic (Fr. Jozo was imprisoned one year by the Communists for having provided protection for the six young visionaries).

To the faithful who filled Sydney's Cathedral Fr. Jozo said: Do not fear! Our Lady guides Australia and Australia loves Our Lady.

After the meeting in the Cathedral a journalist asked Fr. Jozo why so many people desired seeing him to which he replied: "Not certainly out of curiosity because my meetings last at least five hours. People come for God."

The archbishop of Adelaide concelebrated Mass held in the St Francis of Assisi Cathedral. During his homily he spoke of the Rosary, saying how he learnt to love Jesus as a young child because every day his family prayed the Rosary in front of a picture of the Sacred Heart and the Virgin. He held his Rosary beads in his hands all the time and suggested everyone to use this powerful weapon which defends and protects from evil and sin. His comportment during the meeting was edifying for all.

Perth was the last Australian city visited by Fr. Jozo before leaving for Jakarta, Indonesia: a mostly Muslim country with a strong Catholic minority. He was granted a special permit to enter the country after authorities from Sarajevo responded for him. He was escorted with honours to the Cathedral: too small for the large crowd of people present for the seven-hour meeting of prayer, discourse, Mass, songs and folklore (both Catholics and Muslims were present).

In Singapore, the garden city, Fr. Jozo spoke to a crowd of 5,000. There were 35 priests present. The local Bishop and the clergy had always been contrary to Medj., but they could not help noticing the change in those who went on pilgrimage there, and the growing number of confessions. It was for this that the Bishop consented to Fr. Jozo's visit.

It was noted how the English edition of Echo was well known by those who attended the meetings in all the cities visited.

Fr. Jozo's message

Matteo Rossi accompanied the Franciscan all during the voyage. He has summarized for us what Fr. Jozo told the thousands of people at the various meetings.

"Dearest brothers and sisters, my desire is that you know that your Mother is here, the Queen of Peace, the Blessed Virgin Mary who has been appearing in Medjugorje for 14 years and 3 months. She is saying to you: I have chosen you, I need you, you are important to me! Did you hear? You are important to me! To accept and live the messages of Our Lady means to experience joy, grace and light. It means to start on the right way, to come closer to Her Immaculate Heart, and hand in hand, walk towards Christ to become His friend, and witness of His Love. Do not fear taking Mary as a sure guide. She loves you and protects you! Do not fear and do not be tempted to refuse Her invitations because Her only desire is your well-being and your salvation.

I couldn't help noticing the wide open spaces in Australia and New Zealand - no houses, no men, just

cattle and sheep; so different to Europe and other parts of the world where space is precious. Man thinks he can control the population growth by limiting births through legalizing abortion and euthanasia. I have learnt that if the law is passed, Australia will become the first nation in the world to practise euthanasia on large scale.

This type of mentality says we are still far from God, that our egotism is enormous and that our love is in crisis. For more than 14 years Our Lady in Medjugorje has been inviting us to convert, to change our way of thinking. The Holy Rosary, prayed every day with the heart, and the daily reading of the Bible permit you to open your heart to Jesus Who says: I am at the door, knocking.

The Holy Rosary and the Word of God can obtain for you the grace of entering into >>>> the mystery of the Eucharist - the real presence of Jesus in a small host, present with His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity - to desire being broken bread for your brothers. Our Lady invites us to fall in love with the Blessed Sacrament. She is asking for adoration in the parishes. Do not be afraid to spend your time before the Most Holy because only Jesus can respond to your questions about life, to your doubts, and free you from all forms of slavery. Only He can turn on the light in your darkness, heal your wounds and give to you peace, consolation and love. Do not fear, because Jesus is your friend, He is the right way, your freedom and your goal.

Our Lady said: With prayer and fasts you can stop even wars. I wish to thank all those who have continued to pray for peace in my land. Yes, because on the 5th August of this year - Our Lady's birthday - a great miracle was had thanks to the prayers of millions of pilgrims. In Krajina 100,000 Serb soldiers suddenly retreated from the occupied zones, leaving behind tons and tons of weapons! Why? No one knows. Something not human made them escape, and Croatia regained its territories. It was not thanks to the UN, or to America, or to NATO. It was thanks only to your prayers. I thank you and I ask you to keep on praying for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for peace in every nation.

Our Lady's messages are the seed of a new and better life, of long-lasting peace for the whole world. I thank you for responding and for all that you have done for the war orphans. I'll see you in Medjugorje!"

The war in Nigeria came to a halt without any logical explanation. It was the prayer of the Rosary that brought peace to Nigeria. How can one not believe in the power of this humble prayer?"

Guides of pilgrimages are asked to contact same (see no. above) prior to their departure, giving their nationality, date of arrival and no. of pilgrims, so that an adequate pastoral service can be organized in time (Masses, meetings, etc)

For information regarding the spiritual programme of the Shrine, and other, please contact the Info. Office (ph. 387-88-670400) in front of the Presbytery, not the Parish Office.
(The Press Bulletin, Medjugorje)

News from the blessed land

* Many family members of Croatian war victims were in Medj. on October 14. Many have been waiting four years for news of their loved ones who have been displaced or killed because of the war. From the church they went in procession to the apparition hill, carrying a cross, lit candles and a poster with the writing: Where are our loved ones? Back in the church they participated in the Mass with 1,500 foreign

pilgrims. Fr. Jozo spoke words of consolation and encouragement to them.

* Croatian soldiers from the fronts of Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to come on pilgrimage to Medj. to pray on apparition hill and participate in the evening programme of prayer. Two military chaplains recently accompanied Spanish and English soldiers from the battle zone of Gornji Vakuf.

* The Village for war orphans is finished in part and the first children have settled in. They are being cared for by the Franciscan nuns from the province of Mostar. The donations of many pilgrims world-wide have made this project possible.

* All prayer groups and Caritas centres tied to Medj. are invited by the MIR Info. Centre in Medj. to send details of their group to fax no. 387-88-642339. The list will be published in the Press Bulletin and a possible collaboration may be asked of them.

* Family news - Vicka lovingly takes care of her mother and recently renounced her commitments to take her mother to France for medical treatment. Ivan and Laureen became the proud parents of Cristina Maria on October 20. Marija was present in Medjugorje to celebrate All Saints with us. She is expecting her second child.

* The message requesting adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (25 Sept.) is echoing around the world in an astounding manner. Many priests have testified that pilgrims from Medjugorje have launched adoration in parishes where it had been shelved for years.

One day Our Lady asked Jelena's prayer group to help Her through adoration for a very important plan. They responded with adoration on Saturdays in the little apparition chapel with Fr. Tomislav Vlastic. The Gospa later thanked them for the victorious outcome saying how the prayer of adoration was "stronger than an atomic factory."

* "Are Valtorta's books truthful?" Marija asked Our Lady in 1982 on behalf of Fr. Franjo who had been asked the same question by many young people under his guidance. Our Lady replied: "You can read them," no more, no less.

On the other hand Our Lady has >>>> repeatedly said to read the Bible and above all to give it an important place in our homes, and for families to read it together. Mary has also recommended that we read the lives of the Saints. (Sr. Emmanuel)

Peace in former Yugoslavia!

...Let us hope it lasts. After the peace treaty in October, America forced "its" peace on the rivals on the 21st November, feast of Mary's Presentation to the temple. It was on another Marian date (5 August) that the beginning of the end came with the rapid occupation of Krajine by the Croats. The Serbo-Bosnians then decided for peace talks. Thanks be to God for Mary!

What was agreed? Political union for two territories: one Serbo-Bosnian (49%) and the other Muslim-Croatian (51%) with a central government in Sarajevo which will remain united. Sixty thousand soldiers (20,000 of whom from USA) will guarantee that the agreement is respected.

But how happy are the parties involved? And how unhappy are those who have to leave their homeland? An international tribunal has been opened up for the war crimes, but in the meantime, the number one aggressor is being made to look like a peace maker! Three million refugees can now return, but to what? Ruins?

An ocean of love is needed for the victims of so much hate. All of us will need to help so the enormous work of reconciliation and solidarity can begin. Mary is calling us. Untiring aid-deliverers continue to take lorry-loads to these peoples despite the present indifference and lack of collaboration. Alberto Bonifacio tells how he takes aid to the ruined cities of the inner country such as Kupres, Jajce, Vitez and Glamoc where winter has settled in and little else arrives.

Contact your nearest Caritas or Medjugorje centre to see how you can help.

Not war of religion, but of atheism

"A religious war?! The war here is exactly the contrary, it is the result of the lack of religion" says Bishop Trifunovic (of the Serb Orthodox Church of Sabac).

Q. But the rivals call themselves very Catholic, or very Orthodox...

A. The Serb generals do not know Christ, they have never heard of Him and they know nothing about Christian love. And how could they? They are sons of atheists who closed all the doors to Christ. Christ was forbidden to enter the families, the schools and their hearts. For years they were told that God did not exist, that the Gospel was a legend and that the soul is fruit of fantasy. Without God, though, man becomes a dangerous animal.

Q. What can the Churches do for peace?

A. Time is needed for dialogue to begin, a dialogue which must include God as a third person. Those who began the war did certainly not consult their religious leaders. The conflict today has been checked, but a great deal of wisdom and faith will be needed to heal the poisoned relations.

A division within former Yugoslavia according to ethnic criteria is absurd, because in this case most of the families should also have to be divided. Here in Yugoslavia what must be done is that which never has been done: respect the rights of man in general and of the individual. Under the Communists the needs of both individuals and the people as a whole were always secondary.

A land to rebuild under same faith

"May faith become the uniting force once again, just as the Danube and the Sava [which meet] united the peoples of the region," said the Pope to the Croatians. "Both forms of Christianity - western and eastern which have always lived together - must work together in this process of unification. No one must oppose the way of unity and peace. The Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian and Macedonian languages are so closely linked that you can already communicate without difficulty; much more so than any other European peoples."

Sarajevo under siege - lesson in life Fra Jerko Penava reports:

* To the Catholic weekly, Glas Koncila (#42), a young lady from Sarajevo, who moved to Zagreb two months ago to attend university, wrote: "It may seem strange to you, but I am happy to have lived in Sarajevo all during the war. Living in that 'theatre of death' or 'concentration camp' as some have called the city was a real lesson in life. It would do everyone good to go to the same school; life on earth would be more beautiful.

The youth were the first to recognize the power of faith; they experienced communion first hand. I saw them run every day - often amid granades and gunfire - to the Cathedral for Mass, or to pray or to sing... I

learnt to believe strongly and to trust the Lord. The little Croatians, Muslims and Serbs learnt to live together, as brothers."

* Six youth from Sarajevo enter Zara's seminary - One of them, Ivan, told me: "Prior to the war I had never thought about becoming a priest. Now I am more than convinced that being a priest will be my only guarantee of both earthly and heavenly happiness."

"When I left for Zara," Ivan added, "my neighbours, both Serbs and Muslims, wept for my departure, as if I were part of their family. A new world is being born in Sarajevo, a divine world."

Seven nuns imprisoned

Unable to act, but mission more fruitful than ever!

The seven Xaverian nuns who were kidnapped in Sierra Leone last January and kept prisoners for one month witnessed on-the-spot executions, torture, raids, women raped, mothers killed in their own homes and estranged children shooting. They had to watch it all and could do nothing. "In the beginning," explains Sr. Teresa, "we would tell them not to do it, that they were hurting their own kind, but they would do just the opposite; become even more cruel."

Yet these nuns have no doubt: "Despite the fact that we were unable to help, we lived our vocation to the full in that military camp and saw that what those men needed the most was God. Even a violent person, one who kills, hungers for God.

As missionaries it was an unforgettable experience. We saw how it is possible to carry out a mission even when your activity is secondary. We were totally inactive, but our mission was more effective. A little at a time the guerrillas became kinder towards us. We prayed four times a day out in the open, in English, and the guerrillas passing by showed first curiosity then real interest. In the end some of them asked us to teach them how to pray, especially one young soldier named Shaolin. He was 23 or 24 years old and was always very kind to us.

We celebrated Ash Wednesday out in the open on the ground, crossing our foreheads with the ash. Shaolin wanted to know what we were doing. After we explained he said: 'You pray and God listens to you, but could Jesus love someone like me?' 'Yes,' we told him, 'Jesus wants to be friends especially with those who are furthest from Him.' This made him very happy and he asked us to cross his forehead with the ash. We had to point out to him that there was much more to the external symbol, that he would have to accept Jesus' life and believe in Him and His Word. 'I want to,' he said and we crossed him with the ash.

Shaolin also asked us to teach him how to pray. He saw our rosary beads and wanted to know what they were, so a little at a time he learnt all about Christ through the Rosary. He came every day and sat with us to learn another little bit, promising to learn it all so he could recite all the Rosary with us on 25 March (Annunciation), but on the 21st we were released."

On the greatness of Christian vocation discovered during her imprisonment Sr. Teresa says: "Like Mary at the foot of the cross, who saw Her Son being tortured and killed and was unable to help Him, we learnt that participating in Christ's suffering is participating in the world's redemption. I came out of this story certain that it was all in God's hands, that the Word of God is present, as a force of resurrection, even in suffering and death.

One day I was feeling rather down and so sick of all that violence and I said to God: 'Why do we have to see all this? Where are You, what are You doing for these people?' The first words that came to mind were: My grace is all you need, the same words to St Paul when he was feeling tired and weakened and the Lord made him understand that precisely through his weakness would He be revealed."
(reduced from an article in Avvenire - 14/10/95)

Fr. Jozo to the war orphans and their godparents

During the annual meeting on the 17th August in the Shrine of the Assumption of Siroki Brijeg, Fr. Jozo told the widows, orphans and sponsors: "The material help is much, but the aim of our association is not just to collect material aid. Our programme is mainly spiritual, so your wounds and those of the children, in particular, will be healed. Everyone must be part of your prayer, your love and your friendship... Over these last years we were able to build a small oasis for you mothers and your children, on the island of Lopud near Dubrovnik. This year the Croatian government has granted us, in a 10-year concession, a small island with a hotel and a few bungalows. It is all for us, we godmothers, godfathers and children with their mothers will be able to go there. We will also take with us the wounded, for spiritual retreats, so that the Lord may give to all the grace of being able to forgive and pray for one's persecutors."

Fr. Jozo greeted the co-ordinators present and non, and the new caretaker of the monastery, fra Svetozar who guides and supports the association's projects. In turn, Fr. Svetozar warmly greeted all those present and spoke of when he, as a young child, walked 20 km to reach the Shrine and slept in the church till the next morning, the feast day of the 15th August. "That experience," he said, "helps me see that Our Lady wants to accept children into this Shrine and, like Jesus, embrace them, each one of them."

In the end all were called out by name and the Eucharist was celebrated to thank the Lord and to entrust the lives of all to Him and to His Mother. Though the meeting was planned to last three days, Fr. Jozo preferred concluding it at the end of that day because of the risk of attacks.

Matteo Rossi

Fr. Jozo's visit to Italy

Fr. Jozo visited many northern Italian cities in June. Everywhere, thousands gathered and opened their hearts to the Queen of Peace. People of all ages came, and remained in the various churches even up to 5 and 6 hours. Their fervour was edifying.

In his homilies Fr. Jozo underlined how the man of today is extremely poor: he has everything, but lacks everything. In his presentation of Mary's messages he clearly stated that without prayer, man is unable to find the right way. Prayer must be his first priority in his daily life so he can find himself and begin to talk to God his Creator, far from Whom there is only darkness, desert and sadness.

"With prayer, you can do everything. Is your matrimony at risk? Pray, and all will go right. Is your son a drug addict, has he lost the way? Pray, and you will see him healed. If you think another child is too much, pray, and you will receive the grace to accept him. Do you feel void and discouraged? Pray, and you will once again find trust in life. Do you feel egotistic, envious and jealous? Pray, and the Lord will melt the problems and the sins and make you a new man and a witness to His love. Do not be afraid of prayer. Take your Rosary beads and trust the Lord. Call and listen to Our Lady and begin the journey on the way of conversion with Her.

Whatever your life may have been, whatever sin you may have committed, do not be afraid to return to the Lord like the prodigal son who was met by the merciful arms of a father who never ceased waiting for him. Make a good, full confession; you will make your Lord happy and you will experience the joy of

pardon. Your Mother will help you take that first step. Have courage! Then you will discover the gift of the Eucharist, of the Sunday Mass; you will feed on the Body and Blood of Christ: nourishment that allows you to face every trial with peace in your hearts. Keep the Bible in your homes and give it the place it deserves. Read a passage from it every day, perhaps the one from the Mass of the day and the Word of God will bring light to your life..."

In Cuneo, Bishop Aliprandi stayed behind for a friendly talk with Fr. Jozo, and some priests made the decision to visit Medjugorje. Fr. Jozo was well accepted and greeted by bishops also in other dioceses, one of whom made a booking for a prayer meeting in the near future and made a generous donation towards the orphanage.

In Turin, Fr. Jozo met with hundreds of nuns and volunteers from the Cottolongo hospital for the seriously handicapped where the miracle of Providence is renewed every day, thanks to the offering of prayer and suffering. He also visited some of the wards where the "incurables" are cared for and pointed out how "God waits for those who have no one to wait for them."

From the Shrine of Our Lady of Health, filled to capacity, he uttered a long prayer of liberation over the city of Turin and concluded: "This is not a cursed city, but a blessed city."

Matteo Rossi

For donations to Fr. Jozo's orphanage, contact: Matteo Rossi, Via delle Grazie 9, I-54100 Massa, Italy.

Thoughts on the "new evangelization"

In a concise and essential manner Fr. Umberto Neri from Bologna explains what "new evangelization" implies in a handy little leaflet. It should be meditated rather than read to fully understand it.

Preliminary information

a) At times rather severe judgements are made on the evangelization done within the Church, especially in these last times. This doesn't mean that the glory, the beauty, the heroism of testimony and the wonderful fruits of sanctity are ignored, or that the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit's help in the work of Christ's disciples is doubted. What is being done is to try and find the quiet courage to make a serious and constructive self-criticism which - God willing - will permit us to go from good to better.

b) A constant eye will be kept on the East and the problems related to the relations with that world. Without wanting to be prophets (even though it is now more than obvious), in the not too distant future the far East of India and Japan - which already knock on our doors - could become the main problem for Christianity: more treacherous and aggressive than what Communism has ever been.

Is there need for new evangelization?

With regards to the word "new" in the expression "new evangelization," it is necessary that a few things be made clear.

1. "New evangelization" can in no way mean "new Gospel," that is, a new meaning to Jesus' fundamental announcement.

The Gospel is only one. Paul wrote to the Galatians (1:6-9): I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel - not that there is another. But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an

angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed!

To the Corinthians he said (1Co 15:1): Brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, the gospel that you received and in which you are firmly established; because the gospel will save you only if you keep believing exactly what I preached to you - believing anything else will not lead to anything.

It must be added that it is not true that the Gospel "grows" and changes through the course of history - as many would say these days. It is rather history that when confronted with the Gospel is changed. Neither does the Gospel need to change to become more "actual" to better respond to new dimensions of human living. Here too the process is quite the opposite: it is history in its variability and precariousness that must become more "actual" with regards to the Gospel confronting itself continuously with the Gospel. The same goes for the so-called "process of bringing other cultures up to the Gospel culture." The Gospel is preached in all languages, it is incarnated in all peoples and races, and therefore is not a "stranger" to any culture, as it can be accepted by all. With regards to culture the Gospel is what it has always been and therefore it is reason for everlasting newness, just as it is an offering of everlasting salvation. Concerning the concept of translation it must be clear that its meaning is the fair translation of the Gospel and its faithful transference to other cultures, not a series of disputable "equivalences," for when these are considered at greater depth it is noticed how these are often loaded with ambiguity.

2. Nonetheless, there can and must be a continuous renewal of evangelization:

- a) by purifying it of all extraneous elements which continuously try to seep into the very heart of the Gospel. This means discernment. It takes a deep and on-going knowledge of the Scriptures and authentic Tradition. We are all children of our time; it is natural that we are influenced by the moods and various categories belonging to it.
- b) by an ever deepening comprehension of what is proper to the Gospel. Another huge task. The contents of the Gospel exceed any human possibility of synthesis and analysis, and are always "beyond" any formula no matter how saintly or traditionally proven these may be. The Scripture and its message of redemption enjoy an eternal youthfulness. They cannot be forced into stereotyped expressions which can be gradually emptied of their meanings, or worse, end up meaning something totally different to what they originally meant when they first gushed out of the Church's live conscience, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. It is not a question of denying or forgetting anything. What has to be done is rediscover over and over again, as if that word was being told to us today.
- c) through a loving acceptance, as though it were something "new and unheard," like an unexpected prodigy of God's wisdom, which will defeat the sluggishness that accompanies habit, or something "already heard." When Christ is announced it is always an incredible paradox of his mystery of being made present: a paradox which if not provoking wonder means that it has not at all been understood. In the end, those who listen to the Gospel and yawn are far worse than those who listen and oppose it with vivacity and passion.
- d) through clearly, completely and lovingly announcing the mystery of God and His Christ on the part of authentic witnesses. In the same measure that the evangelizers and the entire Church (who must support those she sends out) make the contents of the Gospel their own and bear witness to it with their own lives the Gospel can be transmitted with effectiveness.

For the ministers of the Word nothing is more important than and nothing can substitute enduring personal work of appropriation and experience (not only knowledge) of the revealed Truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This means "remaining" in the Word, as St John says in his suggestive and profound language.

e) A programme of new evangelization cannot seriously and convincingly proceed until we become aware - with serenity - of the inadequacy of the work of announcing done so far, by us, at times by others or our predecessors. Saying good of everything and everyone, though they may be charitable and kind, is not always the most fitting way of making progress: no anachronisms, no bitterness, no thinking that we are the bearers of a "better world." With both mercy and simplicity one must look at things the way they are. Always we must be afraid of giving reason for scandal to the little ones, and of no less importance, of giving reason for scandal to our serious and well-intentioned brothers.

How has evangelization been carried out so far?

a) Quantity-wise, how many people has it reached? It is known - and it is a revealed mystery, like that of Christ's unfathomable humility - that the Church will always remain *pusillus grex* - a small flock; she always will be something small in the world (of course I refer to the real Church) because it pleases God to be that. Liberating ourselves, however, of every ambition related to numbers, of nostalgia for the crowded squares does not mean that we do not have to go out and look for even one of Christ's lost sheep and lead back into the fold all those who do not refuse or who are not totally insensitive to the grace of an invitation or call and in particular to the grace of the announcement of God's love in Christ. A widespread impression, enforced by experience, wants that many more people would respond "yes" than those who would refuse to listen or who would listen with hostile indifference or scepticism. In other words, those who are far [from the faith] are often very close to us: a room-mate in the hospital, a neighbour, the fellow who fills up our car at the petrol station. Here we must say that feelings of prejudice and instinctive repugnance, besides historical errors including recent ones, have often and still do interfere on this level, and these are not so easily salvaged. If it is not possible to include everyone straight away, the least we can do is not totally exclude anyone.

b) Quality-wise, too much has been thought to be "unable to be proposed," not interesting, too tiring, too difficult. Also in this case experience tells that the Church never tires of hearing the Word of God and that the essential themes regarding redemption, eternal life and new life in the Spirit not only interest many but are also capable of awakening consciences - in other words of "converting." Nothing new under the sun. Scripture repeatedly affirms this power of the Word of God. When it does not strike, the cause is not necessarily a temporary and mysterious "weakness," but an insufficient "epiphany" or manifestation, submerged as it is by human themes and wordings which are thought to be more "actual" or more able to attract attention.

c) How has evangelization been received in our environment? What level, what awareness and clarity make up the Christian choice for those generations who have grown up in our youth centres, who have faithfully attended Sunday Mass? We're talking about those people we have always thought to be "good Christians." Besides morality, what else of Christian is in them? How aware are they of the fundamental mystery of faith? What idea do they have of this Christianity which unites them to so many others? Their lack of preparation in questions of faith and moral behaviour is at times very grave: they just don't know! At times one hears: "no one ever told me." This lack of knowledge deprives them of that impetus of joy and generosity which must make up the unmistakable characteristic of a true Christian.

d) With this introduction in mind, it must be said that the renewal of evangelization must not and cannot be just a resumption of impetus. This would quickly be dampened by inevitable weariness and disappointment in living one's unpoetic routine. It must, instead, be a true turn, a profound reform - of which the Church is always in need and for the grace of the Spirit which abides in her is always able to offer. (End part 1) Fr. Umberto Neri

OUR READERS WRITE

Due to lack of space we can publish only a small sample of the many letters we receive.

* Echo brings me news from God's world - The mass media informs us by the minute of all world events, but never about God's world. That is why I like the Echo so much... (Hebe Pauliello, Argentina)

* The Poor Clares of Osimo (central Italy): ...Thank you ever so much for all that you do. I wanted you to know how much joy I and my 45 fellow sisters receive from reading the Echo.

* It is one of Our Lady's miracles that the whole world is reached through the pages of the Echo, before witnessing - either here on the earth or in heaven - the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart. (Fr. Gerolamo, Switzerland)

* I invite all students to turn to Our Lady for help. They will surely benefit from placing their trust in Her. The messages of the Queen of Peace helped me mature in my faith and to accept God's will. Prayer helped me with my studies. I thank Her and all of you at Echo for your bulletin. (R.R. Naples)

* I thank the Blessed Mother for the continuous production of the Echo which has become a major source of spiritual food, light and inspiration for me. (Raquel D. de Leon, Manila)

* The Echo has transformed my life and that of my family. Echo is an inexhaustible fountain of meditation, joy, hope and enduring peace. (G.C.F. Anakwue, Nigeria)

* Thanks for the wonderful work you're doing for Mary through this little BIG paper. It has been a God-send in my life, an oasis! (Frances Cinelli, Ontario)

SHARING

Parishes flourish with practice of first Friday of month - Together with a letter from a missionary community in Novara there was also a leaflet on the promises of Jesus to those who honour His Sacred Heart on nine consecutive first Fridays.

Thank you indeed for having reminded us of this great Promise which has drawn generations to the fount of grace (Confession and Communion) on the first Friday of the month. A shame that it had been left to the side, but what grace since it has been repropounded to the faithful! People are sensitive to the love of His heart, and amid the general indifference Jesus too is particularly grateful to those who recognize His love in that pierced Heart.

He will draw many souls to us priests if we for first accept His request to open this miraculous fount of grace to the faithful. In my tiny parish I have coupled Mary's request for monthly confession to the first Friday celebration, beginning 45 minutes before the evening Mass. It is the Heart of Jesus and Mary that calls the people, attracting them to the sacraments. Let us open our hearts and doors and our parishes will flourish.

Go out from church only 3 minutes after taking Communion? - A reader has asked if the faithful should leave the church after only 3 minutes of having received Communion, as is the case in many parishes.

When we take Communion we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus and we know that it takes about 10 minutes for the host to be assimilated by the body. In those 10 minutes we are living tabernacles of Jesus Who is God; a guest within our homes. Often only 3-5 minutes pass between Communion and the end of the Mass and many rush out of the church or begin chatting to a friend.

Can this show of lightness towards Jesus' presence be tolerated in people of faith, which deprives us of a

moment of grace, which might be cause for scandal for some?

We know what St Philip Neri thought about this. He sent altar boys carrying candles after one woman who left the church immediately after Communion to accompany the Holy Sacrament in her heart.

We propose that priests lengthen the moment of silence after Communion so that this most important Guest be fully honoured, say to 10 minutes. During this time the priest could help the faithful pray by giving suggestions: meditate on the Word heard during the Liturgy, entrust to the Lord our worries, family, recite a decade of the Rosary so Mary may praise and pray with us...

Certainly, the faithful will be pleased, their faith in the Eucharist will be strengthened, and they will be able to experiment the wonderful effects of so much grace.

Travelling to Medj. made simpler - Now that the way through Krajina is open the voyage has become simpler and shorter than taking the coast. At Senj (70 km after Rijeka) take the road towards Dalmatia for Otocac, Gospic, Gracac, Knin, Urlika, Sinj, Imotski, Grude and Ljubuski. Petrol can be bought only at these towns. Bus from Trieste still departs daily at 6 pm, arriving in Medj. at about 8 am next morning. Also from Ancona a ferry departs for Split Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. To book fax: Italy 071-202618

* Can our faith in Jesus still move mountains? - Julian, a young theology student from Romania was feeling anxious about the mission that awaits him.

Yes, it can, and how! It can also move your seemingly unsurmountable problems, and the hardest of hearts, because Christ is the same yesterday, today and always (Heb 13:8). Christ is the Lord! There is nothing that is not subject to Him. Whoever believes, against all human hope, will see for himself and will always be able to say - even in moments of sorrowful loss or apparently irreparable events: thanks be to God Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1Co 15:57).

What's wrong is that we let ourselves be influenced by human criteria and not by Eternal Words, which is why we are often disheartened instead of being filled with joy even amid tribulations. When things seem impossible, remember Jesus' words: It is written (said to Satan during the temptation in the desert). The Word of God is as powerful as dynamite; it always wins!

Fire in the Seminaries! The Ministers of God need to assimilate the Word, to devour it like Ezekiel (Ezk 3) and John (Rev 10:8-10) to the point of living on it and detaching themselves from the word of the world which submerges us. I would like a seminary where importance is given to the Lectio Divina and the meditation of the Word. The enthusiasm of the young men would not become so quickly and so easily burnt out, but they would become like the disciples of Emmaus who said: Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us and opened the scriptures to us? (Lk 24:32). And the seminaries would be alive with fire; vocations alive with Jesus. This is what I desire also for you dear Julian. Ciao. My blessings.

Mary heals through Echo - Marianna Di Battisti from Teramo made the following testimony before the Mass at the Comunità Cenacolo in Medj. "I give the Echo to the sick people I visit in hospital and tell them: 'Trust me, this bulletin contains Our Lady's words.' So one day I gave it to a relative of mine, Luigi Merletti, 68 years old, who had cancer and would have been operated on the following week. I told him: 'Pray to Our Lady, using this bulletin.' He was happy to receive it. The following Monday, after an X-ray, his cancer could not be found.

Also on the 8th August, in the hospital, I met a young woman, Giuseppina Baffoni, who was anxious about giving birth which promised to be very long and difficult. I gave her a copy of the Echo and told

her to believe that Our Lady would help her. Well, she gave birth without difficulty only three hours later.

The same joy is shared by Fr. Alfredo - a Salesian priest from Taranto - who accompanied the pilgrimage to Medj. He says: "Our Lady wanted to reward me for having taken two pilgrimages to Civitavecchia." Happy is the faith of those with simple hearts, which God rewards.

Echo begins its 12th year - We thanked God and confirmed our commitment to Mary on the 21st November: date of Echo's eleventh birthday. Yes, we are a little strained, but happy for the joy that accompanies the many letters of consent, for the untiring efforts of our many helpers who distribute the bulletin, for the generosity of our readers who support us (a special thank you must go to those in Italy, France and Germany) thus enabling us to find the 85 million lire (about US\$55,000) each issue (the cost of paper has doubled this year) to print and mail out the 5 editions handled by us (Italian, French, English, German and Spanish). At the moment we are producing 500,000 copies per issue (380,000 the Italian edition), but the number is always on the increase. Then, of course, we give financial help to four editions produced in the East: Russian, Polish, Romanian and Albanese. With these and the other six self-financing editions, Echo reaches the 750,000 mark each issue.

We ask you to please bear with us if we are unable to drop a line to acknowledge receipt of your donations. Thank you for all the Christmas greetings that have reached us.

A special thank you goes to Mary Immaculate Who guides and blesses our work. May She prepare our hearts for a special Christmas. In Her Immaculate Heart we bless you all in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Don Angelo

Villanova, 29 Nov. 1995

From day to day, people who are in darkness come to your homes. Give them the light.