



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

140

July-August 1998 - [Info](#)

Our Lady's message of 25 May 1998:

Dear Children, Today I invite you to prepare yourselves, through prayer and sacrifices, for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

My little Children, this is a time of grace; thus I invite you once again to decide for God your Creator; allow Him to transform you and change you, that your heart may be ready to listen to and live all which the Holy Spirit has in His plan for each of you.

My Children, allow the Holy Spirit to lead you on the way of truth and salvation, towards eternal life. Thank you for responding to my call.

Allow the Spirit to transform you

It is a time of grace.., decide for God your Creator... Allow the Spirit to lead you... This impassioned appeal by Mary on the eve of Pentecost in the year of the Holy Spirit, hides a note of sadness. Yes, because that: "allow God your Creator," tells of the light-hearted manner in which we choose our own way instead of God's way. Yet, only He can give us the life to fulfil the project He has for each of us. To choose God our Creator is to choose life and blessing; otherwise one chooses curses and death (read Deut. 28 and 30).

This is a time of grace. For 17 years the world has been receiving grace upon grace from the hands of the Queen of Peace, in the form of messages, signs, illuminations and examples, so that Christians might turn away from their crooked ways to find Jesus' way indicated by Mary. So let us take advantage of this time to decide for God.

Allow the Spirit to lead you. The Holy Spirit is not a luxury; He is the Father's great Promise which was fulfilled with the glorification of Jesus. The aim of this promise is to renew the face of the earth, that men, in communion with God, may form a community of Love (see Acts of the Apostles, 2:42-47; 4:22-25). If Thou take Thy grace away nothing pure in man will stay, says the Sequence of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is not an intruder in our lives; Mary should not have to say: "allow Him to lead you." He is the divine artist Who wishes to give shape to our nature deformed by sin so that we may become similar to Jesus. He truly is the Creator Spirit of the Pentecost hymn, because He creates in us a new spiritual being able to turn to God and call Him Father (Rom 8:15), to think with God's thoughts (1 Co 2: 10-13), to love as God loves (Rom 5:5), and to bear God's fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22).

Furthermore, the Spirit has a special plan for each of us. It is a project of incommensurable beauty, which cannot be repeated, and is part of His great plan to construct Jerusalem.

If Our Lady repeatedly says that we should "allow" the Holy Spirit to guide us, it indicates that our state of sin, our schemes by which we organize our lives, offer resistance to His sanctifying work. The Holy Spirit's aim is to transform us, as He did with the Apostles. After Pentecost they caused even the Council to wonder for their boldness, as they were uneducated, common men (cf. Acts 4:13). We cannot imagine the changes and the fervour that the Holy Spirit is able to work in man; He designed the universe and gave it order, and He turns poor creatures into saints.

For Him to be able to do this the Spirit needs to find hearts ready to listen to and live what He has prepared for them. A ready heart is a free, unhindered heart. The Apostles in the Upper Room are our model; Jesus said to them: "Remain!" We also need to be violent with ourselves and remain in the inner cell of our heart (of which St. Catherine speaks) even if our worldly commitments allow for few moments of silence. Mary looks sadly upon consecrated souls who attend the voice of the world. Even ministers of the Word who should be the mouth of the Holy Spirit (it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you - Mt 10:20) are instead dry springs and the rivers of living water (Jn 7:38) are unable to flow through them.

It is indispensable that we make decisive cuts in our worldly habits and relations: they are rubbish when compared to the work of the Spirit. Do we believe or not that Jesus wants us to share in his full joy? Thus, prepare yourselves for the coming of the Holy Spirit with prayer and sacrifices, and fasts. St. Peter warns: keep sane and sober for your prayers (1 Pt 4:7). Mary does the rest: "When the Holy Spirit, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul; He flies there. He enters there in His fullness; He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent to which it makes room for His Spouse" (St. Louis De Montfort, no. 36).

Fr. Angelo

17th anniversary message, 25 June 1998:

Dear Children, Today I wish to thank you because you live my messages. I bless you all with my motherly blessing and I take you all before my son Jesus. Thank you for responding to my call.

I thank you because you live my messages

What a lovely surprise this compliment by Our Lady! This is not the usual thank you for "having responded to her call," or, as in other messages, for the numerous presence, for to go to Medjugorje is already a sign of openness.

Here Our Lady is thankful because we live Her messages, thus She joyfully acknowledges that throughout the world children take Her messages seriously and live them. These children make up Her ranks which oppose Satan. So let us also rejoice if we are among these.

This doesn't mean we have done all that She has asked of us, observes Fr. Slavko, but that She sees our good will, our efforts, and our little steps forward, by which She is moved. Our tendency is to thank only when all goes the way we want; and when it doesn't we criticise. That is precisely where we wrong: not seeing the good in others, but seeing more often than not just negative aspects; and this is cause of conflict and of bad thoughts, so much so that some end up with inferiority complexes. Mary, on the other hand, sees even our smallest good and least effort, and Her gratitude gives us courage to continue.

While thanking us, Mary also helps us to reflect on our merit. Have we truly heeded Her, found the time to pray, to go to Mass, to Adoration, to confess and to fast? Her thanks is a push forward to help us look onward, and, if necessary, make changes. And anyone who had fallen by the way can receive new impulse to pick up the journey with Our Lady.

Her Motherly Blessing expresses Her goodness and Her approval, and the gift of Her grace to help us continue. Above all, Her presence is Her true Motherly blessing: for 17 years Mary has been with us to guide us so that we don't get lost. She is here to take us to Jesus, because He is the only Good in our lives. In Him we find love, peace and eternal life.

Fr. A.

Pope before mystery of Holy Shroud

Before the Shroud the faithful cannot but exclaim: "Lord, you could not love me more!"

24 May: John Paul II went on "pilgrimage to the Shroud" in Turin. Curved over with age and suffering, he slowly made his way up the walkway outside the cathedral, with his rosary beads in his right hand, his left hand on the handrail. With the help of his stick he crossed the cathedral and stopped to adore the Blessed Sacrament for five minutes, then he knelt before the Shroud, the linen sheet used to cover the Redeemer's body (front and back) in the sepulchre. With trepidation he looked at it for three minutes: the same time allowed for each visitor (approx. 2 million). Then, when he celebrated the Word, he expressed his great passion for the Shroud, giving it ten different titles. Following is a summary.

"For the believer, the Shroud is a mirror of the Gospel: the image it presents has such a profound relationship with what the Gospels tell of Jesus' passion and death, that every sensitive person feels inwardly touched and moved at beholding it. The Shroud is truly a unique sign that points to Jesus, the true Word of the Father, and invites us to pattern our lives on the life of the One who gave himself for us. In the Shroud is reflected the image of human suffering. It reminds modern man, often distracted by prosperity and technological achievements, of the tragic situation of his many brothers and sisters, and invites him to question himself about the mystery of suffering in order to explore its causes. The imprint left by the tortured body of the Crucified One, which attests to the tremendous human capacity for causing pain and death to one's fellow man, stands as an icon of the suffering of the innocent in every age. Before the Shroud, how can we not think of the millions of people who die of hunger, of the horrors committed in the many wars, of the brutal exploitation of women and children, of the millions of human beings who live in hardship and humiliation, of those who do not enjoy basic civil rights, the slaves of criminal organizations?

The Shroud is also an image of God's love as well as of human sin. It invites us to rediscover the ultimate reason for Jesus' redeeming death. In the incomparable suffering that it documents, the love of the One who so loved the world that he gave his only Son (Jn 3:16) is made almost tangible and reveals its astonishing dimensions. In its presence believers can only exclaim in all truth: "Lord, you could not love me more!" and immediately realize that sin is responsible for that suffering: the sins of every human being.

Contemplation of that tortured Body helps contemporary man to free himself from the superficiality of the selfishness with which he frequently treats love and sin. Echoing the word of God and centuries of

Christian consciousness, the Shroud whispers: believe in God's love, the greatest treasure given to humanity, and flee from sin, the greatest misfortune in history.

The Shroud is also an image of powerlessness of death, the power of which not even the Son of Man withstood, but faith reminds us of Christ's victory and gives us the certainty that the grave is not the ultimate goal of existence. God calls us to resurrection and immortal life.

The Shroud is also an image of silence... of the silence of death, but also of the fruitfulness which belongs to whoever refrains from being heard outwardly in order to delve to the roots of truth and life. The Shroud thus becomes an invitation to face every experience, including that of suffering and extreme helplessness, with the attitude of those who believe that God's merciful love overcomes every poverty, every limitation, every temptation to despair.

Regarding the infinite investigations of the Shroud, the Pope said: "The Church entrusts to scientists the task of continuing to investigate, so that satisfactory answers may be found. She urges that the Shroud be studied without pre-established positions that take for granted results that are not such [eg. the carbon test; and this rehabilitates Card. Ballestrero]; she invites them to act with interior freedom and attentive respect for both scientific methodology and the sensibilities of believers." John Paul, visibly moved, concluded with a prayer in Latin: "Soul of Christ sanctify me, Body of Christ save me, Passion of Christ console me, in Your wounds hide me."

Radiant Pope gives new courage to Church of Austria

Impressive is the word to describe the Pope's conclusive discourse in the immense Heldenplatz (Heroe's Square) on Sunday 21 June. This was his third Pastoral Visit to the Church in Austria, which he said has seen many sufferings. "Many things can be taken from us Christians. But we will not let the Cross as a sign of salvation be taken from us. We will not let it be removed from public life!" He appeared extremely weary as he leant on his Cross, and despite the burning sun, he still managed to joke with the youth who had "come a long way, and not only in a geographical sense."

During the visit, the theme of which was, Come Holy Spirit, the Austrians were overwon by the Pope's charism, including the stern dissenters and members of "We are the Church" (pro abolition of priestly celibacy, women priests, etc.!). He responded to them with the love of a Father and with wise moderation. Cardinal Schönborn said: "He is a man who emanates a superior light and an extraordinary power; who sees the future and thus is able to capture's people's attention."

John Paul consoled the Austrian Church which is going through a period of crisis and disorientation, also due to the accusations made against Card. Groher (who has withdrawn from public life), by indicating three new Blessed as witnesses to the faith. To the youth the Pope said: "May the three heroes of the Church sustain you on your way" calling Sr. Restituta (beheaded by the Nazis because she refused to remove the cross from the hospital rooms): "a courageous witness of her convictions," and he thanked her "for swimming against the tide of the times."

"They were not photocopied Christians," he said as he pointed out to the youth that "they began like you: as young people, full of ideals," and that, "their personalities matured gradually. It is therefore important that you cultivate life, so that it can bloom and mature. The persuasive power of the message also depends on the credibility of its messengers. New evangelization starts with us, with our life-style. The Church today does not need part-time Catholics, but full-blooded Christians!"

The Pope asked the Austrians: "Do all you can to protect Sunday as the Lord's Day!" and on the subject

of unemployment and work opportunities for the young, he said: "I know there are no easy solutions. This is why I repeat the words of Bl. Fr. Shwarz: 'we must pray more!' "

Always paternal, the Pope wished to honour the 50 body guards who offered him protection during his three-day visit, with a grand reception; they all came out radiant with joy. Indeed our Pope is an extraordinary man, above all situations, whom God has prepared for these our times.

Pope, like Mary, desires communion with ecclesial movements

A half million members of 56 ecclesial movements and new communities from around the world gathered in St. Peter's Square on the eve of Pentecost for an unprecedented meeting with Pope John Paul II, the appointment for which John Paul gave on Pentecost 1996. Aware of the wealth which the movements harbour, the Pope welcomed them with a discourse which was masterly, exhaustive and ardent. Following are extracts from it.

"Here we are, like the Apostles, gathered in a great upper room of Pentecost, longing for the outpouring of the Spirit. Here we would like to profess with the whole Church the same Spirit ... the same Lord ... the same God who inspires them all in everyone ... For the first time the movements and new ecclesial communities have all gathered together with the Pope. It is the great common witness I wished, for the year dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Whenever the Spirit intervenes he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness.

In Vatican Council II the Church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements. It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy and leads the people; he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank, for the renewal and building up of the Church. The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential, as it were, to the Church's constitution. They contribute, although differently, to the life, renewal and sanctification of God's People.

Some charisms given by the Spirit burst in like an impetuous wind, which seizes people and carries them to new ways of missionary commitment to the radical service of the Gospel. Today, I would like to cry out to all of you gathered here and to all Christians: Open yourselves docilely to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us! [So like Mary's message of 25 May!] The birth and spreading of your movements has brought to the Church's life an unexpected newness which is sometimes even disruptive. This has given rise to questions, uneasiness and tensions; at times it has led to presumptions and excesses on the one hand, and on the other, to numerous prejudices and reservations. It was a testing period for their fidelity... Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity.

In our world, often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God, the faith of many is sorely tested. Thus we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid, in-depth Christian formation. There is so much need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world! There is great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements and new communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium. How to safeguard and guarantee a charism's authenticity? It is essential that every movement submit to the discernment of the competent ecclesiastical authority. No charism can dispense with reference and

submission to the Pastors of the Church. This is the necessary guarantee that you are taking the right road! Those who have charge over the Church should not extinguish the Spirit, but test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. 1 Thes 5:12; 19-21).

Jesus came to cast fire upon the earth; let us accept His invitation, so that his fire may spread in our hearts and in those of our brothers and sisters. Today, from this upper room, a great prayer rises: Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth! Make even more fruitful the charisms you have bestowed on us. Give new strength and missionary zeal to these sons and daughters of yours. Let us turn our gaze to Mary who was with the Apostles at the first Pentecost, so that she will help us to learn from her fiat how to be docile to the voice of the Spirit.

The Curate of Ars on the Holy Spirit

Practical signs of His presence

In himself, man is nothing, but the Holy Spirit makes him great. Man is completely earthly, all animal. Only the Holy Spirit can lift him up and take him to extraordinary heights. The reason that the Saints were so detached from the world is because they let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is light and strength. The Spirit makes us distinguish the truth from what is false, and good from wrong. As a lens magnifies the objects, the Spirit makes us see the good and the bad in larger proportions. With the Holy Spirit you see things enlarged, including each little thing done for God and each little sin. In the same way that a clockmaker distinguishes the various little cogs with the help of his lens, we, with the light of the Holy Spirit, see all the little things that regard our life. Thus, the minimum imperfections seem serious and the smallest of sins appear horrifying.

Those who possess the Holy Spirit cannot become proud, so aware are they of their own miserable state. For a person who lets himself be led by the Holy Spirit the world seems to exist no longer. For the world God no longer exists.

Therefore, it is a matter of knowing who our guide is. If it is not the Holy Spirit then it's going to be hard work and whatever we do will be without wisdom and substance. If it is the Spirit, everything is so sweet that we could die from pleasure.

Those who let themselves be led by the Holy Spirit experience all types of inner happiness, while bad Christians wrap themselves up in thorns.

Without the Holy Spirit we are similar to a cobblestone... Take a sponge soaked in water and in the other hand a small cobblestone .. squeeze both of them. Nothing can be squeezed from the cobblestone, whilst abundant water from the sponge will come out. The sponge is the soul full of Holy Spirit, and the cobblestone is a cold, hard heart where the Holy Spirit does not live. A soul who possesses the Holy Spirit experiences such joy in prayer that the time never seems long enough, and it never loses God's presence.

Without the Holy Spirit all is cold. As soon as you feel the fervour weakening you must hurry to do a novena to the Holy Spirit to ask for faith and charity.

If we think that God sending us the Holy Spirit can be compared to a great king who encharges his prime minister to accompany one of his subjects, saying: "Accompany this man everywhere and then bring him back to me safe and sound." What a wonderful thing, my children, to be accompanied by the Holy Spirit! What a wonderful guide to have ... and to think that some don't want Him as a guide! (The Curate of Ars

cried here.)

The Holy Spirit is like a man with a carriage and a horse who wants to take us to Paris. Of course, we would say yes, and step into the carriage and feel very proud. Well, the Holy Spirit wants to take us to heaven; all we have to do is say yes and let Him do the conducting.

The Holy Spirit rests in just souls, as a dove rests in its nest; and as a dove broods its young, the Spirit stirs up good thoughts in pure souls...

The Sacraments which our Lord instituted could not save us without the Holy Spirit. Even the Lord's death would have been useless without Him. That is why our Lord said to the Apostles: "It is good for you that I go, because if I do not go, the Consoler cannot come..."

The Holy Spirit must come, that this harvest of grace might bear fruit. It is like a grain of wheat; you sow it in the field, but it needs the sun and the rain to make it grow and ripen. That sun and rain is the Holy Spirit. It is good to say every morning: "My God, send me your Spirit, that I may know who I am and who you are."

"Burn with love for the Eucharist"

"... Holy Mass truly is the centre of a priest's life; of his every day. This centrality is thus the main object of the formative project of a seminary; and it is necessary that each candidate to the priesthood offer his conscious and total adhesion to it. A seminarist is above all one who burns with love for the Eucharist, who is aware that his vocation orients him towards the assiduous participation in the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, which becomes ever more interior and coincidental..." (The Pope to the students of the Seminary Major in Rome, during Mass before the grotto of Lourdes in the Vatican gardens, 14 June 1998)

Bless always!

To the same students in a previous visit, the Holy Father said: "You are the bearers of God's blessing which is the expression of His goodness towards his creatures." He told them how, in his visit to Peru, he had been struck by the fact that the people never tired of asking for a blessing. "This aspect has fallen by the side in the western civilization, where people no longer ask for a priest's blessing. Instead, a blessing is the natural expression of revelation, of God's closeness to man... You must bless, not only when, as priests, you celebrate the various liturgies, but you must carry with you God's blessing, with which the history of mankind began: And God blessed them (Gen 1:28). Bless, in particular, every man, his work, his family, his suffering."

St. Peter wrote: Respond to evil with a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing (1 Pt 3:9). Our Lady, in the first prayer group, asked the young people to ask for the blessing and to bless. Also the lay people can bless.

Jesus too was an exorcist

In the Audience of 3 June the Pope spoke on the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life, saying: "All three synoptic Gospels stress that, immediately after his baptism, Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1). When Satan suggests a triumphal messianism to Jesus, consisting in spectacular wonders, Jesus' choice, in total obedience to the Father's will, is clear and

unequivocal: he accepts being the suffering, crucified Messiah who will give his life for the world's salvation.

Jesus' struggle with Satan, which began in the wilderness, continues throughout his life. One of his typical activities is precisely that of exorcist, which is why the crowds cry out in amazement: With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him (Mk 1:27). Anyone who dares to say that Jesus' power derives from Satan is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (Mk 3:22-30): it is in fact by the Spirit of God that Jesus casts out demons (Mt 12:28). As St. Basil of Caesarea states, with Jesus "the devil lost his power in the presence of the Holy Spirit" (De Spir. S., 19).

Fr. **Amorth**: "Too few believe in battle against Satan" - "In my opinion the Pope's words contain an implicit warning for the clergy. Exorcism was practically abandoned 3 centuries ago, thus we have priests and bishops who have never studied it; who don't even believe in it. Some theologians and biblists don't even believe in the exorcisms done by Jesus, saying the Evangelists stylized their writings to suit the times. But this denies the battle waged against the devil and his very existence.

Exorcism is part of the baptismal rite, and once it was given immense importance, with various being done during the rite. This was reduced to one only, which caused Paul VI to protest publicly.

It should be noted that the Sacrament of Baptism does not dispense of temptation, for if the devil "lost his power in the presence of the Holy Spirit" in Jesus, this doesn't mean that he lost his power in general. As Gaudium et Spes says, his activity will continue to the end of time.

"Meditate the Last Things and you will sin no more" was what was preached in the past. "It is sad but true that within the Catholic Church the doctrine of the "Last Things" continues to be weakened by a false faith in "progress" which is meant to guarantee man's earthly happiness. Since Christ's Kingdom is not of this world, this false faith needs to be fought against by courageously preaching the Christian doctrine on death, judgement, hell and heaven. A doctrine which instils fear, it is nonetheless rich in hope and shifts the centre of gravity from human life to eternal life."

Fr. Werefried

Visit the Tabernacles - "Write that I want it to be preached that there be adoration before the tabernacle. Many are those who enter the Church without greeting me and without stopping a moment to adore me. I would like many faithful guards in front of the altar so that the many, many crimes cannot be committed... Tell your spiritual father that he preach to consumption that I be visited and loved in the Holy Eucharist. It is I who is asking. They may ask me for anything they want when they are in my presence. From here comes the remedy for all ills."

(Jesus to Alexandrina M. da Costa)

* **7th UK YOUTH 2000 Int'l Prayer Festival**, 28-31 August, Worth Abbey, nr. Crawley, W. Sussex. Cost £65, all inclusive. Contact Youth 2000, POB 119, London SW 7 5RH (Fax/ph. 0171 370 0211) for info about this and other Youth 2000 events in UK, Ireland, USA, Germany, NZ, Canada, Caribbean, Panama, Mexico, and on how to start YOUTH 2000 in your own country.

* **Successful Prayer Vigil in Knock** - An estimated 3,000 people from throughout the country were present in Knock for the first ever Pentecost All-Night Vigil, during which Bishop Finnegan of Killala conse-crated the Re-evangelisation of Ireland to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Bishop stressed the need for evangelisation of self, saying how it is necessary to rediscover the most fundamental truth of our religion, which is acknowledging that "God is our Father and we are His children."

VATICAN CLARIFICATION on MEDJUGORJE

Mostar Bishop's opinion purely personal - Free to go on pilgrimage - Investigations still open

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sent the following letter to Bishop Aubry of Saint Denis. Received on 24 June, the Bishop divulged it on the 25th: a gift to the Queen of Peace for the 17th anniversary!

"Excellency, In your letter of January 1, 1998, you submitted to this Dicastery several questions about the position of the Holy See and of the Bishop of Mostar in regard to the so called apparitions of Medj-ugorje, private pilgrimages and the pastoral care of the faithful who go there.

In regard to this matter ... I would like to point out that the Holy See does not ordinarily take a first instance position of its own regarding supposed supernatural phenomena. As for the credibility of the "apparitions" in question, this Dicastery respects what was decided by the bishops of the former Yugoslavia in their Declaration dated April 10, 1991: "On the basis of the investigations so far, it cannot be affirmed that one is dealing with supernatural apparitions and revelations." Since the division of Yugoslavia into different independent nations, it would now pertain to the members of the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Hercegovina to eventually reopen the examination of this case..

The opinion expressed by Bishop Peric in his letter to the Secretary General of 'Famille Chretienne,' declaring he believes Medjugorje is a case of 'constat de non supernaturalitate' (it can be affirmed that there are no supernatural apparitions) should be considered the expression of his personal conviction which he has the right to express as Ordinary of the place; but which is and remains his personal opinion. Finally, this Congregation points out that private pilgrimages to Medjugorje are permitted on condition that they are not regarded as authentication of events still taking place and which still call for examination by the Church.

Msgr. Tarcisio Bertone (Secretary to the "Congregation")

Fr. Daniel Ange summarizes:

1. The declarations of the Bishop reflect his personal opinion. Consequently, they are not an official judgement by the Church.
2. The declaration of Zadar leaves the door open to future investigation. In the meantime, private pilgrimages with pastoral accompaniment are permitted.

Justice is had, after exactly two years that a French Bishop made a similar request to this Congregation on the eve of the 15th anniversary. Then, the media divulged the false news that pilgrimages to Medjugorje were prohibited, and when the Vatican spokesman announced that it was not true, the media did not bother to publish it.. This encouraging reply is very welcome. Replies like this from the Congregation to a Bishop are valid for the entire Church. Our thanks to Mary!

Bishop from Canada "God draws the people here"

Bishop Gerard Dionn from Edmundston, New Brunswick, visited Medjugorje at the end of April and said: "When I heard that the Virgin was appearing every day in Medjugorje for nearly 17 years I didn't know whether to believe or not. I came here because a group of pilgrims asked me to be their spiritual guide during their voyage; it truly has been a wonderful gift for me. Everything here has profoundly impressed me; it's difficult to find something similar elsewhere. I was touched by the faith of the people, the spirit of sacrifice, the evening Mass, which is like a Pentecost. I saw crowds of people climb the mountain, pray and confess; people from all over the world. I can't express a definite judgement, but given the fruits I have seen, I can seriously say that something special is happening here. It is not the Franciscans who draw the people; I feel it is a Woman who calls them to Medjugorje, and this Woman instils trust. Men need a mother and here they have found her.

Many have come here repeatedly, despite the expense involved, and once back home they become witnesses of their faith with ever greater fervour. I believe that Our Lady is appearing here. I would not know how else to explain the phenomenon here. It can't be Satan, and it can't be a trick. People can be fooled for a while, but not for 17 years, and here we are talking about millions of people. The extremely good fruits are what make one see that something great is happening here.

Fr. Slavko's missionary voyage to Brazil

From 5-12 May prayer meetings were organized in various Brazilian centres; some of which were transmitted via radio. Thousands of faithful took part. "I was able to see," said Fr. Slavko, "how the Medjugorje message has taken root and is bearing fruit in this country so contradictory, where the poor see in the Church a sign of hope."

Meeting at Shrine of Quixada - The first stop was in Quixada, on the north west coast of Brazil where the friends of Medjugorje held their own meeting entitled: "The Holy Spirit will descend upon you" in the new shrine of the Virgin of Serteo.

The bishop of Quixada, Msgr. Adelio Tomasin, originally from Verona, Italy, explained how he was inspired to build the shrine. "At Holy Mass, after Communion, I heard a voice say: 'Why haven't you thought to build a house for My Mother?' And I saw a shrine amid the rock at Serteo. Still uncertain, I told the people present at the Mass what I had heard; they all got up and applauded loudly.

That was how the idea of the shrine was born, but the first thing I did was look for a religious family which could take care of it. The answer came from Fr. Gianni Sgreva, founder of the Oasis of Peace Community. The shrine was built (the bishop himself helped build it) and now, with the help of the young caretakers, it works full time.

Bishop Tomasin: "Profoundly renewed after Medjugorje"

The bishop of Quixada visited Medjugorje and spoke about his past experiences. He came the first time in 1984, after being pushed to do so by a friend. "I was impressed by the fact that even before the evening prayer the poorly-lit church was full of faithful, so many of whom were young. I was also struck by the profound devotion - which was not fanaticism - and by the confessions, and the prayer on the

hills... I went to the church and remained there in prayer nearly the entire day. That's how I spent my days in Medjugorje; I did not speak to any of the Franciscans or the visionaries.

Back home I felt profoundly renewed. I understood Mary better; also that thanks to Her the Church is renewed. I came again ... deeply convinced that many things happen here that theology or psychology cannot explain. I discovered the true meaning of faith and its fruits. No one can doubt the fruits of Medjugorje, for God's presence and His mercy are obvious; the Church can see that God's grace is handed out by the Mother of mercy, the Mother of sinners, who was close to the Cross. This is a truth which cannot be denied. With regards to the apparitions, besides the conversions and the good fruits of faith, there has to be some-thing more, and for this we must wait."

The Brazilian Bishop emeritus, Silverio Jarbas Paulo from the diocese of Feira, spent one week in Medjugorje. "I was mostly impressed by the simplicity of the prayer and the power of the faith of those I met. There was no fanaticism. I saw many young people. Marian shrines have a basic role in the life of the Church."

Fr. Slavko in Austria - Invited by friends of Medjugorje, his visit to parishes and prayer groups went from 18 to 20 April. In Hohnhart he held a course on "Mary's call to prayer," for which many parishioners were present, then Medjugorje's usual evening programme followed. The same programme followed on the 19th at Griesskirchen where chaplain of the parish community is Joseph Gratzner. He received his vocation in Medjugorje, leaving behind him a well paid job. Now he joyfully dedicates himself to the salvation of souls. On the 26th April the prayer meeting in Vienna, in the beautiful church dedicated to Mary in Siege drew a great crowd. Many priests also participated.

On his way back Fr. Slavko visited Sr. Elvira's Community which she opened 8 months ago in Mattersburg. The large property, donated to her, includes land for tilling, a wood and a lake. The young people work together with the parish. At first, the local people were mistrusting, but then they understood that the presence of the Community represented a great blessing.

"Each voyage abroad," said Fr. Slavko, "confirms how the world has been touched by the Medjugorje message and how many continue to remain faithful to the Virgin's call."(Press Bulletin)

Scientific tests for visionaries - A series of sophisticated tests were organized for visionaries Vicka, Marija and Ivan in Como (22-23 April) and were accompanied by parish priest, fra Ivan. Jakov could not attend because he was in Munich for a prayer meeting. The twelve experts, coordinated by Fr. Andreas Resch and Dr. Giorgio Gagliardi, came from 4 different prestigious scientific institutes (in Innsbruck, Milan and Bologna). "The results will be revealed only after accurate analysis has been carried out," said Fr. Slavko.

The following Sunday Alberto Bonifacio met Marija in Medjugorje. With a note of humour, she told him what happened: "We were happy to undergo the tests, thinking that someone would benefit, though it wasn't easy. All we did, though, was obey. In one hour we had to respond to 510 questions, and during the two days we didn't even have 5 minutes off, except for dinner. We had to do many psychological tests, including one on typical anti-apparition gossip. To explain Vicka's reaction (of anger) they said that they had to make us angry so they could see our weak points." Marija concluded: "We visionaries are the only ones in the village who have medical certificates to say we are normal."

Mary takes revenge - A Mexican parish priest was sent to Medjugorje 2 years ago to prove that the apparitions were false and so discourage the Mexican pilgrims. But Our Lady, with the delicacy of a mother, took this case to heart, and in the end Fr. Salvatore was able to gather up only proof of Mary's presence and Her powerful action upon hearts. It only took a few days for him to change totally and still

today he repeats: "My priesthood was born in Medj."

Once back home he drew up a positive report on the apparitions, which greatly surprised his bishop. From that moment on Fr. Salvatore worked so that the Virgin's message was known and lived in his parish. The result is that his church is now too small to contain all the people who come to pray. Last winter he returned to Medjugorje and he entrusted his parish to Mary before the statue of Mary Immaculate in Tihaljina (Fr. Jozo distributes pictures of this statue to pilgrims), and he said to Her: "I want you in my church, but you know I have no means, so it's your problem." Then, months later - it was the 1st May - a faithful reproduction of the statue arrived in his parish. Who sent it? A wealthy woman heard his prayer and without saying anything ordered it. Along with many other blessings, the parish has its own priestly vocations.

Return to the priesthood! - A man had accepted to come to Medjugorje as a tourist, together with a group of pilgrims from the Indian Ocean. He did not pray or attend Mass, but kept away from his group, and did not want to go to the hills or meet Fr. Jozo. On Pentecost day, on his way through Bijakovici with two other people, he met Vicka. She smiled at him and then stood before him and placed her hands on his head. Though greatly surprised, the man let Vicka bless him, all the while listening to her long prayer. And thanks to her prayer our friend was able to relive the grace of priesthood; yes, for he was a priest! We saw him concelebrating the day after. He left Medjugorje full of enthusiasm.

Francesco died after having caught pneumonia. An AIDS victim since 1989, he asked Sr. Elvira to allow him to die in one of her homes. Once in the community in Medjugorje, his health improved, allowing him to carry out prayer and work duties. He will be missed by the entire village. During the funeral service, fra Ivan called Francesco a light for them all.

(From Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

The 17th Anniversary

Tues. 23 June 1998 - Thousands of people were on the hill of apparitions to pray the Rosary prior to Our Lady's apparition to Ivan at 10.30 pm. In quite a few of the recent evening apparitions Our Lady has asked that we pray for priests.

Wed. 24 - Many thousands of people participated in the Eucharistic procession for peace from Humac to Medjugorje guided by Fr. Slavko and Vicka. A group from Modena animated the songs.

Thurs. 25 - At day-break Krizevac was swarming with people for the Way of the Cross in various languages. The afternoon rain stopped at 6pm when the outdoor evening programme was beginning. It is estimated that about 50,000 people were present for the Holy Mass. On the outdoor altar 230 priests concelebrated, while many others continued to confess.

A healing - In our group there was a Portuguese woman with a 2 1/2 year old child, who at 7 months was diagnosed with cancer of the anus, and had undergone 9 operations. Early last month the doctors gave up, saying he wouldn't live any longer than 3 weeks. His mother prayed to Padre Pio and was inspired to take him to Medjugorje. They arrived by plane on the 18th. Everyone prayed for the little boy whose aspect was deathly. Vicka, too, prayed over him and his condition improved; that evening he climbed the hill of apparitions. Fr. Jozo also prayed over him and his condition improved further. While the child was undergoing thorough tests on the 26th, his mother went to Medjugorje to give thanks. He is completely healed; even the spot in his lungs has disappeared. Praised be Jesus and Mary. (Alberto Bonifacio)

Fr. Slavko explains Medjugorje phenomenon

To understand the monthly messages, which can serve to guide us for the month, one has to remember the main messages. These derive mostly from the Bible and in part from Church tradition. From the Bible are derived the messages of peace, conversion, prayer, faith, love, fasting. From Church tradition are derived those which regard ways of praying which matured over the centuries; thus the recommendation of Holy Mass, the Rosary, adoration, veneration of the Cross, Bible reading and fasting twice weekly which is also part of the Hebrew tradition.

In many messages Our Lady said: "I am with you." Now, some say: "But Our Lady is also present here." Many pilgrims have told me that before coming here friends and family asked why they were going all that way to see Mary when she was right there where they live. They are right, but it must be added that here there is a special presence of Mary, due to the apparitions.

Right from the start many have tried to explain the Medjugorje phenomenon in a different way. The Communists saw it as a counter revolution, which is quite ridiculous. Can you imagine a monk going against Communism with six children between 10 and 15 years of age, four of whom were girls, and the two boys were shy? For all their courage, how could they ever stage a counter revolution? But the Communists really thought this and that's why they imprisoned the parish priest and pressured the entire parish, the visionaries, their families and the monks. In 1981 they compared Medjugorje to Kosovo! On 15 August 1981 the Communists called in a special police squad, but at the end of the day their captain said: "They called us here as if there were a war, but it's as quiet as a cemetery." The Communists were good at prophesying for themselves. After the first meeting with the visionaries one of them said: "You are inventing this to destroy Communism." Also those possessed by the devil were the first to recognize Jesus as the Son of God: "Why have you come here, Son of God, to destroy us?" Whilst others were asking themselves if it were true or false, they were saying: "You do this to destroy us." Prophets. Others in the Church explain Medjugorje as a disobedience of the Franciscans. But when can disobedience help people to convert, to pray, to heal? Others say that the monks are manipulating it all, for money. Of course, due to the amount of people who come here, there is also money, and many houses are built; but you cannot explain Medjugorje with a concept of money. Yet they accuse us of this. I don't think the Franciscans is the only organization in the world which receives money. So if we have found this good method to make money, why don't you apply it too? You, Father (to a priest), when you go home take 5 or 7 children - not 6 like us - instruct them a little and one day they can say: "We see Our Lady!" But do not call Her the Queen of Peace, because we have already taken this name. A lot of money will follow, and if they put you in prison you will earn even more. After analysing it we see how ridiculous it is. Yet they accuse us of this and some believe.

The monks, visionaries and pilgrims have committed and will commit errors; it is only with this special presence of Our Lady that you can explain Medjugorje. It is grace which the Lord gives for these Marian times, as the Pope calls them. And Medjugorje cannot be without problems. With the messages given here Our Lady has never condemned or provoked anyone negatively. All those who do not want to come should say: "I'm not interested," and nothing else.

A close analysis of the writings against Medjugorje show how people invent things, and how they disappear like soap bubbles. Like waves, they come, they go and they disappear! I assure you that in Medjugorje we are not all saints, and I am sure that there are worse places in the world, yet no one disturbs them. Here instead, they attack, assail, criticize and condemn. I told the Bishop: "If the only problem in the diocese is Medjugorje then you can be happy, for here people pray more than in the entire

diocese," even if we sing, "Though sinners, we are your children." If Our Lady repeats: I am with you, then you have to understand that Medjugorje cannot be explained without Her special presence. [Mary, like Jesus, is a sign of contradiction.]

(Part 1, reduced from a conversation with Italian and Spanish pilgrims, 14.3.98)

John H. Newman (1801-1890) said in 1865: "Exactly those nations and lands that got rid of the devotion to the Mother of God, have lost faith in Christ's divinity; while those lands which were faithful to Mary, have conserved Orthodoxy."

Open to the Spirit from within

"Do you know Him?" was the question Fr. Tomislav asked the 800 participants at the meeting in Numana from 7-10 May.

Four days to discover and get to know more deeply the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in us and the Church. Four days in the Upper Room with Mary to be truly prepared for the unique feast of Pentecost, in this year of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came to rest on the Apostles in the form of flames, as if to represent how the fullness of light can be obtained only by making communion with each single flame. So, rather than summarize the meeting, we present some of the flames which, together, will lighten up our journey to the Lord.

1. Know Him - St. John says of the Holy Spirit: You know Him. The world does not know Him. Thus, whomever does not know Him belongs to the world. If you argue and fight then you do not know Him. To know Him you only need to follow the soul's way, the Father's way, and there is no other; He cannot be found elsewhere.

2. Christ's way of thinking - St. Paul says: We have Christ's thought - and this is not an ideology, but is the Holy Spirit. The students of today know that books are heavy, that they damage one's back, however, even the ideas in the books are at times heavy. Our ideas and knowledge, our convictions, weigh down on us, making our spiritual life heavy. In the end we think it impossible that God can ask for easy things. Hence, remaining in our way of looking at God and the Holy Spirit in particular, blocks His coming.

3. Do you really know Him? - I ask you: do you know the Holy Spirit? I hope that you have begun to know Him. Of course, you would not know Him in His fullness, but you know the way. Which way? Jesus Christ is the only way which can lead us to the Father. If you follow Fr. Tomislav's way, you are on the wrong way. You must follow the Lord's way! ...

Do you know Him? The reply is in the Gospel. If you know me, then you know the Father. You know him already, and you have seen him. Souls which are open to the Shepherd's voice - the Spirit's voice - know how to walk and already have within them knowledge of the Father. When the Hebrew people left Egypt, they did not know the roads and ways in the desert. God was their way. The people needed to remain with open souls and follow God. They did not need to know the tracks or the hills in the desert. All they needed was an open heart, and trust in God. There is no other way for us. So, let us live in this state of aperture, so that the Holy Spirit is able to lead us, step after step, towards the promised land...

4. Are you ready to be upheaved? - The peace which Jesus gives is different to the peace which the world gives. He gives His peace to the Apostles so they can face passions and persecution. God's peace does

not allow us to sleep on in our dreamworld; it does not sustain the logic typical of unconverted people. The Spirit ousts our arrogance and our false logic. Are you willing to be upheaved so the Spirit can act in you? Change or renewal is impossible if you do not allow the Spirit to upheave you. He wants a new creature, a new Church, a new world. I ask you all to say to the Lord: "Send your holy Spirit to remove my convenience; to upheave me."

5. The Holy Spirit and us - The Spirit is not a stranger to us; He is the central point of our soul and our vitality. St. Paul speaks of becoming the living place of God through the Spirit. In the Holy Spirit we are edified and harmonized and in Him we reach the fullness both on an individual and a universal level. In the very instant that God created us we were void of negative human experiences, and we received the Spirit; but at the moment of conception we were struck by the original sin. Each of us, though, has this core within them where the Spirit is, and the more our souls are open to Him, the more they become fortified, as they are defended from within.

Change your human defence with divine defence! He who does this has strength from within, just as a healthy organism is able to react against illness.

6. Thus you need to strip yourself... - Do not let any type of pride remain in you this year. Everything which does not belong to God will be put to the test. Human pride will be unable to reign; you will have to submit. So submit to God with humbleness and love, to adore Him. Be alert inwardly! Human defence, even against evil, in the end always hurts. So slowly remove your defences; for they enclose all your forms of justice, logic and reasoning. It is necessary to open up to God's logic, and to His right. We must decide to strip ourselves totally of our ego, just as Mary did.

If you wish to decide, then you must look at God the way He is; not the way you'd like Him to be. To see God the way He is means to deprive yourself of your own initiatives and let yourself be illuminated by Him, in the manner wished by Him. It means letting Him express Himself in us. It takes courage! On His way to the Father Jesus deprived Himself of all His charismas and prophecies, etc. to remain immersed in nothing else but the Father's love. To do this a soul must be opened to the Holy Spirit.

7. ... and open yourself to the Holy Spirit - Without total aperture of the soul to the Spirit, all we can do is formulate theories. It is, in fact, necessary to get down to the level of the soul and work on it, so that it can memorize. How many messages have we received from God? And where have they ended up? Where is our soul's memory? Here we see the meaning of the word which is scattered, but is stolen by the devil. Original sin, and our own sins, inflict wounds upon the soul, and so, unable to communicate with the Spirit, it is weakened and tends towards evil, to the point of being blind and denying God's existence. Hence, it learns to defend itself.

So what can we do? We need to understand that Satan's action on all levels is aimed at blocking our souls. Look at the world: men no longer have time to look at God; they are immersed in another world. Who can heal us? God can! Our Lady has often said: "Pray, pray, pray!", and I add that you must pray well. That way your prayers become a journey of aperture to the Spirit, Who will heal your soul, and free it from your inner prison.

8. The new Jerusalem? - One last piece of advice: exchange this love which the Lord has stirred up in you with those near you (spouse, family, community). Make this love come alive there among you, and it will be there that the Church will grow.

What does "Church" mean? It means that God's love has descended upon the earth and is alive among men. The renewed Church, the new Jerusalem, is there; and it can't be any other way. This is the way to take for the Church to be renewed. The new Jerusalem is God amongst us. God is found there where His

love runs in a soul and amongst souls, and I tell you that this love generates new children and it regenerates the Church and the world.

Now, follow Jesus Christ! We are all little instruments to help one another find the way called Jesus Christ. Do not put any priest or guide in the place which belongs to Jesus Christ. The worth of a guide or priest depends on how humbly he withdraws himself so as to make room for the Holy Spirit, for the Risen Christ Who is Way, Truth and Life.

(Summary by fra Nicola)

Fr. René Laurentin's testament on Medjugorje

With the Father's latest publication (in French, dated June 1998), famous Mariologist Fr. Laurentin, concludes his volumes of updates on Medjugorje. His series of books is to date the most complete and precise on the subject. Laurentin's first book, "Is Mary appearing in Medjugorje?" announced the apparitions to the world, and each year he published an update.

In a long talk with Msgr. Peric in Mostar (which the Father mentions frequently in his 17th edition) the Bishop asked him not to publish anymore news on Medjugorje, and Laurentin agreed.

Thus the title of this his last book is: "17 years of apparitions in Medjugorje - Hostility abounds, Grace superabounds - Testament"

"I desired this to be not an accusation, but an appeal for today's Church, so that it does not fall again into the trap of preferring authority to life, codes of law to spirituality, exterior to interior; but that, according to Christ's words, we might have life and have it to the full," said Fr. Laurentin in a confidential letter to his friends.

On the cover it says, "With this book I wish only to ascertain the facts, that it may help readers make objective discernment. The book does not contain a pronouncement regarding facts relating to the apparitions, but simply says that the reasons why one should believe are very similar to the reasons which determined the authenticity of La Salette, Lourdes and Fatima, and that the objections are no greater than those which were overcome in these same places recognized by the Church."

If the author considers this request by the Bishop "a providential occasion" (his words) "to be rid of a conflicting and controversial, thus degrading, situation," for us it is a sad loss. With all our heart we thank René Laurentin for the arduous work with which he recorded for history the human goings on of such a lengthy encounter between earth and heaven. We wish for him that he may continue to work for Mary according to Her desires.

(Please contact your local Catholic book store, not us, for news of the English edition.)

12 year old Iqbal leader and martyr for sake of little slaves

This resembles the story of David and Goliath. Only 12 years old, Iqbal Masih, a Christian from Pakistan, fought for his life and became the leader of the oppressed. He was assassinated on Easter day 1995.

Born in a country where 20% of the children are reduced to slavery by employers without scruple, Iqbal began to work at a brick factory when he was only 4, and the following year his parents sold him for \$16 to a rug maker. From that day on His ideal was to free the little slaves, and for this he sacrificed his very life. He earned his freedom by working from 12 to 14 hours per day, and became the leader of a liberation Front for little slaves which he organized without giving himself a moment of respite. Iqbal was extremely bright and serene; his firm faith gave him the certainty that he could win, and his words gave the little slaves reason to hope.

News of Iqbal and his Front reached the western world and he was invited to meetings in Stockholm and Boston. Iqbal proved to be sure of himself and as resolute as any of the great leaders. He was offered a scholarship at an American university which he declined, preferring to remain in his own country and win the fight.

With the scholarship money Iqbal began construction of an institute to shelter the most desperate children. The mafia of the building industry, and the employers who brutalized the little children, soon made themselves known to him, for thanks to his "crusade" dozens of factories in Punjab, which used little children as their labour force, had to close down; and the revolt of the little children forced the authorities, who connived with the factory owners, to intervene. The slave drivers were losing badly, and their threats went unheeded. To avoid total failure, they decided on take drastic measures.

On the 16th April 1995 Iqbal was riding his bicycle; it was Easter, the most important feast of the year, and Mass was about to begin. Suddenly, a car was at his side and from the window someone shot him. Iqbal thus celebrated his Easter; a boy of 12 became a hero of justice and of Christian love.(From Stella Maris, nr. 336)

According to some, Iqbal is among the list of new martyrs to be honoured during the celebration of the year 2000. We will see. In the meantime, he reminds us of the 250 million children all over the world, little victims of brutal interests, whom we sadly hear of every day.

From Fatima to Medjugorje Our Lady's plan to save souls from damnation

"Our Lady is happy because in these 17 years of grace we have had Her as a guide in the journey of holiness. It has never happened that our Blessed Mother should take an entire generation by the hand and educate it in prayer, conversion, holiness and in the concept of an earthly existence as a journey towards eternity, and show us the key points in living a Christian life. We have had an extraordinary teacher in this period of spiritual darkness, when the world has tried to construct itself without God. Indeed, we have had the enormous grace of having Our Lady take us by the hand to help us discover the foundation of faith.

Mary thanks us because there has been a certain amount of correspondence, a re-awakening, and She is happy for all of this. Nonetheless, a journey of holiness does not allow for pauses. Woe, said Jesus, to who-ever puts his hand to the plough and looks back. Holiness is the purpose of human existence; it is the way of happiness where the greatness and beauty of life is manifested. We either take this way of holiness with Christ, or the way of sin and death with the devil which leads to eternal perdition.

Many have taken the way of conversion and Mary is happy for this. The majority, though, have chosen the way of perdition. Here we see how God makes use of a few to save many. Christ died for all, but He asks us to collaborate. Mary was the first to collaborate in the work of Redemption and is the

Co-Redemptrix. We have to be God's collaborators for the eternal salvation of souls. Our Lady's strategy is precisely to arouse souls in the world to be messengers of the Gospel of Peace, salt of the earth, yeast amid the dough to ferment the sense of eternity, souls which radiate light, and "hands joyfully stretched out to distant brothers and sisters."

Mary's project is that we be Her helpers for the salvation of souls. Even eminent people from the Church are unable to see this project in Mary's messages and in the length of Her stay on the earth. Hence, they cannot understand how serious the actual situation is. One of the key messages of Medjugorje is where Mary says that She came to fulfill what She began in Fatima.

In Fatima Our Lady showed hell to the three shepherd children, and they were so impressed that they thought up all types of sacrifices to save sinners. Mary also showed hell to the visionaries in Medjugorje. You see, in this world dominated by sin, many risk eternal damnation (and it's certainly not the case of hell being empty, an idea which some priests also divulged!).

This Godless world leads to this tragic end, and Mary wants the world to be forewarned. Not only is sin spread wide and far, but it is exalted (as though it were good: adultery, abortion, etc.). We live in an era of mass perversion, an "ethical night" (disappearance of morality from the world). Aware of this grave moment, let us help the Immaculate Heart of Mary to win..."

(Reflection by Fr. Livio on Radio Maria)

Mary's priests

Fra Arcangelo from Vicenza, whom Fr. Jozo calls a model "little Franciscan," in love with Our Lady and tireless guide and aid carrier, will celebrate his 60th anniversary in Medjugorje on the eve of the Assumption.

Fr. Angelo Bisi, umpteenth adult vocation which blossomed in Medjugorje, was ordained a priest in Mantova on the 6th June. He celebrated a solemn Mass in Villanova Maiardina (Fr. Angelo's parish) where his vocation matured. May Our Lady make him one of "Her" holy priests!

Priests all over the world received their call from Mary in Medjugorje. Cardinal Schönborn of Vienna said it all when he pointed out that, had he been against Medjugorje he would have to close the Seminary since nearly all the seminarists found their vocation in Medjugorje. He told this to Card. Ratzinger, talking about the importance of the fruits of Medjugorje. (Fr. Jozo during his visit to Austria)

Vicka resumed seeing Our Lady again on the 6th June, after 45 days of "abstinence" which Our Lady asked of her and which Vicka had joyfully accepted.

He walked for the first time! - The young man who began to walk on the 18th March has a name (news of the healing was reported in Echo 139, page 5). We have been asked by his parents not to publish anything till all medical examinations have been concluded.

THE MAIL

Ecumenical aid delivery - "We took aid to Nevesinje, a Serb town in Bosnia, where 2,800 refugee families live. They are very, very poor and have never received aid. We met the Orthodox pope and prayed with him in their church. Thus, our little efforts to mend divisions continue. (Alberto Bonifacio, 19 June 1998)

From Shkodër, Albania - "In Echo we find good advice to continue with faith and patience our life here

in Albania which is so difficult in these times. We pray for your health..." (Gjyljana Gurashi); "I happily distribute copies of the Echo to various towns in North Albania. Echo helped us overcome the terrible moments of 1997." (Sander Prendushi)

From Budapest - Elisabeth, our Hungarian translator, who is ill, was happy to let us know that "the Hungarian readers love Echo and consider it the best Catholic paper of all."

From Athens - Sr. Despina, who takes care of the Greek edition of Echo, wrote to tell us of the many Marian initiatives and wonderful graces which accompany the Echo even amid the Orthodox and Protestant brothers. ".. little lamps which light up the darkness in the world and prepare it for the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart." (25 May 1998)

How many sacrifices! - "No one can imagine how much Mary's work in France costs! If it brings fruits of conversion, it is because She, but also all of us little helpers, offer our trials. We are happy when we see hearts return to our Lord." (French translator, 13 May 1998)

From all over the world come moving testimonies of the good received through reading Echo. Infinite thanks to Mary Our Mother who directs it and makes it grow; especially with regards to the foreign editions. We can't hide the fact that many trials have struck those who dedicate them-selves to the Echo of Mary, both here at home and abroad. To the Mother Of Mercy we entrust our cause; that She may provide what is necessary to overcome them.

Please do pray for this intention.

In particular for the feast of Mary's glorification, we extend to you all Her motherly blessing, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Villanova M. 29.06.98

Don Angelo

* The main language editions of Echo of Mary are available in Medjugorje at the MIR-Shalom shop opposite St. James church and at the Ain Karim shop, in the arcade under the International Hotel.

* Travelling to Medj. - By ROAD: bus from Trieste (adjacent to train station) leaves regularly every evening 6pm, arrives in Medj. 8am. Reservations ring Italy 040-425001. By SEA: Ancona Italy to Split. Departures Ancona: Mon., Wed., Fri. 9pm, Sat. 10pm. Departures Split: Sun., Tues., Thur., Sat.. Reservations fax Italy, Agenzia Mauro: 071-202618; Agenzia Morandi: 071-202296.

I will be forever close to you.