



Message of May 25, 2009

“Dear children! In this time, I call you all to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon every baptized creature, so that the Holy Spirit may renew you all and lead you on the way of witnessing your faith – you and all those who are far from God and His love. I am with you and intercede for you before the Most High. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

Message of June 25, 2009

“Dear children! Rejoice with me, convert in joy and give thanks to God for the gift of my presence among you. Pray that, in your hearts, God may be in the center of your life and with your life witness, little children, so that every creature may feel God’s love. Be my extended hands for every creature, so that it may draw closer to the God of love. I bless you with my motherly blessing. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

The Holy Spirit and Mary’s outstretched hands

The liturgy is the celebration of the Mystery of Christ and of his Easter mystery in particular. (Catechism of the Catholic Church). Taking part in the liturgical celebration is not the same as attending it; we must be *part of it*. We must enter into Christ’s Easter mystery so as to be part of it, drawing the nourishment from Him that allows us to live His Life (John 15, 4-5). A few days after Pentecost, Mary invited us **all to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit onto every baptized creature**. Like Easter, like Christmas, like every Mass etc... Pentecost is not a simple moment of celebration, but an event during which, if we really want to, we can enter the Life and experience communion with Jesus Christ. These are events that cannot be enclosed within the temporal duration of their celebration, but that are extended to our era, giving some meaning to our work, shedding light on the shadows, directing hope. These are events that can and that must radically change your life, everyone’s life, making it more and more conformant with the Life of Jesus Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew all of you and lead you and all those who are far from God and from his love, along the pathway of bearing witness to your faith. This, Mary tells us, is the fruit of the coming of the Holy Spirit. We all need His coming, all of us, those who believe that they are near to him and those who believe they are far from God and from His Love. Without the action of the Holy Spirit we cannot have faith, nor can we bear witness to it; works are not enough, it is not enough to know Mary’s life or all of



“We believe that God’s Most Blessed Mother, the new Eve, the Mother of the Church, continues her maternal duty in Heaven regarding the members of Christ, co-operating with the birth and the development of divine life in the souls of the redeemed”.

Paul VI – The Belief of God’s People

Her messages in order to possess that faith that is capable of changing our life and that of others. We may be able to transmit a series of precepts, but not their soul. Mary visits Elizabeth and already with her greeting she passes the Spirit of God onto her (Luke 1, 40-42). When the Spirit finds the space within us to be able to freely move, we do not need either words or formulae to reach the people we meet.

Mary also visits us today like she once visited her cousin, but are we open, like Elizabeth was? Are we open to allowing ourselves to be penetrated by the Spirit that is in Mary? **Rejoice with me** – She says to us – **convert in joy and give thanks to God for the gift of my presence among you.** True joy, that joy that comes from the depths, that is not a transient feeling, but a state of blessing of the soul, cannot be detached from conversion to God, it can only exist in Him and in communion with Him. The joys of the world, even those that are good and righteous, are less than a shadow before the joy that comes from the inhabitation of His Spirit. Rejoicing with Mary, rejoicing with Her same joy, is already a form of conversion to God’s Love, it is Mary’s *Fiat* that resounds within us and generates Jesus within our hearts. From this experience of joy, which is conversion at the same time, the need to **thank God for the gift of the presence of Mary among us**, it is Her *Magnificat* that becomes ours. **May God be at the centre of our lives** and may

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Message of July 25, 2009

“Dear children! May this time be a time of prayer for you. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

Message of August 25, 2009

“Dear children! Today I call you anew to conversion. Little children, you are not holy enough and you do not radiate holiness to others, therefore pray, pray, pray and work on your personal conversion, so that you may be a sign of God’s love to others. I am with you and am leading you towards eternity, for which every heart must yearn. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

Prayer and conversion to be a sign of God’s Love

The message of the 25th of July recalls that of the 25th of October 1999, both in terms of its brevity and its contents. In the first one She says **let this be a time of prayer for you**, and in the second one, *do not forget, this is a time of grace: and so, pray, pray, pray!* The grace is the help that God gives to enable us to participate in His Life. *Prayer* is elevation of the soul to God, and for Christians it is a personal relationship with the Father, through His Son Jesus and with the strength of the Holy Spirit. Grace and prayer are the lungs of Christian life; they allow us to receive Life and to live on it.

This time: the time of each of our lives, but also the time of the history of humanity, of our era. This era that is so stained with wealth and misery, so open, yet at the same time, closed off from Love, so fertile with saints and martyrs, but also with demons of hate and death. But above all, this is also a *time of grace*, a time of Mary’s presence, a time of waiting for Christ’s return! Let us prepare ourselves according to Mary’s teachings and invitations, with a sense of seriousness and trust, in prayer and in fasting. Let us pray with our hearts and not only with our lips. *Let prayer be for you like the air that you breathe and not a burden* (message of the 25th of July 2007). Prayer must be perceived not as a mere moment of our day, but as its soul, the core of our actions, our plans, our thoughts, our desires, our relations, our work and our rest. Prayer as the incessant, silent, vital breath of the soul. *“Be careful! If you fail to pray, you will damn your soul”* Padre Pio said to me in September of 1965.

Today – Mary says to us in the message of the 25th of August – **I invite you once again to conversion.** Conversion is not a *once off* act, it is an incessant journey that has an effect on our whole lives. Every confession that is done well is an act of conversion, in actual fact, *conversion* is one of the names by which the sacrament of confession may be called. Conversion is the pathway of holiness, the progression of decentralization from ourselves so as to cen-

tre ourselves on God. For us Christians, this is a pathway that has already been traced out; we must live Christ's life, or better, allow the Spirit of God to assimilate our life to Jesus' life. Above all, our duty lies in ardently desiring that this may come about, by abandoning ourselves to the will of the Father, who wants to see his chosen Son in us. It is not easy and in fact, Mary says this to us: **you are not holy enough and you do not irradiate holiness to others.** But if we strip ourselves of all human pride, if we implore forgiveness and **conversion** with a sincere heart, if we know how to recognise our mistakes and forgive those of others, if we incessantly commit to replace our *I* with God, if we **pray, pray, pray**, we will succeed, because we will make God's abundant love bear fruit. The pathway that Mary points out to us for **personal conversion** and to be a **sign of God's Love for others** is not the fruit of human gifts or works and nothing that is really ours can bring us close to that destination, but *what is impossible with men is possible with God* (Luke 18, 27). We found our hope on these Words of Jesus and our hope is well placed because He is our **personal conversion**, He is the **sign of God's love for others**, and in Him we too will be!

N.Q.

The economy in crisis? THE POPE'S ANSWER

Charity and truth, giving of ourselves for free and fraternity. These are the concepts that are set out in the new encyclical signed by Benedict the 16th. We are all a little tired of hearing talk of crisis, financial cracks, and worries about the fate of the world. Certainly those who are already experiencing the precariousness of losing their jobs are the ones who are bearing the brunt of this, along with those having to deal with redundancy and unemployment in general, which creates poverty if not misery in the lives of many. Words, writings, conferences; the famous G8 with so much pomp and ceremony and big smiles. Must we thread our way through this maze of erudite speeches presuming that we can solve everything with human forces only or with diplomacy? Absolutely not. At least not those who claim to be Christians and who are therefore faithful to a God who asks us to serve him "with naked hands" because He wants to look after us. Then what? Should we pretend that there is nothing wrong, should we act like jovial people whose mouths utter only clichés to console themselves and repeat to themselves that life is beautiful in spite of everything? In doing so we would run the risk of being superficially blind, leaving the needy behind in their dramatic existence. "Charity in truth puts man before the surprising experience of the gift – says the Pope – Gratuitousness is present in life in many forms... Human beings are made for gifts". It is in this tone that the Holy Father offers his contribution with a writing that is entitled "Charity in truth". It is a contribution for dealing with the crisis that arises from a financial instability but that is then reflected in all other areas of man's life. "In truth, charity is the main propulsive force for everyone's true development and for the development of the whole of humanity. (...) Only with charity, illuminated by reason and faith, is it possible to attain objectives of development equipped with human and humanising values....we need upright men!".

“CARITAS IN VERITATE” a look inside the encyclical

Pietro Squassabia of Mantova proposes that readers reflect on a brief commentary by **Prof. Luigino Bruni**, an economist who lectures at the Bicocca University in Milan, he is the coordinator of the International Committee for the Economy of Communion of the Focolare Movement.

With Prof. Bruni's permission, engineer Squassabia added a word, by way of specifying his thoughts, which is indicated in square brackets [].

The publication of the Encyclical entitled *Caritas in veritate* is an important event, especially during this moment of "global crisis". In fact, on the one hand it continues the social teaching of the Church and the Popes, and on the other hand it represents an important innovation in its way of dealing with the market, the economy, world justice and the development of the populations. Firstly, continuing on from *Populorum Progressio* by Paul VI, the new encyclical expresses a profound criticism of capitalism.

If, on the one hand, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that *without a market there is no good life*, on the other hand he denotes the fact that with the market *only*, the other principles and founding mechanisms of a shared life become marginalized and withered, such principles and mechanisms cannot be traced back to the contract, such as the giving and receiving of gifts and the concept of reciprocity.

In the first few lines we then find the reading key to the entire encyclical letter: love in truth, *caritas*, which can and must inspire the gift and the contract, family and business, market and politics. We can certainly attain a good life and holiness in a life of contemplation and prayer, but also by working as entrepreneurs and working or committing to politics for our own people.

Gratuitousness is another key word of the encyclical, which should not however be associated with free things or gifts, but rather, it should be seen as a dimension that may accompany all human actions, and that therefore we can and must find in the ordinary dynamics of life, including the economy.

If gratuitousness is, as the Pope affirms, the founding dimension of human life, what consistently derives from this, is that profit cannot be the [only] aim of companies, of any company, not only non-profit companies, because when this happens (as in the recent financial crisis) every part of the economic activity and the activity of companies becomes instrumental: the person, nature, relations and nothing has any intrinsic value any more. From here comes the Pope's reference to the civil economy and the economy of communion, the meaning of which is only grasped in the overall picture of the encyclical.

A more extensive commentary by Prof. Luigino Bruni is available on www.focolare.org

**“People travel to marvel
at mountains, seas, rivers and stars
and they pass alongside themselves
without any sense of wonder”.**

Saint Augustine

May the cosmos become a living host!

Editorial staff

“May your Church offer itself to you as a living and holy sacrifice”. “This question, which is directed to God, is also addressed to us; it is an allusion to two texts from the Letter to the Romans: we ourselves, with all of our being, **must be adoration, sacrifice**, we must give our world back to God and thus transform the world!”.

With these words, the Holy Father, who is currently having his summer rest in Val d'Aosta, dealt with a very important theme for all of us, but in particular for those who are experiencing the priesthood in person. **“The aim of the priesthood is to consecrate the world so that it might become a living host**, so that the world might become liturgy: that liturgy might not be something alongside the reality of the world, but that the world itself might become a living host, that it might become the liturgy. This is the great vision that Teilhard de Chardin also experienced: **in the end we will have a true cosmic liturgy**, where the cosmos will become a living host”.

Among the many invitations that Pope Benedict XVI has sent out to the Christians of this era, some of them have a particularly prophetic tone, firstly because in some sense they resume the intuitions of some, who are perhaps not always known to the masses, but that yesterday, like today, anticipate the dominating thought of the Church, proposing keys to reading and a gaze over the spiritual horizon and that resound like “novelties”.

Regarding this, perhaps some of you may be asking yourselves “Who is Teilhard de Chardin?”. It is worthwhile taking a look at his thoughts.

Who was Teilhard?

Born in France in 1881, Teilhard de Chardin was a noteworthy palaeontologist and a convinced Jesuit, a priest who lived in a period of many changes: the economic, political and social system was transforming more and more quickly and with it, the shared culture and mentality.

A Son of the Church, he suffered and he offered himself for it and he did not hesitate to report what he defined as the *“two great illnesses”* of the Catholicism of his time: the absence of a cosmic conscience (for which an image of God that appeared to be smaller than the infinite extension of the cosmos that was being discovered, was being proposed) and the inability to positively understand progress and therefore the risk of closing off into a resentful spiritualism that scorns everything that is body, sensitivity, matter and love in human life.

“Christ is everything and everything tends towards Christ”

As a palaeontologist, he realised that evolution was an undeniable fact, but in his opinion, this was not in contrast with Christianity, as the transformation of the world comes about in a very precise direction: from what was primitive, backward, chaotic, to an ever more intelligent and developed life...and the arrival point of this process may only be perfect communion in God, unification, the convergence of everything in what he defines as an “omega

point”, when “*Christ will be everything in everyone*” (Col 3,11).

In this sense, incarnation did not only come about “to pay a debt”, but even more, to show us the pathway towards this process of unification and spiritualization that awaits the whole of humanity. The Eucharist is a small fragment of a **Christified cosmos**, a small foretaste of what is to come: the whole cosmos will in fact be “Christified”, we will all be a **living Eucharist** and “*Christ will be everything in everyone*”.

Misunderstood, and then... revived!

He was misunderstood by the ecclesiastic authorities who imposed on two occasions that he leave his teaching post in Paris. The superiors of his order admired him and considered him to be a chosen son, but they didn't want to commit personally to positions that official theologians resisted. The best solution then seemed to be to transfer him first to China, where he lived for twenty years, then to New York, where he died in 1955.

For some time, his writings, that the Vatican had prohibited him from publishing, were circulating silently, in the 60's his school of thought flowered with interest, his work entitled “The man phenomenon” became known firstly in France and then throughout the whole world, but still the official hierarchies pronounced a *monitum* that advised against it being distributed. The significance and importance of the pope's quotation from this theologian's works is then enormous, he was a “*misunderstood prophet*” of these difficult times.

“*In every person, even in non-believers, do not destroy anything, but make it rise up, make it grow*”. *Everything that grows, goes towards Christ*”. Teilhard used to write. At this point we cannot fail to add the words with which Benedict XVI concluded his homily in Aosta: “And let us pray to the Lord that he might help us to be priests in this sense, to help in the transformation of the world, in the adoration of God, beginning with ourselves”.

Francesco Cavagna

BRINGING THE WHOLE OF CREATION BACK TO THE FATHER

From the beginning, God has wanted man to collaborate in his works. He gives man the highest mission, because if He draws things from nothing, man will have to fulfil such things and it is through man that the whole of creation will have to attain its aim. A great Father of the Church says “*Being unable to communicate with a single creature himself, he had to multiply creatures in some way, so that the infinity of his being might be expressed through the undefined wealth of creation*”.

However, **if creation must be raised up to God in the supernatural order**, the process of a divinisation of the cosmos implicates a process of simplification and reunification of all things in God. It is precisely through man that this must come about. It should be no surprise then that man is already the greatest paradox of divine creation. In him the physical and spiritual worlds are united. This union seems to be truly paradoxical and it also makes the human being mysterious.

Don Divo Barsotti

(A free adaptation from: *Pasqua, La trasparenza del Cristo risorto nell'Eucaristia*)

The Priesthood to the forefront

He was a man like many others, simple, even a little ignorant. But he had discovered a *pearl* that gave light to his whole existence with its splendour. It was the beginning of the nineteenth century when **JEAN MARIE VIANNEY**, a young man of modest origins, decided to put Christ in the midst of his life and to remain there, centred on Him. For always. This *positioning* allowed him to reflect on all those who approached the Light obtained during long hours of Eucharistic adoration. The setting within which he lived was that of post-Revolutionary France, which was characterised by practical Atheism and a significant indifference towards religion; it was the time of rationalism at all costs. It was an atmosphere that certainly did not invite people towards faith and a Christian life.

People everywhere began to speak about this good and kind priest, because the people who approached him, especially in the sacrament of confession, were transformed: “He emanated the grace of Christ himself”, they used to say. But he did not consider himself worthy of such a high vocation and he answered those asking him the reason for his *success* saying: “It is not the sinner who returns to God to ask him for forgiveness, it is God himself who runs after the sinner and makes him return...!”. His constant abandonment to the hands of Divine Providence, brimming with trust, managed to touch people's hearts. He attracted souls, even the most reluctant, informing them of his friendship with Christ, with whom he was madly in love.

The patron of parish priests

He is the Patron Saint of all parish priests throughout the world. This year marks the **150th anniversary of his death**. He was extremely humble, shy and nevertheless aware of being an immense gift for his people. He spoke about the priesthood as though he were unable to even conceive the greatness of the *gift* and the *duty* entrusted to a human creature: “Oh, how great the priest is!... If he were to understand himself, he would die... God obeys him: he says two words and Our Lord descends from the heavens to his voice and encloses himself in a little host...”.

The year of the priesthood modelled on him

These are the reasons for which the Pope chose him as the model for this year which is dedicated to the priesthood: “I wanted to draw inspiration from this anniversary to establish the Year of the Priesthood, the theme of which, as you know, is *Faith of Christ, faith of the priest*. The credibility of the testimony of every priest and the effectiveness of his mission depends on his holiness” Benedict XVI explains.

The images of the saint of Ars show a smiling, simple, welcoming face, almost hiding the life of penance that the Saint wanted to experience in order to leave more

space within himself for Christ, “the only priest”. Yet that smile did not hide anything, actually, it revealed his perfect union with the Lord: “All the good works combined are not equal to the sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men, while the Holy Mass is the work of God”, he used to say.

You cannot celebrate Mass as though it were nothing!

He was convinced that the whole fervour of the life of a priest depended on Mass: “The reason for the priest being relaxed is that he is not paying attention to the Mass!

My God, I feel sorry for priests who celebrate mass as though it were something ordinary!”. And he was accustomed to always offering, celebrating, even the sacrifice of his own life: “**A priest really does something good in offering himself to God as a sacrifice every morning!**”.

This personal identification with the Sacrifice of the Cross led him – with a single inner movement – from the altar to the confessional. It was the growing crowd of sinners, who came

from all over France, that kept him in the confessional up to 16 hours a day. It was then said that Ars had become “the great hospital of souls”.

Priests, do you offer yourselves with Jesus?

He explained to a fellow priest: “I will tell you what my recipe is: I give sinners a small penance and I do the rest for them”. This is the core of his teaching, which Benedict XVI wanted to deliver this year to priests: “souls cost the blood of Jesus and the priest cannot dedicate himself to their salvation if he refuses to personally participate in the “high price” of redemption!”, affirmed the Pope during a recent speech to the presbyters. “After all, the aim of the mission of every presbyter, we might say, is “cultural”: **so that all men might offer themselves to God as a living host, holy and pleasing to him** (cfr *Rm* 12,1), which becomes faith in creation itself, in men, praise for the Creator, receiving that charity that they are called to distribute abundantly to each other”.

Being a new creature

“It is urgent to recover a clear and unmistakable judgement on the absolute primate of divine grace” writes the Holy Father in a letter to the presbyters. Saint Thomas Aquinas used to say: *The smallest gift of grace goes beyond the natural good of the whole universe*. The mission of each individual presbyter will therefore also depend on the awareness of the sacramental reality of his “new being”. The renewed enthusiasm of the priest for his mission depends on the certainty of his own identity, not built artificially but gratuitously and divinely given and welcomed.

S.C.



A surplus of love

No man is closed off within himself. Each of us has a relationship with others and depends on others, not only from a material point of view, but also from a spiritual, cultural and moral point of view. We try to simplify this concept, beginning from its negative side.

There are people who do not only destroy themselves, but who also ruin others, leaving forces of destruction behind that push whole generations towards the negative.

But thanks be to God, this is not only valid for the negative aspect. There are people who leave a sort of **surplus of love** behind, of **pain that is suffered and experienced to the utmost**, of happiness, sincerity and truth that also takes others, accompanies them and sustains them. There truly is something like **vicarious replacement in the depths of existence**.

The whole mystery of Christ rests on this.

Now we can say: yes, this is the case. But then the surplus of Christ's love is enough, there is no need for anything else. He alone frees and redeems us, the rest would be a form of presumption, as though we were to add something to the infinity of his love with our finitude.

In fact, the greatness of Christ's love is such that it does not leave us in the condition of those who receive passively, but rather, it involves us fully in his work and in his passion. A famous passage from the letter to the Colossians affirms this: "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body" (Col 1, 24).

Within the spiritual framework, everything belongs to everyone. There is no private property. The asset of another becomes mine and mine becomes his. Everything comes from Christ, but given that we belong to him, what is ours also becomes his and is invested with a saving strength.

Even spiritually no man lives for himself. Worrying about the salvation of his own soul frees him from anxiety and selfishness if it becomes worry for the salvation of others. We must often ask ourselves: What does God want from me so that others might be saved?

(Joseph Ratzinger – from: Il Perdono di Assisi)

"Knowing how to discern which spirits originate from God, with a sense of faith, (the presbyters) must discover both the humble and lofty gifts that are granted to lay people in many forms, they must joyously admit them and encourage them diligently.

Such gifts urge many towards a higher spiritual life, they may be useful not only for lay believers but also for ministers themselves. From the communion between ordained ministers and gifts in fact, a valid impulse for a renewed commitment of the Church to the annunciation and testimony of the Gospel of hope and charity in all corners of the world may arise."

Benedict XVI
from the letter to the Presbyters

A mine of knowledge

Over the years, the pages of Echo have contained many comments about the messages that the Queen of Peace gives us on the 25th of the month, through the Visionary Marija Pavlovic; they are beautiful messages, that make us reflect and question ourselves: do we actually experience them or not? However, they are not the only messages that the Virgin addresses to her children in Medjugorje. In fact, almost everyone knows that on the second of the month, Our Lady gives Mirjana some profound words, rich with content and important teachings.

We of Echo have thought about dedicating more space to these messages, offering a small spiritual commentary so as to attempt to get a clearer grasp of the extent of grace that the Mother wants to inform us of in Medjugorje.

Message of the 2nd of August to Mirjana

"Dear children; I am coming, with my motherly love, to point out the way by which you are to set out, in order that you may be all the more like my Son; and by that, closer to and more pleasing to God. Do not refuse my love. Do not renounce salvation and eternal life for the sake of transience and frivolity of this life. I am among you to lead you and, as a mother, to caution you. Come with me.

A living pathway

There is a road that passes through Mary's heart. A pathway intercepted her existence as a virgin and made her a mother. It is Jesus. He is the Way, and also the Life.

But how is this road? How do we recognise it? We are certain of one thing: it is not easy. It is certainly narrow in some areas, to the extent that it is difficult to get through it. In other areas it is steep and we need to gather up all our energy in order to make it up. And then it is impervious, scattered with obstacles that hinder our journey. But it is blessed, it leads to eternal life, because only through Christ can we get to the Father.

The life of Jesus is the gospel. It is already announced. We must only welcome it in full, without any convenient reductions. Otherwise we risk stopping half way, especially when we get to the point where we encounter a crossroads, actually, a cross....we must also choose to go left or right, attracted by fleeting realities that the vain world continues to propose.

"The spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing; the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some who do not believe", Jesus warns us in his Gospel (John 6, 63). And so Mary invites us to go forward. Like every mother, She wants us at home. Safe, happy. To avoid the risk of us wandering around aimlessly, distracted by the vanities of this life, she comes to guide us. We must just trust her and go with Her.

We must not refuse her. Above all, we must not refuse her love, which is certainly not the honey-coated feeling of an affectionate *mummy* who only wants to spoil us, forcing us to remain children. It is the wisdom of a holy mother who is not afraid of warning us, as long as we are assured of salvation.

What holds us back? It is worth asking ourselves this and then deciding, convinced: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" (John 6,69).

The Message to Mirjana on the 2nd of July 2009:

"Dear children! I am calling you because I need you. I need hearts ready for immeasurable love – hearts that are not burdened by frivolity – hearts that are ready to love as my Son loved – that are ready to sacrifice themselves as my Son sacrificed Himself. I need you. In order to come with me, forgive yourselves, forgive others and adore my Son. Adore Him also for those who have not come to know Him, those who do not love Him. Therefore, I need you; therefore, I call you. Thank you".

That immense love

Like always, Mary immediately touches the essential point, the true reason for many, too many answers that are lacking regarding the extraordinary grace of this time. How many of us, once touched profoundly by the grace of Medjugorje, almost imperceptibly seem to lose our energy, often spinning into unfertile spiritual journeys that lead us far from the living heart of the Queen of Peace. If we have the honesty and the courage to look at ourselves in the depths of our hearts with the "clear eyes" of the Gospel (Matthew 6,22), we will easily discover the reason for this, the only reason that is very simple: we are not ready for that immense love that Mary is asking us for. A decisive love that tends towards a continuous exodus from ourselves, from that "vanity", made of thousands of little facets that closes us off from the joy of the gift in itself for the life of the brother and that separates us from Christ. A love that does not stop before sacrifice, especially before the greatest sacrifice: that of loving those who humiliate you, who wound you, who betray you, with the love of God.

How many times do we risk drowning the freshness of a true "fiat" in an ocean of beautiful spiritual words, behind which there is a substantially "uncircumcised" and rebellious heart? Mary warns us that there is no more time to play with grace, that we cannot grant more space to our ill self, often ably dressed in religious and nobly spiritual clothing. This is the time to radically incarnate the Gospel in the truth of life and in solid relations with the brothers that God allows us to meet. We must have the courage to look at mortal fragility in the face, it paralyses that "immense love" in our hearts that Mary is waiting for, we must grasp on to that prayer of the heart that She tirelessly calls us towards, to continuously find the only founding centre of our being and our action in the mystery of the "boundless love" (message of 25.11.1991) of Christ.

This is the time to be totally determined as regards this daily struggle of the heart. Then everything will become clear, then the fears and the sad contentions among children of the same Immaculate Mother will cease, then everything, within us and outside of us, will be fully renewed in the light and in the free song of the new heavens and the new earth that Mary is announcing in Medjugorje.

Giuseppe Ferraro

ECHO'S “silver wedding anniversary”

Skipping an issue of this magazine seems to have almost caused us to take a more energetic run-up to an important threshold: the 25th anniversary of the foundation of ECHO of MARY.

We celebrate it in this issue of the magazine with a sense of joy and thanksgiving for the gift that the virgin has first given to the readers of the whole world and then to we who serve it with love. But also with trepidation, because we are aware of our duty to responsibly administrate the gift of grace, which has been given to us by the Queen of peace, the true editor of this magazine. We have already said this on other occasions. Obviously, apart from Her, the first thanks should go to Don Angelo Mutti, who generated it and guided it until 2000.

We did not have any summer issue. This was a necessary pause in order to ensure a healthy revision of our work. Including shortcomings and priorities. Successes and failures. Only to then start off again with renewed enthusiasm and a desire to do good, for Echo and for those who read it.

We feel honoured for the duty that Mary entrusted us with, that of transmitting the words that She regularly utters in Medjugorje in a simple and familiar manner. This is an important duty that we share with others throughout the world, who deal with divulging the messages of the Holy Virgin in many different ways. But everyone is original, and unique.

As far as we are concerned, we can only bear witness to the fact that without God's hand of providence it is impossible to go on, from all points of view. In fact, it is an adventure that leads us along unthinkable roads, which are sometimes arduous and treacherous.

Will we make it? Will we be able to continue with this publication which costs a lot and survives solely on offers? Will we be able to reach the people who want Echo if distribution is entrusted merely to the generosity of good people who take on this responsibility?

We have asked ourselves this on several occasions. And we only find the answer when we abandon ourselves to God, trustingly handing Him our worries and above all, the faith of the magazine. Perhaps we need to be a bit more patient, we need to suffer while we wait...but then the doors regularly re-open. Without a doubt Echo is the son of offers.

Mary is with us. She has shown this so many times. This is the first reason for us to be happy. But not the only one. Many friends have appeared on the pages of Echo over the years, giving us the gift of their writing. We would like to thank them.

Many more people from all parts of the world let us know how near they actually are to us with short greetings of encouragement and perseverance even when we feel threatened by difficulties. We would like to thank them.

Many people do not write to us but we know that they are there because their prayers reach us and sustain us, feeding life into Echo

in a real manner. We would also like to thank them.

We humbly return to our journey, certain that without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. We are always listening out so as to always be able to welcome what He has to say to the benefit of our readers' pathway of faith.

Married couples usually celebrate the twenty-fifth year of their marriage with silver. Perhaps in order to celebrate it in all of its splendour. After all, it's the colour of the

moon when it shines out over all the rest in silence, shadowed by the night. The night shines out in this vivid light, a light that makes us look towards the past with a sense of serenity and gratitude and towards the future with so much hope, we want to embrace all those who love us. We invoke Mary's blessing for everyone, a blessing that we hope we will always be able to send out through every word that we manage to write. And to you Echo, we say, Happy Anniversary!

The ECHO team

SIMPLE THOUGHTS by Pietro Squassabia

Those hands

«We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us» (2Cor 5,20).

From these words of the apostle Paul, we can understand that God uses man to fulfil His works; in actual fact, it seems that we can perceive that God “needs” man to fulfil His Work, almost as though He “cannot” act without him. It is almost as though God lent man his hands, his feet, his voice, so that we might fulfil His plan of love in the world. And this is what He expects from us. He expects us to consider others as friends and brothers, and not strangers, people to help, not to run away from, people to love even if they are not very lovable. In short, God expects us to act as brothers to everyone, to sustain everyone, to give ourselves to everyone, like He gave himself, we who offer ourselves completely to Him, like He did for us, by offering us his Son.

Mary always thanks us in her messages. Usually people give thanks for a favour, for some form of attention, for something good that we receive. Obviously Mary thanks us for something of ours that makes her happy, although she knows that mothers also rejoice about little things, with much younger children, as we certainly are. Now we may think that such thanksgiving from our Mother is also that of our Father, because Mary's plan coincides with that of God. Therefore it is God himself who gives us thanks, for something that he is pleased about regarding us. And so God is in the position of “having to receive” something from man, although man is such a tiny creature. Yes, God needs man because this is what his love arranged: that His hands might operate through man's hands, that His feet might walk through man's feet, that His voice might be heard through man's voice. In this way, God's plan of love in the world passes through us, it is implemented through man. Yes, in his love, God is pleased to “depend on man”, not to operate without man.

We are very surprised that God gives thanks to us, through Mary, for things, even very small things that we do out of love for Him. We truly needed such a God, a God who might love such poor creatures as we are, we really needed this. This thought gives us so much joy, but it also makes us think about what God expects from us. We should not therefore disregard Our Mother's invitation, that is, God's invitation, knowing that we are not alone, we have the whole of Heaven with us.

Where to rest

An ancient rabbinical comment says that God rested after having created man, almost as though, without man, he could not rest. This is certainly not a necessity for God, but perhaps a requirement of Love: to find his delight in man. God does not seek out the things we do so much, he is more interested in our heart. Yes, God wants to be with us, to rest with us, as we can gather from the history of his people. He does not expect things from us, he wants us to welcome Him, joyously. This makes us think, also because we sometimes do many things which, although they are nice, they risk closing our hearts more than opening them up to Him. Mary, the Lord's chosen one, is an example for us: in fact, Her only intention was, and is, to make herself completely available to and to welcome her Lord. Only in this way was God able to fulfil “great things” in Her, things that He alone knows how to fulfil. Otherwise, how could a poor girl from Palestine do something so beautiful and so important! How could she have generated the Creator!

And so let us make space for God's work, let us leave some space in our hearts for him. Not a narrow and uncomfortable space, but an ample and welcoming space. We are all given this possibility, because the Son gave it to anyone. Let us invoke our Mother and we will find a powerful source of help. Let us allow her to work in us, and our dwelling place will become splendid.

For this reason, even those who do not have many possibilities because they are infirm, or elderly, or they do not have the means, can do a lot, because they are always given the possibility of making space for the Lord. And so, even those who have very few possibilities are always capable of implementing God's plans, plans that always lead to the salvation of men, of all men, without exception. Actually, it would appear that God seeks out those who appear to have few resources, in order to fulfil marvellous things in them.

Our little magazine also aims to be a tool to make the hearts of many more welcoming. If this were not the case, then the time taken by Echo's collaborators, the time dedicated to Echo by its readers, would often be in vain. But we are under the impression that Echo is a tool in the hands of the Heavens, to be used for making the inner dwelling place of many a little more beautiful, for the glory of God and of many.

Then, with God in our hearts, perhaps many of our worries will disappear, perhaps we can avoid many useless exertions.

Then perhaps we will understand that we can only find true rest in God, who delights in resting in us. □

Reflections of light from Mary's land

by Stefania Consoli

She is there

Rain, lots of rain. And so there's also lots of slippery mud on that red soil that stains the slopes of Podbrdo, the high ground that sits just on the edge of Medjugorje, where the Virgin Mary first appeared before the incredulous eyes of some children some twenty-eight years ago. Those children have now become adults, mothers and fathers.

Once again this year, on the 25th of June, several thousand people made their way along the sharp and craggy stones to reach that place where Mary tirelessly continues to call them "Dear Children...". From all over they world they "answered her call".

What pushes them? Or rather, who draws them there? Yes, because only an extraordinary force can draw such a river of people this far, to a place that has no other human attraction. Actually, in some senses it is even an unpleasant place.

The ecclesiastic institution has not yet officially approved any of this. It is waiting for the fruits before expressing any judgement. And yet the faithful continue to flock there in their masses. You cannot help but ask yourself: **are they not perhaps the fruits of all of this?** Is this not the certainty that in this place on earth there is a great grace, capable of transforming our lives for the better? Is there not perhaps the desire to please a Mother who is so extraordinarily beautiful, attentive, kind and wise that she motivates an obedience that is sometimes even heroic in her messages? She never fails to thank us. As though we were doing her a favour. When in actual fact it is beneficial for us to listen to her and obey her. Actually, it saves us.

Not only young people, not only the healthy climb up and remain perched on the stones, under the pounding rain of this afternoon at the end of June. They are there. They are praying. Some of them are singing. Others simply remain in silence, in deep prayer that allows them to speak to God alone.

How can we pretend that this is nothing? Or worse, how can we attempt to fight the evidence, seeking to prove that it is all an invention, that it is all an illusion?

Mary is in Medjugorje. She is alive. The protagonist of a story that has marked the destiny of not only a village that was tiny and unknown at the time, but also that of those who were literally shaken by the meeting with that reality of grace.

Mary is there. She is in the renewed life of those who found faith in the true God in Medjugorje, as well as in themselves, in their own identity. And healing. For many people, Medjugorje was and still remains a school in which the Mother, the attentive mistress in the Spirit, teaches us to live according to God's way, which is beauty, peace, and holiness.

Mary is there. She will remain there when the apparitions come to an end because her immaculate Heart will pulsate triumphantly in that of her children who were willing to allow themselves to be changed, answering "her call".

The multitude seeking conversion

"After this, I looked and there before me was a *great multitude* that no-one could count,



from every nation, tribe, people and language". *Who are they?* Someone asks the author of the Book of Revelations. "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation, they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple (Rev 7, 9.13).

A *multitude* of people, immense, like that which continuously flows to **Medjugorje to gather at the feet of the "Woman dressed in the Sun"**, she who crushed the head of the ancient Snake for once and for all and who is now carrying out her mission through her *posterity*, as Scripture reminds us (cfr Rev 12,1).

In a certain way, the population that Mary is forming in Medjugorje may be similar to that described by Saint John at the end of the Scriptures. Those who decided to undertake a serious journey of conversion by renouncing Sin and its actions, choosing God and his desires for good, cannot be counted.

In her messages, Our Lady said it many times: prayer, fasting and offering our lives has the power to annul Satan's power, which slips into our society more and more, pushing it to adore a crowd of false Gods and therefore of idols. If we are willing to see it and admit it, humanity is living new forms of veritable paganism. In all areas.

Fighting evil in our lives by continuously opting for the Spirit of God, makes us active collaborators of that bright and powerful Woman, who like she did then, today continues to hunt the enemy out of our lives, this is a commitment that we are proud of but that requires all our faith and responsibility.

Change direction

There is a constant calling in Gospa's messages, that the Mother will never grow tired of saying: "convert!".

And here is the stumbling block. If we consider ourselves *believers* to some extent, we think we have already done so. But if this is the case, then we must take another look at the interpretation of the concept of conversion. If we believe that converting means only realising that God exists and, at the most, confessing this publicly, then we are wrong. This is necessary. Actually, it is an essential basis. But it is only the beginning! According to Mary, conversion is deciding to resolutely change the direction of our lives. It is accepting a change of mentality. It is choosing to look at reality through the eyes

of Jesus. Beginning to think, to act, and to behave like He did.

And once again, here is the stumbling block. It is one thing to discover that God is not only an idea, it is another thing to set aside the selfishness that we often entrust the reins of our life to... Conversion cannot only be the act of a moment. We may call this "falling off a horse" in the words of Saint Paul. We should all get off our high horse: that of the presumption of knowing everything about life and its mystery; we need to get down off the horse of our pride and our vanities; the horse of our arrogance that is born of the instinct to dominate and be overpowering...

The instant that Grace touches us, sometimes unexpectedly and suddenly, it causes our conscience to reawaken and we realise that man is not the centre of the universe, and above all, that he is not enough for himself. On the other hand, conversion is a gradual process, it is slow, progressive and for this reason, it is permanent, to the point that "the old has gone, the new has come" (cfr. 2 Cor 5,17).

It is a definitive change of direction that directs all of our faculties towards God, like our tastes and as a consequence our choices. It is a one-way street, but it ends in the Lord's Kingdom, and we do not want to leave there. Whatever it may cost.

Mary comes to visit us in Medjugorje for this reason; *to make all things new*, according to the style of the Holy Spirit, who made her silent and virginal womb fertile.

A eucharistic woman par excellence, she gave herself in order to give form to the Word. Like the bread on the altar before becoming the body of the Lord. We take Mary with us as though we were going to receive communion: taking on her style, her way of dealing with reality, She transforms us into living hosts.

Sixty thousand at the twentieth Festival

An enormous figure We cannot fail to notice this. Especially if we think that the majority of this number is made up of young people. "I saw one with an enormous multi-coloured plume on his head, maybe English or American" says Angela, "what is someone like him doing in Medjugorje?".

It's the same story every year. The *crowd* grows bigger and bigger at the Youth Festival in August, which has been going on for twenty summers now. A lot of people come. Even those who open their eyes for the first time "to a reality that surpasses me and gives me an insight into how much time I had wasted up to now", comments Carlo. Those who have been walking for some time on the other hand, return to feeling confirmed, encouraged and sustained in their choices of conversion. But above all, they come to meet Mary, who is happy to welcome them into her ever-ready arms.

Once again, there is a *multitude* of people celebrating around the Mother on this occasion. How can we ignore this? It's impossible to do so! But perhaps some people prefer to think that this is normal: simple pilgrims visiting one of the many shrines. "For the first time in twenty years, the visionaries were asked not to be on stage at the Festival with their

testimony”, says Claudia. Is this perhaps accidental? Perhaps not. Perhaps someone wants to set aside the idea that people go there because Our Lady is alive, and can be seen through channels that our logic is unable to manage, often the daughter of subtle calculating interests...Queen of peace, pray for us! □

My name is peace

by Don Nicolino Mori

She introduces herself as the Queen of peace. From the very first moment of the apparitions, back in 1981, the Virgin recalled many values and aspects of the faith that were risking decline; especially **personal conversion and prayer**. But not as an end to themselves, as simple good deeds, but rather, a bigger plan for peace in the world.

Now this peace not only involves the absence of conflicts or the better functioning of international bodies, it involves peace with God, the recovery of his presence within the world, his will to save, what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

With his love, God wants to reign in every person's heart, in families, in nations; among believers and among those who still do not know his love, so that everything might lead back to Him; so that through his Son, there might be only one sheepfold and one shepherd.

This will is manifested and recalled by the Blessed Virgin in Medjugorje and it led to the creation of several initiatives and spiritual fruits. And so some people got together to comply with God's plan, making themselves available to the Queen of peace; wanting to **offer her not only a little time or some attention, but their whole lives**, in union with the great offering of Christ for the salvation of the whole world, humanity on earth, the souls of the dead, all the creatures of the cosmos.

One of the great tragedies of our era is our inability to experience an inner life. We are always extroverted, always outside, always amidst the noise and this prevents us from thinking. Perhaps there are those who are afraid of silence because they want to avoid discovering the identity of their own life and so they deafen themselves with noise, alcohol, drugs, and evasion at all costs. Living in this manner is not only unwise, it also degrades our humanity. A Greek philosopher used to say: every time that I go out and spend time among men, I always end up being less of a man. On the other hand, Carlo Carretto, who had engaged in political militancy and activity within the Church for years, withdrew into the desert and used to say that those who live in the city needed to find their desert: one hour a day, one day a month, one month a year, as an essential minimum to learn to pray and be with the Lord. In peace. □

“I invite you to know how to welcome the new spring that the Lord is stirring up these days within the Church, not least through the Ecclesiastical Movements and the new Communities. The Spirit has many forms in his gifts... He blows wherever he wants. He does so in an unexpected manner, in unexpected places and in ways that you might never before have been able to imagine...”

Pope Benedict XVI

THE FIRST TIME FOR US *The Mountain of silence*

I climbed up Krizevac at a quick pace. Twenty-five minutes isn't a lot right? I was passing out groups of pilgrims who had stopped off in front of the stations of the Cross in prayer, and I walked on. I felt that my appointment was at the summit. *Something* great awaited me. I could perceive it, although I was still unaware of what it was. I am an athletic type, I'm well trained, and climbing isn't a problem for me. The climb up Krizevac is quite demanding, but not even my sudden shortness of breath slowed me down. I had to reach *that* cross that was inviting me to lift myself up. And there, on the mountain, a look over the whole of Medjugorje enlightened me all of a sudden on where I had really ended up.

I was at the appointment. But had that *Something* already come? I realised immediately afterwards because it passed through me. Like a gust of wind that frees up your lungs and lets you breathe, with a sigh of relief. I could see nothing or hear nothing. I could just perceive something different, I felt good without any particular reason, only because I felt a sense of peace being generated in my soul, as it made space for itself in my heart. I felt above my normal everyday self, that fact of matter and human laws. Which are sometimes too tight. There's a new air there. You don't know what it is, but you know it's there!

There were very few of us around the cross that morning during mid-August. It was like everything was suspended, almost surreal in the silence that enveloped me, the creatures and all things. I almost held my breath so as to avoid breaking the spell. But it didn't last long. The groups that I passed out previously were now approaching, I could see them, but above all, I could hear their noisy voices that together caused a din.

I felt a tear in my heart. Harmony had reigned up to then, everything was quiet, even the crickets that you can hear singing in the summer. Perhaps they too were absorbed in our same prayer. But it was now shattered by the superficial nature of men, a noisy and irresponsible sense of excitement. Creation itself protested: a choir of crickets in their thousands began to cry out, in an almost deafening manner. “Be quiet men, this land is holy. We are on the mountain of silence. Here you should only hear one voice, a whisper. That of Mary”.

Fabio Macchioni
Caldarola (MC – Italy)

“My” Medjugorje

Lately I had been experiencing a strong desire to go there. I really had to go on that trip that so many people had spoken to me about. I had also heard about it on television from famous people whom you would never expect to speak publicly about “certain things”. That desire soon changed into a decision:

I'm leaving! In the company of my family. Including my young children.

Everything coincided: holidays, the boat, and the organisation. But why then was I crying in the days leading up to my departure? I did feel happy, but what was that *Something* that was insistently touching my heart, almost disturbing it? *Something* that was managing to rummage in the depths, pulling out the memory of shortcomings, repeated sins and the inability to love like I would have liked to. And then that subtle sense of inadequacy before the stature of the Mother whom I was going to visit...

“Cry, don't hold it back”, a friend said to me, “that's a sign that Mary has already started her work. Not only is she waiting for you, she's here with you and she's packing your bags for the trip: the baggage that you must leave there with your sins, and the empty ones that you need to take away the graces that She has reserved for you. This is a blessed cry, tears that free up the heart and prepare it to be changed”.

Excitement accompanied me. But there was a lot of expectation also, expectations of things that I had imagined, having heard others speak about their experience.

“That's what it will be like for me too”, I said to myself. It wasn't true, because where I expected to “feel something” it seemed empty to me, almost insipid. And therefore disappointing.

But you can't plan grace. It always surprises you. It was just as I didn't expect it that I felt myself being grasped by a true sense of peace, in the depths, where everything calms down and you feel reassured. I felt reconciled with myself, with others, with the Creator. *Something* great had been established within me, and it never left me.

The *Medjugorje* that I was expecting wasn't that with the noisy shop-lined streets. Nor did Apparition Mountain meet my expectations, perhaps it was too crowded when I climbed up there with my family.

It was in the silence of evening Adoration, guided wisely by a young priest, that Grace awaited me. It was in the quietness of the Community that welcomed me. It was in the peaceful faces of these friends who were housing me. In the areas set aside for recollection and prayer. In all of this I met “my” Medjugorje, the one that the Virgin had prepared and that was waiting for me alone. And my yes.

But I did not leave it there. I realised that something had changed when I returned home. Grace followed us here and changed our way of dealing with things: from frenzy to calm, from agitation to peacefulness. It's a miracle.

I did not speak very much about what I had experienced. I didn't want the pearls of the treasure that I had been given to get swallowed up in the wave of my enthusiasm. I kept them for myself, to enjoy them all the more and to allow them to be like a “slow release”, a testimony that is not “shouted”, that risks getting lost in the wind, but an inner experience that leaves a mark. This is the best way of notifying others about it, because it can be seen.

Cinzia Vinchi
Caldarola (MC – Italy)



Medjugorje, a piece of heaven and a piece of the world

During the summer, Davide spent his days sitting at a very special viewing point: a shop situated along the road that leads to Podbrdo. Pilgrims pass him by, they enter, they start talking, they reveal the world that they brought to Medjugorje and what they came to take from here...

How should we define Medjugorje?

A piece of heaven, yes, but that's not all. I would say a piece of heaven and a piece of the world.

The heavens bend down, they become small, visible and comprehensible to man and they come down to meet him. In its blinding rhythm, the world sometimes remembers to lift up its gaze, to lift up its hands.

The heavens are present here without a doubt, the grace of this place is experienced and witnessed by thousands of pilgrims every year. **And the world is also clearly visible** and it can be experienced here.

If we look *in the mirror* at the people passing through the town, we will notice the frenzy that characterises our days and it often doesn't abandon us even here in Medjugorje, in that week of rest that we had so looked forward to in the midst of our tiring urban rhythm. It is difficult to get out of the suffocating mechanism that we have become so accustomed to: full schedules and timetables that lead us to **continue our crazy race through this world, even in this corner of paradise.**

This frenzy may even suit us, it is a sweet prison that we have now grown accustomed to living in but that undoubtedly puts the heavens further out of our reach, less perceptible and more difficult to actually attain. Is this only a habit? Or is it perhaps a little trick that we play on ourselves to void thinking about what we have come to put at the feet of Jesus or Our Lady?

Another trap is the run up to events, a chase after testimonies, meetings, appointments, but with the risk of concentrating too much on these, becoming addicted to them, as though our meeting with God were to essentially come about through an extraordinarily great event. I believe that the personal event that will touch us so as to change us in our depths, depends more on God than on any external factors. He works in our hearts, in silence and in calm, and he knows how to transform us at the simplest, most common, most anonymous yet personal moment, in such a way that our meeting with him does not become a group event, but a unique and unrepeatable touch of his grace.

How easy it is to throw the smoke of our world into this celestial clear air that the Lord gives to us through Mary! This is the same struggle that each of us experiences within ourselves: two spirits that meet each other and engage in a battle, God's spirit and the spirit of the world. Or better: God's heaven, which lives within man's heart by nature, that is invaded by the spirit of the world and by sin that seeks to corrupt it.

I personally experience this, I see it in the people I meet here in Medjugorje, with whom it is possible to exchange a few words and some experiences. They carry faith, hope and often pain within themselves. Here is a mother who

has just accompanied her son to the Comunità Cenacolo and who is seeking the strength from God to accept this separation. There are those who speak of miracles experienced here, those who bear witness to how their lives have changed... All men and women who, perhaps without knowing it, with their faith, their actions and their heroism, are enlightening the heavens of the soul within themselves and distancing themselves from Satan's smoke. In this way, in the communion that embraces and unites all men, it is as though a piece of the world were to be purified of its spirit of deceit and transformed into a piece of heaven.

The world goes by in Medjugorje, we are all part of that world. It goes by in those who run past in a bewildered state, and in those who stop, accepting the gift of peace that the Mother gives to us. In those who have come to breathe in a piece of heaven, only to discover that heaven lies within them, it is present and alive within the soul. In contact with the graces of this place and with a sincere desire for conversion, the soul then brightens up, allowing the sun to reappear. Then the time comes to return home. But let us take home the heavens touched in Medjugorje, so that they might remain with us.

This is the true dream. The Father gives us numerous external gifts by way of confirming the truth of his presence on this earth. But there is only one sign that truly counts: "The glory of God is the living man". You are the sign!

Davide Cavanna

Our readers write...

Sergio Leon from Havana (Cuba):

Dearest brothers, thank you so much for sending us Echo of Mary, which gives us some great information and food for thought. We distribute Echo throughout Cuba, where information is quite scarce and it helps us a lot in our missionary work within the communities in the countryside. We cannot pay you for it with money, but if prayers are worth something, we pray for you every day.

We shared in the pain of the Italians following the earthquake and we prayed for you.

Here in Cuba there are several priests who work hard alongside the Cuban Catholic church and they are very good and extremely kind.

Ester Zampetti from Bergamo (Italy):

"Continue always in your Apostolate, because you are doing much good; the world truly needs to think of the soul. Rest assured, Our Lady will be generous with you and she will reward you like only SHE can. I send you my very best regards".

FROM FIRST PAGE

our lives be the expression of His Presence so that **every creature might feel God's love** and so that we might be **Mary's hands outstretched towards all creatures**. Her hands are outstretched to draw us towards her, not to us push away, to point out a pathway of hope. Hands outstretched like Mary's hands, that give everything without keeping anything, pitiful hands, like those of the Samaritan. Hands outstretched so as not to rob but to give, so as not to refuse but to draw close to itself, so as not to crucify but to take man down from all crosses.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

I am near to you and I will not abandon you,

- first of all because I am Love: if only you knew the extent to which you can be loved!
- and then because I need you very much, more than you think.

Because you feel weak, you are strong with my Strength, powerful with my Power.

Do not count on yourself, count on Me.

Do not count on your own prayers. Count on my prayer, the only one that is worth anything.

Unite yourself to it.

Do not count on your own action, or on your influence. Count on my action and on my influence.

Do not be afraid. Trust in me.

Worry about my worries. When you are weak, poor, during the night, in agony, on the cross... offer my essential, incessant, universal offering.

Unite your prayer with mine. Unite your work with my work, your joy with my joy, your pain, your tears and your suffering with mine.

Unite your death with my death.

Now, for you, many things are a "mystery", but they will be light and the reason for you to give thanks in glory. Actually, it is in this light and shade of faith that people opt for my favour and merits are obtained for which I myself will be the eternal reward.

Gaston Courtois

(From: *Quando il Maestro parla al cuore*)

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donations.**

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

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

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*"Oh, you sent us true light,
that guides all men to salvation,
give us the strength of your Spirit
so that we might prepare
the PATHWAY of justice and peace
before your Son.*

(From the Liturgy of the Hours)

Villanova M., 14 september 2009