



Message of the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2010:

**“Dear children! Today I am with you and bless you all with my motherly blessing of peace, and I urge you to live your life of faith even more, because you are still weak and are not humble. I urge you, little children, to speak less and to work more on your personal conversion so that your witness may be fruitful. And may your life be unceasing prayer. Thank you for having responded to my call.”**

## Life like prayer

Mary blesses us all and urges us to intensify our life of faith because we are still weak and we are not humble. It is not a question of doing something more but of strengthening our life of faith, which finds it hard to bloom in weak plants because they are folded back on themselves and are anaemic due to a lack of humility. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” Jesus says to us (Mt 11, 29). And Mary once again says to us: “Open your hearts and surrender your life to Jesus so that He works through your hearts and strengthens you in faith” (Message of 23.05.1985) and: “When you are far from God, you cannot receive graces because you do not seek them with a firm faith. Day by day, I am praying for you, and I want to draw you ever more near to God, but I cannot if you don’t want it. Therefore, dear children put your life in God’s hands” (25.01.1988).

Yet still today we continue to hear the same exhortations, the same invitations, and perhaps still today we will pretend that we have understood and accept the words revealed but not the Word Incarnate! For me, for each of you, it is much easier to understand than to do, like it is much easier to speak than to live! This is the fulcrum of today’s Message. **I urge you little children, to speak less and to work more on your personal conversion, so that your witness may be fruitful.** “Be strong in God. I desire that through you the whole world may get to know the God of joy. By your life bear witness for God’s joy. Do not be anxious nor worried. God himself will help you and show you the way. I desire that you love all men with my love. Only in that way can love reign over the world” (25.05.1988).

All of this is truly within our reach; not due to human ability but thanks to a divine gift, through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is up to us to accept or refuse; and to accept means living our abandonment to the Father together with Mary and Jesus: “Behold, let it be done onto me according to your word” (Lk 1, 38) and “Behold, I have come, oh



*“The Lord is coming, he will not delay: he will unveil the secrets of the shadows, he will make himself known to all peoples”.*

(Entrance antiphon – 1<sup>st</sup> week of Advent)

God, to do your will” (Jews 10, 7-9). This does not mean taking refuge in indolence but welcoming God’s plan for salvation within ourselves and in our lives; this is not a choice that deprives us of something, but that highlights our dignity as *children of God*, beyond every human possibility.

This is the testimony that bears fruit, the **fruitful testimony** that Mary invites us towards. If our life is inhabited by Jesus, fertilized by His Spirit, it is already a testimony and there is no need for verbal affirmations, persuasive discourse, or many words: we will speak of God with the mouths of children and infants (cfr Psalm 8,3) and that is, only with the smile of the eyes and lips, with the love, peace, joy that every child gives to the world. Is this not an invitation from Jesus to be like them? We must be reborn from above, from the Spirit; not only is this possible, it is necessary for us and for the world! Nothing stops us if not our will. I, you, any of us can strip ourselves of our sin because if *I ever committed the worst of crimes I would retain the same trust forever; because I know that this multitude of offences is just a drop of water in an ardent brazier*, as Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus teaches us. Let nothing hold us back from *running towards the Father* and our life will be no easier than He who stands beside us, but supported by He who lies within us; not immune from pain, fatigue, adversity but consoled by He who holds the Cross. Our life will no longer be an empty succession of days and events, but a unique event in the Event, an **incessant prayer** that is elevated at every breath of ours, both if we keep watch and if we sleep. Peace and joy in Jesus and Mary.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Message of the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2010:

**“Dear children! May this time be a time of prayer for you. My call, little children, desires to be for you a call to decide to follow the way of conversion; therefore, pray and seek the intercession of all the saints. May they be for you an example, an incentive and a joy towards eternal life. Thank you for having responded to my call.”**

## The journey of conversion

The keywords of this message are: **prayer, conversion, intercession of all the saints.** These are fundamental themes for us Catholics, actually, the first two are vitally important not only for Catholics but for all Christians. **Prayer** and **conversion** are recurrent themes in Mary’s Messages so that our faith might not be reduced to a sterile verbal profession, but that it might make us similar to Christ. *Oh Father, accept our offering on this night of light, and through this mysterious exchange of gifts, transform us into Christ your Son, who raised man up alongside you in glory.* This is how we pray over the offerings during the Mass on the night of Christmas, and *our offering* cannot be reduced to gifts that we present on the altar, but these must mean ourselves, our life, our love, our desires, our thoughts, our plans, our affection... Our offering cannot be our person, body, blood and soul and this, to be true, requires a long **journey of conversion** that is certainly the gift of divine grace, but that requires our free decision, towards which Mary invites us today also, and our prayer. Today then, in the imminence of the feast of all Saints, Mary suggests that we **pray and request the intercession of all the saints.** The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us as follows (thesis 2683): “The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today. They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were “put in charge of many things.” Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world”. And so Mary says to us: **May they [the saints] be for you an example, an incentive and a joy towards eternal life.**

Let us pray for our saints therefore, for all saints, that they might *take care of us*, that they might *intercede for us*. Let us pray to them with an open heart, presenting our needs to them, but let us not underestimate their

help, with insignificant requests; let us aim high: let us ask them to communicate to us the desire to live in the presence of the Father in every circumstance of our terrestrial life, in joy and in pain, in sickness and in health. Praying is not delegating but entering into communion and therefore praying to the saints means sharing their life of holiness, allowing ourselves to be permeated by the Love of God that inhabits them. Nothing and nobody can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Rm 8, 38-39). Let us seek out this love, let us desire it with all our hearts, with all our strength, let us fall in love with Love and, not knowing how to pray in a convenient manner, the Spirit himself will intercede for us with groanings that cannot be uttered (cfr Rm 8-26-27). Nothing and nobody, not even our sin, can keep us far from God if we really want to be with Him. "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father, who art in Heaven..." (Mt 6 7-13). Let this be our prayer, let this be the breath of our day, of each of our days.

N.Q.

## Somebody is listening to me!

Prayer is not in the beautiful words that we use or in the beautiful sentiments that we blurt out before God, but rather, in our ability to bring our battles and our combats before his gaze. The only way to win our battles is to remain firm like the "firm" hands of Moses on the mountain... Prayer is therefore an underlying behaviour, a way of reacting to the events of life: every time that someone or something comes to "fight" in our heart, we immediately turn to God... Prayer is not answered when we get what we have asked for, but when we know deep down and believe that someone is listening to us....

(from Messa Quotidiana - Fratel Michael Davide)

## Prayer booklets in two maximum security prisons

The prisoners of the maximum-security sections of Zambia – including detainees on death row – will receive booklets on the rosary thanks to a joint initiative between two charity organisations based in the United Kingdom. "Although they are treated humanely, the majority of detainees spend years in prison with only the clothes that they were wearing at the time of their arrest, without soap, blankets or sheets to cover them during the cold months of the year, often refused by society... Mary, the Mother of God, loves all her children, and in suffering and despair we can stand beside Her in prayer, looking through the tears of this existence towards hope in a new life and resurrection".

A prisoner on death row wrote: "It's the first time I've received a parcel, although I've been in prison for 14 years now. May God reward you abundantly". Another prisoner housed in the maximum-security wing expressed his acknowledgement by defining the work of the charity organisations as "a lamp that cannot be hidden under the table".

(source [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org))

## I want to go to Bethlehem

We find ourselves once again face to face with the Mystery par excellence: The eternal and infinite God becomes small, He becomes a man, He becomes a child... **This is Christmas.** All the rest is an outline, a frame created to highlight the picture that illustrates that night in Bethlehem.

Unfortunately the culture of the transitory has plundered the treasure of this celebration brimming with profound spiritual meanings, to use them to its own advantage; like the overabundance of lights that should tell us that the *Light* is coming into the world and yet they are just a ploy to attract as many buyers as possible to the shop windows full of all sorts of goods... It would be nice if Christians would speak up and give back a true meaning to this celebration, that cannot be manipulated to gratify the spirit of the world! Jesus was born for all of us and offers himself indistinctly, but every man must be willing to walk with humble simplicity to welcome the Truth that is born, without attempting to change it to please himself...

**To venture into the heart of the Mystery** that reawakens wonder every year, we are guided by the **words of Pope Benedict XVI**, words that were uttered in the homily of the Holy Night of 2009. Words that narrate, words that contemplate *the-God-with-us*. Words that show us the pathway that leads to the threshold of the grotto along with the shepherds...

**"I want to go to Bethlehem..."** The Gospel recounts the story of the shepherds with a precise aim. They show us how to respond correctly to that message that is also addressed to us. What then do these first witnesses of the incarnation of God say to us?

**Firstly, the shepherds are said to be vigilant**, and the message was able to reach them precisely because they were alert. We need to wake up, so that the message might reach us. We need to become truly vigilant. What does this mean? The difference between someone who dreams and someone who is awake lies firstly in the fact that he who dreams finds himself in a special world. With his I he is enclosed in this world of dreams which is only his and is not linked to others. Waking up means getting out of that special world of the I and entering into a shared reality, in the truth that, alone, unites us all.

**Conflicts in the world, reciprocal incompatibility derive** from the fact that we are closed within our own interests and our own personal opinions, in our own miniscule private world. Selfishness, that of the group and the individual, keeps us prisoners of our own interests and desires, that are in contrast with the truth and that divide us from each other. Wake up, the Gospel tells us. Come out and enter into the great common truth, in communion with the one God.

**Waking up therefore means developing sensitivity towards God**; towards the silent signals with which He wishes to guide us; through the multiple signs of His presence. There are people who say that "from a religious point of view they do not have a musical ear". The ability to perceive God almost seems like a talent that some people are not given. And in actual fact, our way of thinking and acting, the mentality of today's world, the range of our

experiences are likely to reduce our sensitivity towards God, making us "deprived of a musical ear" for Him. And yet, in a hidden or open manner, the act of waiting for God, the ability to meet him is indeed present in every soul.

**To obtain this vigilance, this waking up to the essential, we want to pray**, for ourselves and for others, for those who seem to be "deprived of this musical ear" and in whom, nevertheless, the desire for God to manifest himself is alive. Origen the great theologian said: if I had the grace to see as Paul saw, I could now (during the Liturgy) contemplate a great host of Angels (cfr in *Lk* 23,9). In fact – in Sacred Liturgy, the Angels of God and the Saints surround us. The Lord himself is present among us. Lord, open the eyes of our hearts, that they might become vigilant and visionary and so that we might be able to bring your proximity to others also!



**The Gospel of Christmas tells us** that after having heard the message of the Angel, the shepherds said to each other: "Let's go to Bethlehem"... they went, without

delay" (*Lk* 2, 15s). "They hurried" the Greek text literally says. The annunciation was so important that they had to go immediately. In fact, what had been said to them was totally out of the ordinary. It changed the world. A Saviour was born... Of course, they were also urged by curiosity, but above all agitation, due to the great thing that had been communicated to them, small and apparently irrelevant men. They hurried – without delay.

**In our ordinary life this is not how things are.** The majority of men do not consider the things of God to be a priority, they do not follow each other immediately. And so we, in the vast majority of cases, are more than willing to postpone them. First of all we do what appears to be urgent in the here and now. In the list of priorities, God is almost always in the last place. This – we think – can always be done. The Gospel says to us: God has the utmost priority. If something in our lives deserves a hurry without delay, that is, then, only the cause of God.

**God is important, absolutely the most important reality of our lives.** The shepherds teach us this priority. From them we wish to learn not to let ourselves be crushed by all the urgent things of daily life. From them we want to learn the inner freedom of putting other occupations in second place – no matter how important they may be – to direct ourselves towards God, to let him enter our lives and our time. The time used for God and, beginning from Him, for our neighbours is never a waste. It is the time in which we truly live, in which we experience the fact that we are human beings.

**But the majority of us modern men live far from Jesus Christ**, from He who was made man, from the God who came among us. We live in philosophies, in affairs and occupations that fill us up completely and from which the walk towards the manger is very far. In many ways God must repeatedly push us and give us a hand, so that we might find the way out of the tangle of our thoughts and commitments

and discover the pathway towards Him. But for everyone there is a way. For everyone the Lord has signs that are suitable for each of us.

**God walked towards us.** We could not reach Him alone. The way is beyond our strength. But God descended. He comes to meet us. He embarked on the longest part of the journey. Now he asks us: Come and see how much I love you. Come and see that I am here.

Let's go there! Let's surpass ourselves! Let's be wayfarers towards God in many ways: being on a journey towards Him within ourselves.

## THE MIRACLE OF A NOVELTY

Half way through the journey of Advent, the knowledgeable liturgy of the Church invites us to take a rest in the company of Mary, a woman characterised by waiting and welcoming and a model of the disciple who prepares for the coming of the Lord. The **solemnity of the Immaculate Conception** is a strong invitation to put the grace of God at the centre of our thoughts. If Mary can welcome the vocation of the Mother of the Messiah, it is certainly not due to merits obtained on the battlefield, but due to God's plan of love.

The angel salutes her as being "full of grace" (Lk 1,28) and not "full of merits". At the centre of this there is God's gratuitousness, for whom "nothing is impossible" (1,37). It is a gratuitousness that surprises us. It is a plan of love that unhinges our canons and our parameters for assessment. God chooses the insignificant Nazareth and not a great and wealthy capital; he chooses the little Mary, and not the daughter of a great leader; he chooses Joseph the carpenter, and not an important businessman. It is a logic that travels throughout the whole of Scripture, from the beginning to the end. God's callings overthrow expectations and do not provide for training. His word launches the chosen ones into history with the strength of his grace.

In us too the gentle power of his mercy is at work. In us too the miracle of newness is possible. We are not condemned to our errors, we are not armoured in our poverty. If we allow it to, the grace of God will launch us onto new and promising pathways. A rest in the company of Mary, the Immaculate one, reminds us that before God we need not be the best, splendid, the top of the class; that at least before him credit cards or educational qualifications or influential friends do not count. Before God all that counts is love, humility, a willingness to allow ourselves to be moulded and remoulded by his hand.

As the Immaculate lady reminds us, before God the docility of the Word counts and it leads us to release our grip, to lose control, to allow ourselves to be transported by the breath of the Spirit. Mary's example is a powerful antibiotic against the terrible virus of the sedentary nature of Christian life. "Do not be afraid" (Lk, 1,30) says the angel to Mary and to each of us. Do not be afraid to offer that so-longed for forgiveness in a gratuitous manner. Do not be afraid to answer indifference with love. Do not be afraid to start over: you are not your mistakes. Do not be afraid to give yourself with your "yes" to those who love you and are waiting for you. Do not be afraid because the Lord is with you and nobody can take you away from his hands (cf. John 10,29).

*Father Roberto Sereni* (From: Messa Quotidiana)

## We, God's gardens

A person dear to me, who was no longer very young, recently left terrestrial life to meet God the Father in a wholly new dimension. The image that I carry in my heart is the tenderness of her gaze during the last months; time had left her two beautiful vivacious eyes. Her life was spent entirely for others, in silence, and this made me think of that smallness that God likes and that makes us the recipients of his blessings. A life that recalls us to great values: a simple Faith placed entirely in God, family, affection, rectitude, the value of a word given, peaceful acceptance of life and its destiny.

During the last days of her life on earth, the people who loved her prepared a beautiful garden around the house that she lived in. This meaningful image confirmed to me that God does the same with us: he loves us gratuitously and every day he prepares the most beautiful things for us that we often fail to see, swept up as we are by whirling commitments and breathless rushes here and there. One Christian is no better than others but he lives with the certainty that God loves him for what he is: what a good Father we have! He leaves us in our freedom so as to love us even more... How important it is to enter into the mystery of God and let ourselves be loved by Him: this causes joy to be born in us and we feel like we have been saved.

It becomes difficult on occasion, to understand suffering when it knocks on the door of our homes. We have all come to know that pain that seems to pierce through the soul... We must ask the Lord to grant us to enter a little, through a reflection on our experiences, into a profound awareness of the mystery of the Passion and Death of Christ, so that our gaze might be elevated and we might have a taste of the joy of his Resurrection.

The Lord raises us up with his love and takes care of our weariness, our suffering, our wounds, which last for a short time. Mary, a woman of humanity and love, helps us to understand this. She points out the pathway to us that might unveil the Lord's love to us because she is our Mother and she loves us as her children.

In my prayer of contemplation I can ask the Lord to help me to live, to put the beauty that has opened up within me into practice, or I can thank him, praise him... This is the precious moment that leads me to return to my life in a renewed manner; life itself may become prayer. I will no longer feel alone, but I know that the Lord is the Living one, because I have experienced him in prayer!

I feel Jesus' gaze on me, a gaze of affection and fondness. He alone enables me to understand that He knows my heart and He welcomes everyone according to their characteristics and originalities and we, filled with his gifts, are able to scent this life that is given to us.

We live in a time where the Grace of God is manifested, it is fulfilled, and we are all called to announce it. A Priest wrote that "*The graciousness of putting oneself at the service of others is like the scent of a flower: it is immediately emanated regardless of whether or not someone can smell it or not*".

The Holy Spirit is our guide and he helps us to inhabit God's spaces here, now, living in the Hope that becomes much more than safe waiting.

*Lidio Piardi*

## The greatest thank you that we can give to God

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September, **Father Andrea Gasparino**, founder of the *Charles de Foucault Contemplative Movement* died at the age of 87 years.

Already during the years of his studies in the seminary, Father Gasparino felt the calling to serve the poorest of the poor. In 1951 he opened the *Città dei ragazzi* in Cuneo, to offer war orphans a home, an education, the warmth of a family. Soon the first volunteers and the first nuns joined him. The community of the consecrated was then formed, it currently consists of about ten priests and 120 brothers and sisters consecrated in 35 fraternities scattered throughout the world.

During the second half of the '60's, the meeting with Carlo Carretto brought him to a deeper knowledge of Charles de Foucault and with his spirituality, he became a model for him. The Eucharist and adoration progressively became the fulcrum of his life and the soul of his apostolate. And so the *prayer schools* were established, meetings in which generations of young people and less young people learnt the love of silence, prayer and adoration from him. **For years we've published the reports** given by Father Gasparino during the prayer school in this magazine and we are grateful to him for having pointed out a simple pathway of faith to us, that might be capable of harmonising action and contemplation.

**With a sense of affection and gratitude we recall Father Gasparino**, with some of the famous phrases that he repeated several times, to help us to live a deeper and more authentic relationship with God:

"I believe that prayer is not everything, but that everything must start from prayer".

"I must change my whole day in love, because the spaces set aside for prayer are too few".

"If we flee the cross we cannot love".

"Prayer and love obtain the impossible".

"Joy is the greatest thank you that we can give to God!"

*Chiara Bernardi*

### If the Holy Spirit meets Mary in a soul

God the Holy Spirit, who does not produce any divine person, became fruitful through Mary whom he espoused. It was with her, in her and of her that he produced his masterpiece, God-made-man, and that he produces every day, until the end of the world, the members of the body of this adorable Head. For this reason, the more he finds Mary, his dear and inseparable spouse in a soul, the more powerful and effective he becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul and that soul in Jesus Christ.

*Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort*  
(A treatise on true devotion to Mary, no. 20).

# Prayer changes during those moments

by *Stefania Consoli*

Thick, swollen clouds crowded the sky like candyfloss. The airplane that was due to bring me home was ready to take flight. "I need to be patient" I thought to myself, "I won't be able to see the view that I usually admire on take-off, and especially we'll be *dancing around* as the aircraft flies through turbulence...but then, once it has reached cruising altitude it will stabilise". And so, well assured in my seat, I waited for the engines to lift us up before relaxing a little.

It was as I had foreseen. We surpassed the barrier of clouds and an intense blue embraced us while the light of the sun burst through the window and warmed me up. Everything was under control...Only for a short time however, as without any apparent reason, the fasten your seatbelt sign was switched on. "Why?", I asked myself, "it's not possible that we've already commenced our descent...".

The answer didn't delay in coming. Violent shakes suddenly started moving the aircraft, which was at the mercy of strong air currents at an altitude of ten thousand metres. It was as though the aircraft had become a toy made of tin, fragile and wobbly. Air pockets, jolting, sudden upsurges...since I was a child I've travelled on this very useful means of transport, finding it practical and quick, but every time I do I think that by nature man was not meant to fly, otherwise God would have given us wings, like birds. A feeling of insecurity therefore is more than comprehensible during cases like this...Now however, amidst crazy jumps, fright begins to take the upper hand: "Lord - I pray - how is it possible to believe in you yet feel afraid? No, I don't want to...I want to put my worry into your hands, to pour it into you and leave it there, because I am certain that all things are in your power!".

I felt a little better. I trusted in God. But then I said to myself: "Am I doing this only to distance the fear that creates tension within me? So it is only a technique, a form of *autogenous training* that keeps my emotions at bay...No, this is not prayer!".

The wind comes to help me. It now shakes the plane like a leaf in autumn, ready to detach itself from the tree and my prayer then changes totally: "Good Lord, I trust in you. I do not know if this is the moment that you have established for me to cross the threshold of life. I deliver myself to your Mercy...", and without even realising it, an objective list of shortcomings and personal limits starts to flow within me like the closing titles of an old film. It was clear, everything that I "confessed" to him I had done! With sincerity but also much peace, I told God this as though I was already in his presence. It was right and honest to do so and in any case, it freed my soul. I felt that I was in harmony with "his" forgiveness which, like a wavelength, continuously vibrates, waiting for us to *connect*, to melt the burden of sin within us.

Something was missing from my prayer however: "My God, if you want me to remain on earth then teach me to live as you wish, to do as you wish...Let me realise what I have not yet seen, let me learn to live on the essential, continuously listening out for your voice, that it might guide me and correct me...Now I

understand that the only thing that really counts is to love, beginning from your heart. All the rest is extra. I cannot manage to do it yet...".

A living prayer, an ardent plea burst forth from my heart. During *those moments* we instinctively start to draw up quick balance sheets or courageous plans because we start to lose control of ourselves. But it is *during those moments* that we understand that nothing is in our power and that everything is in God's hands; for this reason prayer becomes true, vibrant and leaves formulae aside to deposit itself directly in God's spirit.

"The Pilot announces that we are about to start our descent towards the destination



airport, where we will be landing in approximately fifteen minutes..." a voice tells us from the loud speaker. *Routinely*, as though nothing had occurred. Yet a real earthquake came about within me, and now I do not even have the right to forget *those moments*. Perhaps that intersection of currents at a high altitude was waiting for me, to tell me that life is a gift to be valued and that it can be

taken away from us in a second: "If I remain here let me be a better person... I offer myself to you, unconditionally...".

I can no longer delegate this duty to his help. It is my own responsibility to live every instant in fullness and with thanksgiving. As though it were my last. □

## SIMPLE THOUGHTS

by *Pietro Squassabia*

### Trust

There cannot be trust without love, because love is nourished by trust. From the words of the apostle Paul: *love believes all things, hopes all things* (1 Cor 13,7) it would appear that only love generates hope and trust. For this, when we do not love a person, we are led not to have trust in them. This is valid as regards every person, and especially as regards God. And so, the trust that we have in God becomes an index of our love.

So how important it is! Regarding this, Saint Faustina Kowalska refers that Jesus told her that he was more saddened by our lack of trust than by our sins. Psalm 146 reminds us that the Lord loves those who hope in his love. It does not say those who do, but those who hope, those who have faith in Him. Only in this way can we welcome what is offered to us, which is the work of salvation and love.

When we hope in the Lord we are not the ones to operate, but it is He who acts in us, without our limits of ability and time. He also acts when we are tired and incapable, even when we are lacking time, because he will give to us in sleep also. If we behave in this way, our fruit will be good, because it is His work and not ours and we will not perhaps be told: *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me* (Is 1, 13)

The trust that her child has in her is a great source of joy for a mother. But in the same way, she rejoices for the hope that she has in her son, for the trust that she has as regards him, even if he is little and incapable, because she loves him. God rejoices when we place our trust in Him, and he also rejoices in trusting in us, although we are weak and incapable, because he is Love. The devil trusts nobody, because he does not know how to love. God makes plans with us, for our good, and so we must make plans with Him. The devil makes plans without us, and not only for our misfortune.

Trust and worry are incompatible because one is an emanation of God, His gift, the other is the gift of the evil one. Those who experience the first, surely also encounter joy in the trials of life, because God is joy, those who choose the second, encounter sadness, also in prosperity, because the devil is only sadness.

This is why trust is always accompanied by peace, while worry is accompanied by agitation.

May the Queen of Peace truly make us into people who trust God, who believe in the work that She is fulfilling in souls, for the joy of the whole of creation.

### That Little One

A baby in swaddling clothes came among us, welcomed into a manger; he grew up in a family that was not part of the nobility of the time. That baby is Jesus, God. How is it possible then, to have feelings of pride if God came to us so Small? Pride, which loves to be great, is an enemy of God and man. It is like smoke in the wind, it builds nothing, it only demolishes, it has no future. And so it expects us to honour it, revere it, to guard it preciously, to keep it in consideration. It wants everything to be subjected to it, because it is convinced that it is worth more than life, more than creation, more than brothers and sisters, more than peace. It is worth more than everything and everyone: this is the trick that the devil offers us continuously.

Pride is a tyrant and it complains continuously because it says that it is not given its share, which always corresponds to our life and that of our brothers. Yes, pride is the negation of life and it has nothing good. It hates the humble and never gives, but always asks for more. Humility on the other hand gives continuously because it is made of God's love, which is donation: it gives life, true freedom. It makes us beautiful and friends of men and of God. Humility creates communion, pride creates division and ruin: *Pride comes before a fall* (Pr 16,18). Humility is always at our service, pride allows itself to be served. Jesus, the Humble one, put himself at our service: *Yet I am among you as the one who serves* (Luke 22,27).

The humble one is obedient to God and willing to offer his life like Jesus did, *who humbled himself and became obedient even to the point of death* (Phil 2,8). For this reason, humility is not a conquest of ours but a gift to ask for from the Heavens. Mary, the Little one, has always fled pride because she knew its fruits well. Let us ask Mary then for a humble heart, that might offer itself, to be more and more like that Little One and His Mother and ours. □

## Hook on to the Heavens

It fills newspapers and bounces back and forth on TV between debates and endless discussions. News with a tragic tone enters people's homes and thoughts without asking, with arrogance and without filters, causing worry. "The facts" are commented, trying to provoke *sensation* and they end up generating dismay and tension...

But the world is not a television screen and humanity is not the protagonist of an awful show! Man and the whole created universe belong to God, who is good, beautiful, righteous... Why should this not be the case for his children?! Why are we so obstinate as regards living immersed in a sea of pessimism, being battered around by waves of gloomy and alarming worries? Perhaps we should tell ourselves that a man weakened by a sense of insecurity is more manageable. Perhaps we should recognise that within the *global system*, it is convenient for someone to keep us tightly in their fist!

Many people complain of an agonising emptiness that feeds its way more and more into our existence and makes it grey and monotonous. An emptiness that bites the heart and paralyses our ability to love and to become passionate about the events of life. Banalities and clichés invade conversations and discourses appear to be silly and insignificant. For this reason we become fond of dreams, of things that we possess, of the emotions of a moment... The illusion that they might give us life and make us love them. In reality we collect corners of emptiness.

**This is why Mary came to Medjugorje** to tell us that if we want, we can change the fate of the entire planet because everything is not like they would like us to believe: "*Dear children! In this time of grace, when God has permitted me to be with you, little children, I call you anew to conversion. Work on the salvation of the world in a special way while I am with you. God is merciful and gives special graces, therefore, seek them through prayer. I am with you and do not leave you alone....*" (Mess. 25.05.2008) "*Be joyful carriers of peace and love in this peaceless world...*" (Mess. 25.06.2008).

Man is undoubtedly paying a high price for the consequences of his own disobedience, of his distance from God, caused by the sin accumulated by generations. The objective then is to recognise its negative fruits that affect all of us. But looking at things only with dark glasses means continuing to exclude God from our lives: "*God is merciful and gives special graces, therefore, seek them through prayer. I am with you and do not leave you alone....*" Says the Mother in Medjugorje (25th May 2008).

And so there only remains one thing to do: **hook on to the Heavens!** With the heart, with the mind, with the soul and with the spirit, to have our eyes transfigured by grace and to look towards all things "from above"... Everything is reorganized, entering into a very wide framework and it acquires meaning; it subtracts itself from the dominion of public

opinion, which is fluctuating and incoherent, and becomes free to exist for what it is.

Furthermore, being *hooked onto Heaven* means turning our gaze away from ourselves, from the small world of selfishness that holds us back, and opening ourselves up to the vast horizons of grace that brings everything back to Christ: *Dear children; Today I bless you in a special way and I pray for you to return to the right way, to my Son - your Saviour, your Redeemer - to Him who gave you eternal life. Reflect on everything human, on everything that does not permit you to set out after my Son - on transience, imperfection and limitation - and then think of my Son, of His Divine infiniteness. By your surrender and prayer ennoble your body and perfect your soul. Be ready, my children...*" (Message to Mirjana of 2nd April 2010).

**The world is falling back on itself**, it anxiously deals with finding solutions to the needs of *today*, without really considering what awaits it in the eternal future: an existence governed by the Spirit and that therefore requires people transformed by the laws of the Spirit...

What to do? What are the *hooks* that unite us to heaven and lift us up?

It is all written in the Gospel. Christ dictated all things, although in a simple and essential language because the space of our comprehension is small. Saint Paul - one of us - took on the job of acting as an interpreter and of leaving us letters that dictate the most suitable life plan for elevating ourselves in Spirit. It is worth reading them...

If we humbly put what he suggests to us into practice, we will find ourselves up high, *hooked onto Heaven*, in communion with the angels and archangels, with the saints and the souls of the righteous, on a journey towards God. It will not be difficult to remain in their company, to pray and to continue to deal with the affairs of our earth. Peacefully.

*For this reason I bow my knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

(Saint Paul to the Ephesians 3,14-21)

## Overwhelming

Those of us who have had the possibility of visiting Medjugorje during the course of the last year, will have realised that the *town amidst the hills* (this is the meaning of its name in Croatian) is starting to become a little too small, sometimes even *overwhelming!* The buildings that are springing up like mushrooms are undoubtedly more and more imposing and they are on top of one another, in the quest to show themselves off. In this way however, the vital space is becoming visibly reduced... Undoubtedly the logistic need to welcome pilgrims explains this wild growth of buildings that are often very ugly and therefore it is understandable; on the other hand, more checks by the Municipality would at least guarantee the necessary harmony to a site that was established solely for prayer!

But **what literally packed Medjugorje** more than anything was the **continuous flow of pilgrims**. They have never been as numerous as this year! Many of them coming for the first time. It was necessary to climb up to Krizevac during unusual hours to ensure a little peace and recollection; while the groups had to queue up before stopping off in front of the Stations of the Cross!

Sometimes the inability of some to experience the pilgrimage in silence became a source of disturbance for others; like the obstruction of buses that often block the roads of the town. Then again in other circumstances people risked being crowded together and therefore less immersed in the quiet necessary to meet God...

But despite some negative aspects, all of this is also a reason to be joyous, because it means that the call of the Queen of Peace can no longer be kept "under control": the children are running to their Mother!... "*My children! I am happy to see so many of you gathered here together. I want you to meet often together to pray to my son*" (Message of the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1991).

**It is not just a question of numbers.** What made Mary happy more than anything was the desire for good, for truth, for fullness that pushes the *multitudes* to crowd to "today's Nazareth": the house where She lives and where She lets us meet Her...

Among the pilgrims originating from Canada there was also Ms. Yolande Gurette, who brought with her the medical documentation of her physical healing in Medjugorje. After her healing, Ms. Yolande started a mission through which an incalculable multitude of people in Canada and the USA consecrated themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Source: [www.medjugorje.hr](http://www.medjugorje.hr)

**It is therefore worth giving more space in the Echo to testimonies** of those who found the truth they were looking for in Medjugorje; of those who rediscovered faith and hope, and brought them home, with love.

It is a way of celebrating this **thirtieth anniversary of the first apparition**: up to the anniversary, the experiences of those who welcomed the grace of Medjugorje, to transform it into life, will accompany us.

## An embrace that you cannot withdraw from

When I was asked “What is Medjugorje for you?” I didn’t have to make any effort to recall it or seek out any sophisticated words that might describe whatever extraordinary experiences...I answered with a sense of naturalness and the **immediacy** with which this truth became impressed on my heart: in my opinion, Medjugorje is an embrace from God that **you cannot withdraw from**. The most curious and provocative element of this definition of mine is not so much the embrace in itself, but the fact that you cannot withdraw from it...not in Medjugorje.

Everyone experiences it (and undergoes it) in an original, more or less intense manner, with joy or sometimes pain and a sense of bewilderment... It is an embrace that inexorably wraps you up, that is confused with the air and the sky, that you do not know how to understand but that you perceive, above all, it is an embrace that you breathe in, and how can you refuse to breathe?

This is why when I feel at the limit of non meaning, when I feel crushed by an unmanageable spiritual apnoea, I return to Medjugorje, where my Creator always has something to whisper to me, whether I like it or not...

*Katia Calati*

## An opportunity not to be missed!

It’s the end of August. We set out in a mixed group of people of different origins... For some it was a return to Medjugorje, for many others it was their first experience, but for everyone it was an occasion not to be missed, an unmistakable sign to be grasped.

We were rewarded abundantly. The pilgrimage to Medjugorje was in fact an indelible, deeply spiritual moment for all of us participants, it pervaded and articulated every instant of the four days we stayed in that welcoming land, in which there are the visible signs of recent and traumatic human events (the war) with that of a simple and diffused spirituality, that the tangible love of “Gospa” for her children sustains and enlivens.

The deepest meaning of this experience of ours is that we felt like “pilgrims”, it prepared us to open our hearts to Grace and to experience this spiritual itinerary intensely, from which the faith of each of us came out undoubtedly renewed and strengthened. This shared journey took form and awareness gradually as the experiences of prayer, meditation, meetings, and exploration of sacred places became concrete realities, always accompanied by the support of our spiritual guide, brother Orazio. On several occasions we said to ourselves that without his illuminating knowledge, we would not have been able to grasp the intimate exceptionality of this Marian shrine, nor would we have been able to open ourselves up unreservedly to welcome peace and joy into our hearts.

Peace and joy in our hearts: this is the most precious thing that we found and brought with us, it has flooded our eventful daily lives with a new light, which now appears to be lighter and less cumbersome to us. We felt extensively rewarded in our most intimate aspirations and our humanity also benefited from this.

We felt especially “welcomed”. By the places, by the people, by the atmosphere of joyful and shared spirituality, in which even the gift of silence defers us to eloquent meanings that may be welcomed only by freeing ourselves from the din that isolates, distracts and confuses. Silence in customary daily gestures, silence in prayer and recollection, like the enormously suggestive and involving recollection that welcomed us on Podbrdo and Krizevac, were we found ourselves with hundreds of other people who had answered Our Lady’s call, like us.

It was an extremely emotional experience for us to feel in communion in the name of Mary and Jesus that still keeps its living intensity intact now. The places of the eucharistic celebration and sacramental life are unforgettable: the simple parish church, the external altar, the small “cells” for meetings and confessions, as well as the surrounding ones for prayer: the statue of the Risen Jesus, the wooden cross, the cemetery with the tomb of Father Slavko.

Furthermore, our group experienced the privilege of being housed by the Kraljice Mira community, in a setting that is as far as you can possibly imagine from the anonymous atmosphere of a hotel or guesthouse. It is no coincidence that the rich and suggestive symbolism that pervades the architecture of the site, recalls first of all Our Lady’s embrace with her Child and also protects him with her vigilant gaze.

In her womb she also houses the places set aside for the hospitality of pilgrims, from the refectory to the rooms, as well as the small chapel, the meeting room, places that are symbolically positioned in a manner that is such that it forms a huge cross.

*“I hold you all in My arms. I want to be everything for you and for you to be all Mine...”* (Message of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1984).

In this special site, where everything concurs towards recollection and prayer, we experienced the most intense moments of our spiritual “marathon”, as brother Orazio jokingly defines it and, with the accomplice of the spiritual peacefulness of the area, we did not hesitate to welcome – as Our Lady says in her messages – the opportunity given to us as a gift from God to “convert” and to “live in peace and love” (25<sup>th</sup> October 2006).

Prayer, eucharistic celebration, meditation, and the recital of the rosary filled our days, infusing peace and serenity in our hearts. We often like to also re-evolve the joyfulness of the convivial moments and confidential chats in the late evening that concluded the day.

We shared many of these moments with our brothers and sisters from the community and all together we felt an integral part of a greater spiritual family. Everything is still clear and present in our hearts, as strong as the impulse to bear witness to what we experienced in Medjugorje and as deep as the desire to return there.

*Miriam Blasoli*

## My first encounter with love

As I was returning home I was asked a specific question: “What are you taking back home from Medjugorje?”

It is not difficult for me to find the answer: I am taking back friends, brothers and sisters, first of all. Not only because we are children of the one Father, but also because God gave us a Mother who gathered us together in Medjugorje, to keep us with her...

I am referring to the answer to a call: “Yes!”, because within this answer lies all my joy and the desire to change something in my life; something that made me feel alone, although I wasn’t alone, before encountering the strength of Mary’s love. In Medjugorje I met them: my parents and my brothers and sisters...

I am the mother of a son but I do not have a man at my side. I have a great desire to fall in love, but it is not easy to discern the authenticity of our own feelings; perhaps sometimes I only fall in love with the idea of a life with someone. In the past I experienced sensations of oppression even only looking at a couple that loved each other, but I never wanted to give up on the idea of being without a man and with a child. I prayed during those moments: “Mary, Mother, welcome my desire to have a husband to love me... Fill me, use me and let me be a mother to the fullest!”

We arrive in Medjugorje and until the morning of the second day I want to remain alone, in silence. My room becomes a sort of refuge. I try to entertain myself by reading a book on Franciscan spirituality, but I am feeling irritable. I look out the window and see the greenery and the mountains... A dream that I had about seven years ago comes to mind, in it Our Lady appeared to me and I was waiting for her prostrated on the ground like someone who wishes to consecrate herself, and I think to myself: Perhaps I got my vocation wrong, but what can I do now? Did I misinterpret the signs that God sent me? It’s impossible, because I now have a marvellous son...I am a mother and so also a wife!? But I have no man! Mary, help me to understand!”

The days go by and at the end of my pilgrimage, on the journey home, I draw some conclusions about what happened in that place of grace. I understood that prayer helps me powerfully to deal with evil, to go beyond temptation and weakness, to come out on top. I felt certain of this as I was descending from apparition hill, after a strong experience of prayer. Before I left, this thought was just a cliché for me...

The difficulty in climbing up cross Mountain and meditation on the *Via Crucis* – that increased the pain of walking – were not an end to themselves, they led me to the Resurrection, the true resurrection, that of the heart...Once I was at the summit I was able to look out over the immensity of creation and from within me the *Magnificat* burst forth, along with a question: “Lord, what is man that you should care for him?” (Psalm 143).

That peacefulness that I had been seeking for a long time through a lengthy journey, Our Lady gave it to me all at once! Of course, wounds will bleed forever, but with the love of Jesus and Mary they will be less painful...

This is what I brought home with me: the love and joy of having finally seen the Resurrection come. And I am certain of one thing: before I had fallen in love with an idea...now I am in love with life!

*Manuela B.*

## My faith found strength

I came to Medjugorje after an event that no mother would like to experience: the loss of a son. A son who willingly decided to cross the road of life and to go to *the other side*, at just 22 years of age. A great pain, a great emptiness, that was however filled by a faith that I did not previously have and that I did not realise could give me such strength and such serenity. Yes: serenity!

This serenity, the faith and joy to live were certainly not transmitted to me by men... There, in the place where Our Lady decided to convey her messages, I left a part of myself.

I am certain that I want to repeat this experience in the home of the Karljice Mira Community that welcomed me with such humility, offering me a peaceful stay, giving me the possibility to grow in faith and love towards others, and above all, teaching me to value sharing, which is something that I had never paid too much attention to before. I am no longer alone now, in my pain...

*Anna Rita Vissani*

## I was waiting for you

Before leaving for Medjugorje I thought: "Who knows what this pilgrimage will be like, we'll spend the entire time praying!" But then the atmosphere that was gradually created and the silence, gave rise to a state of mind within me that naturally urged me to go and *seek out* prayer... I would never have thought that I would feel that need so strongly and I pray to Our Lady to keep it within me...

As I was climbing up apparition hill, I understood that I wouldn't have been able to get to Her, and so I prayed that she might give me the strength... and as though by magic, my feet started to climb up fast! When I arrived up, She was there and it seemed as though she was saying to me: *I was waiting for you!*

*Elena*

## The Virgin is the model of interior souls

It is as though the behaviour of the Virgin, during the eight months between the Annunciation and Christmas, were a model for interior souls, who live in intimate union with God, beings chosen by God to experience from within, in the depths of the bottomless abyss.

With what peace, with what recollection Mary lent herself and continues to lend herself to all things! How the most banal things were made divine by her, given that, through everything, the Virgin remained the adorer of the gift of God.

This did not prevent her from exteriorising, from doing things in the outside world, when called upon she dedicated herself to love; the Gospel tells us that "Mary diligently travelled through the mountains of Judea to go to her cousin Elizabeth".

The ineffable vision that she contemplated within herself never lessened her external love, her affection for her neighbour, because "contemplation guides us to the praise and eternity of the Lord. Mary had a unity that will never break".

*Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity*

## In any case you come back different

The apparitions in Medjugorje commenced on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1981. A united, tenacious love immediately linked our town in Piedmont to the isolated village of Bosnia Herzegovina. The baker used to go there regularly, at a time when pilgrims simply stayed with local families. Once he retired, he gave the community of Medjugorje his oven, training the local craftsmen on how to use it.

A municipal guard who has been married for 27 years still speaks to me enthusiastically about Medjugorje today. His is an ecumenical marriage: he is Catholic, she is from Valle d'Aosta. Together they embark on a journey of faith, respecting reciprocal diversities and regularly dealing with people of different religious faiths.

"I went to Medjugorje for the first time in 2005, to accompany my sister. It was the answer to a call. At first my faith was superficial, undermined by doubts and fears, fragile. Mary healed my life, transmitting a total trust in God to me. Now, the Lord accompanies me on my daily journey. Faith is a gift: it should be asked for and guarded, kept like a plant so that it cannot dry out. The certainty that God is with us puts all problems back into perspective. In any case you come back different from Medjugorje: husbands who were perhaps atheist blasphemers, who reluctantly accompany their wives while grumbling, become devout enthusiasts.

### "Are Mary's messages addressed to everyone?"

Certainly. Humanity created religions, divisions, fanaticism, intolerance. But God is love: he wants us all to be saved, without any distinctions, he offers us countless occasions during which to save ourselves. The apparitions in Medjugorje are different from the apparitions of the past because they are daily and they occur wherever the visionaries are. Furthermore, the visionaries have remained in the world: they are modern men and women, who have studied, who work, travel, talk, have made families and spread the Word throughout the globe with modern means. This is what makes Medjugorje a worldwide pole: this year, during the Youth Festival, there were 60 thousand young men and women from various Countries.

### "Which message struck you the most?"

Our Lady repeatedly tells us that the world must return to God. By excluding the Creator from our plans, we are condemning society, families and the planet itself to a sad end. We are destroying ourselves. The catastrophes that afflict the world, acts of violence, evident instances of injustice and wars are multiplied because we forget the Lord, we fail to respect nature and the animals that He has entrusted to us, or those similar to us. Mary invites us to pray together, to deal with others, to fast, to convert, to read the Bible, to carry out works of charity. In every home, in every family, we must find space for God.

I would recommend to anyone to experience a trip to Medjugorje. Every year I come back improved, I discover something new and important. There, in prayer, it is as though we were to find ourselves in another dimension: you can pray for three hours without realising the time that is passing...".

*Edi Morini*

## A time of Waiting

by Piero Gottardi

"Behold a clear voice, it resounds in the dark night, all nightmares vanish, Jesus shines forth from above. The Lamb is sent for us, he comes to forgive all sins, all together, in tears, we ask for forgiveness...". During Advent, ancient and tormenting hymns return.



**Advent is the most beautiful time of the liturgical year: a time of waiting, a time of hope.** Those who wait do so because they hope and in hope there is already a thrill of joy. And whom should we wait upon if not He who must come? The readings speak to us about the end of time: "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants!" (Luke 12, 35).

**What will the blessed generation be that welcomes him?** The Bible and Catechism do not provide us with any temporal indication. The Gospel however invites us to examine the signs of the times and of these in truth there are many: "Humanity has forged the weapons of its own destruction, burning colossal resources for this undertaking. It has also lost the memory of its alliance with God. It scorns the law of nature and refuses inalienable moral values. A large portion of the world is denying any spiritual dimension of man. The materially developed part of humanity has embarked on an enraged rush towards technological progress for the sake of itself. At the same time, the inhabitants of poor countries, hundreds of millions of them, must swallow the bitter tears of their misery, rather than being able to eat the bread of fraternal sharing. This world, in the eyes of the Father who is shared by everyone, is in a state of mortal sin". (R. Laurentin)

**In His eyes, one thousand years are like a day: what hasn't occurred in one thousand years can occur in one day.** Very clear signs of the times are above all the various apparitions of the Virgin Mary throughout the world: a large mosaic, the little pieces of which (the most important components being those of Medjugorje) form a unique plan for salvation, that is becoming clearer and clearer as the other lights are added. Laurentin has gathered together 2400 of them and he admits that they are only a small portion; false apparitions are limited to very few cases.

"I have come to call the world to conversion for the last time. Afterwards, I will not appear any more on this earth" (2.5.82). "With the events that are being prepared and that are near, Satan will be stripped of the power that he still holds...pray so that the kingdom of love might reign throughout the world...for non-believers it will be too late to convert...I will pray to my Son not to punish the world; but I plead with you, be converted. You cannot imagine what is going to happen nor what the Eternal Father will send to earth. That is why you must be converted! Renounce everything. Do penance." (24.6.83) These are serious, imploring and dramatic words. (R. Laurentin).

**"The ill who are present will be healed in**

*the presence of the great Sign!* Ivo Juričić is waiting for his amputated leg to grow back, just as the Virgin told him it would, through the visionaries. Ivanka who spends a whole hour with Our Lady! *"She stayed with me for an hour. I never saw her looking so beautiful. She was so tender and beautiful..."*. Then she lets her terrestrial mother come to her and kiss and hug her, and lastly Ivanka can also kiss the Virgin! And the angels look on!

Mirjana receives a sheet of material that does not exist on earth, on which there are written the secrets that will trigger the final sequence, these are invisible for now... Many priests and brothers are startled, they are minimising, censoring, trying to pour new wine into their old wineskins. But Medjugorje is the complete package, either you take it all or you can't understand anything.

*Pray for peace so that as soon as possible a time of peace, which my heart waits impatiently for, may reign...(25.6.95) I desire to renew prayer with you and to call you to fast, which I desire to offer to my Son Jesus for the coming of a new time – a time of spring".* [25.10.00]

**How beautiful Mary is!** She comes every day, young, beautiful, pure, regal, charming, full of love. Especially all-powerful (through Grace), by way of a guarantee of her magnificent promises. Nostalgia, desire, hope, hymn, pain, exile, a valley of tears under a sky that is too blue, an infinite wait... "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov 13,12). □

## Let us follow the angel step by step

Let us follow the angel step by step and let us see where he goes, not to Rome, the triumphant one, nor to Athens, the wise one, nor to Babylonia the proud one, nor to Jerusalem, the holy one. He goes to a corner of Galilee, to an unknown area, to Nazareth, where Nathaniel will one day say: "Can something good come from Nazareth?"

But in Nazareth there is a little house that encloses the treasure of the heavens and the earth and the secret love of the eternal father for the world. In this little place, there is a Virgin who is greater than heaven and earth together, a Virgin chosen by God to understand the incomprehensible. There is a Virgin there who is greater and brighter than Rome, Athens, men and even angels.

There is a Virgin by the name of Mary and, according to her name; she is an abyss of graces, an ocean of greatness and a world of marvels. This is the Virgin that God watches over and She too watches over God and with Him she is occupied and she rises up. It is to this Virgin that God sends his angel.

Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle. (1575-1629)

(From [www.mariedenazareth.com](http://www.mariedenazareth.com))

*"May the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his power, never cease to seek his face".*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS  
TO ALL OUR READERS  
AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR!**

## Our readers write...

**Brother Michel Malterre from Cuzco (Peru):** "It is a great joy to once again receive the magazine that I hadn't received for a long time. What a joy it is to be able to meditate on the words of our Mother of Heaven every month. I am a missionary of strict contemplative life, I live in seclusion in a small community called Our Lady of Silence, in the Peruvian Andes. Thank you for your faith..."

**Mary di Bona from Smithfield (Australia):** "Thank you for your efforts in sending us the Echo of Mary. By way of thanks, I hope that my small offer will help you somewhat in moving forward..."

**Ken Harper from Ashfield (Australia):** "I was glad to receive again the Echo of Mary paper as your publication is indeed food for the soul which we desperately need today to keep our faith and trust in the Lord strong. So thank you for your valued paper. I'm praying too that you will overcome our present difficulties in sending us the publication as I believe that the Echo is a gift from Mary herself to all of her children. To help out I'm enclosing my cheque... Thank you".

**C. Ballegen from Brussels (Belgium):** "For many years now I am a faithful reader of the Echo. Indeed it gives many hope guidelines and also an "invisible" chain of Christians linked together. I have understood with your last edition, that you meet financial difficulties, and for this reason I am sending you a small contribution".

**Lucile Broglin from Belfort (France):** "I would ask you to kindly accept my offer by way of a response to your needs. I thank God, who continues his work through Mary, for guiding our generation on the pathway of true life. May your whole team be blessed for the precious work that they carry out faithfully, despite obstacles. This magazine is the sign of the *essential* in simplicity, the only thing that can satisfy our world. I salute you fraternally in the joy of being able to receive the Echo once again and of being in union of prayer with my parish community, with the great family of Medjugorje, with the whole Church and Pope Benedict XVI, for peace in hearts".

**Denise Bourzeix from St. Augustin (France):** "The Echo of Mary is a small marvel for our faith. I have been distributing it for years to my friends and I would ask you to do whatever possible to continue. We currently do not have great things from where to draw once again from the Source..."

**M. P. Arokiaraj from Tamil Nadu (India):** "I am a reader of the Echo of Mary, I thank you very much for the free distribution of the Echo of Mary that is so useful for us: it makes me happy! I've been distributing 10 copies of it to my friends and neighbours for the past three years. Please accept my sincere love and prayers to make you succeed in helping the souls who are thirsting for God".

**A. Gouttenoire from EU (France):** "Thank you for sending me the Echo, several copies of which I distribute to the great benefit of everyone. Thank you also for the translation work – all of this underground work will be brought to light one day – the Virgin Mary truly is tireless!"

**G. H. Vandenhede from Amboise (France):** "Thank you for the Echo of Mary, which is rich with spiritual nourishment in this unsettled and unfaithful world. Mary is very powerful before her Son. May She hear our faithful prayers..."

**M. C. Rembauville da St. Marie Kerque (France):** "A lady in our prayer group was moved by your appeal and would like to contribute with an offer. She greatly appreciates your magazine and encourages you to proceed... Thank you once again for the help and spiritual comfort that you offer us. I thank the Virgin Mary because she continues to visit us every day. May She bless you so that you might faithfully transmit her message to us".

**Juan Carlos Blandòn Montoya from Colombia:** "I have been wanting to write to you for a long time and now I have the opportunity of saying hello to you and sending you my embrace. I've known the Echo for many years. I get it from a person in my city, but I do not always succeed in doing so because he lives on the other side of the city...I would ask you therefore to send it directly to my home. I know that it is possible to download it from internet but I do not have a computer and I really like the magazine on paper because I can collect it. I would also like to receive the back issues so as to form a library of the Queen of Peace... The periodical is excellent, I like it for its spiritual, contemplative content. I salute my brothers and sisters who are responsible for the translation in Spanish. Thank you! You can count on a friend here in Colombia..."

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

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

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

**Villanova M., 1<sup>st</sup> november 2010**

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