

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Message of March 25, 2009

“Dear children! In this time of spring, when everything is awakening from the winter sleep, you also awaken your souls with prayer so that they may be ready to receive the light of the risen Jesus. Little children, may He draw you closer to His Heart so that you may become open to eternal life. I pray for you and intercede before the Most High for your sincere conversion. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

Awaken your souls!

Once again today, as she has often done in the past, Mary makes an allusion to the beginning of spring. The arrival of spring always brings something unexpected with it, almost a new hope, a new life. The awakening of nature also marks the reawakening of our body, and we should not be surprised because we too are part of nature, and **in this time of spring everything is reawakening from the winter sleep.** Everything is blooming, everything is recommencing.

In her messages, Mary often says to us “in this time of grace”, today she says “**in this time of spring**”; but the two expressions are the same, because Mary does not stop at the physical aspect of spring reawakening, which is also a fruit of divine grace in itself, she immediately enters into the heart of the true reawakening, the reawakening of the soul. **You also awaken your souls.** This is true reawakening for humans; without this reawakening all physical wellbeing is transitory, every “bud” is destined to perish before it ever flowers, every expectation will be revoked, all hope disappointed. **You also awaken your souls with prayer.** This invitation is immediately followed by the suggestion: **prayer** as a means, a tool, for reawakening the soul. We cannot do it alone. We cannot awaken the soul with formulae or exercises or any other remedy of science or technology or philosophy; of course, there are behaviours and conditions that favour prayer and these should be sought out and they may create a suitable climate for it but cannot generate it.

Prayer is a gift from God, which is assured to whoever really wants it. Prayer is humbly listening to Him, turning to Him, to be together with Him, in communion with Him. Prayer is a loving meeting between the creature and his Creator and as such it should be experienced, whatever the form that expresses it. Prayer is abandonment to His action of grace, humble but firm trust in Love. **Awaken your souls with prayer so that they may be ready to receive the light of the risen Jesus.** And so, prayer must prepare the soul to welcome the light of the Risen Jesus. And it is in this *light that we*



“My heart was cloven,
and its flower appeared.
And Grace sprang up in it
And it brought forth fruit to the Lord”.

(Odes of Solomon XI)

see the light (cfr Psalm 36 (35) 10) and it is *true light, the light that illuminates every man* (John 1, 9). That light that allows us not only to perceive but also to see, not only to note but to understand. That light that is revelation, knowledge, the guide of Life, like the star that guided the Wise Men. That light that *shines over those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death, and directs our steps over the pathway of peace* (cfr Luke 1, 79). That light that allows us to see beyond death, to await Life beyond life, to recognise the All Powerful on the Cross. That light that is the Epiphany of Him always and everywhere. That light that is the *sentinel* awaits to announce the end of the night (cfr Is 21, 11). And we know that the night is over, that the new day has already come about in the risen Christ. **It is Him – Mary says to us – who draws us close to His Heart so that we might become open to eternal life.**

Thank you, Mother for these words of hope, thank you for Your **intercession before the Most High**, which aims at imploring **our sincere conversion**. Thanks to the testimony of so many great Saints, we know that *none of those who turn to your aid are left disappointed* and in this certainty we turn ourselves over completely to You. *We put our whole selves into your hands, oh Mary: take us as a gift to the Father and the fruit of our Love for our brothers. Hail Mary! Hail Mary!*

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Message of April 25, 2009

“Dear children! Today I call you all to pray for peace and to witness it in your families so that peace may become the highest treasure on this peaceless earth. I am your Queen of Peace and your mother. I desire to lead you on the way of peace, which comes only from God. Therefore, pray, pray, pray. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

All pray for peace!

We usually call *peace* the absence of war and by war we mostly mean every armed conflict between nations, but these are approximate definitions that stop at the consequences without looking into the primary cause, the origin, which resides in our relationship with God. Yet every Christian should know that *peace* means *communion with God in Christ Jesus*, a gift from the Holy Spirit and our free acceptance. Our Peace is Christ Jesus (Eph 2,14a) and in Him we can find it and in Him we must seek it, and without Him we will only have separation and war. Only the full acceptance of Jesus into our soul, into our life, will generate peace in us, in those whom we meet, in what we do, in what we touch.

Mary says to us: **today I call you all to pray for peace and to witness it in your families, so that peace may become the highest treasure on this peaceless earth.** This is a pressing, urgent, unpostponable invitation: **we must all pray for peace.** We must all implore Peace from God, His Peace: that it might descend onto each of us in His fullness, until such time as allowing us to live, to have Jesus Christ dwell in us, because if He does not live in us, we may perhaps speak of Him but never be His authentic witnesses. We may speak of peace but never be a living expression of it, we may be **witnesses of peace in our families** yet this earth will still remain **peaceless**, and the **highest treasure** will be missing from it.

Only the life of Jesus within us leads to communion with the Father and therefore to true peace (John 14, 23-27). *As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”* (Luke 19, 41-44). And Mary does not give in; she still **wants to guide us on the pathway of peace that comes from God alone.** If peace is communion with God in Christ Jesus, the pathway of peace is that which leads to this communion, to the point of being able to say with Paul: *I no longer live, Christ*

lives in me (Gal 2, 20a) and Mary, **Queen of Peace and our Mother** will obtain this for us if we allow ourselves to be guided by Her. **For this reason, pray, pray, pray;** prayer is our positive answer to His desire to guide us along the pathway of peace, and if we are perseverant, we will meet God in our hearts and our whole lives, our lives and the lives of those near to us will change, a new life will come about.

On the 25th of March of the year 2008, Mary warned us as follows: "You are still far from the meeting with God in your hearts and so you must spend as much time as possible in prayer and in adoration of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, so that He might change you and put a living faith in your hearts, along with the desire for eternal life". Spending *as much time as possible in prayer* means **praying, praying, praying;** praying always, without ever growing tired (Luke 18,1), praying unceasingly (1Ts 5,17) as unceasingly as we breathe, as unceasingly as our heart beats.

Let us learn to *breathe* in God and we will never grow tired and we will no longer be able to detach ourselves from Him, and our heart will beat with the beats of the Heart of Jesus and we will live in Him, and there will be Peace. N.Q.

JERUSALEM

access to the Sacred Sepulchre is prohibited for Christians

On the eve of the Orthodox Easter, Israel prohibited the Christians of Jerusalem from freely accessing the church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Old City.

On the day prior to that on which the orthodox faithful celebrate Easter, the so-called miracle of the descent of the Holy Fire comes about in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, this has been certified in documents since 1106. The Fire is then brought to many countries, where it is received with all honours. For the fifth year, the Israeli armed forces have established *checkpoints* in the area surrounding the church, preventing local Christians from praying and from following their own traditions.

"It is obvious that local Palestinians, and above all, Christian Palestinians, are targeted", affirmed the Lay Committee in the Holy Land/Eastern Jerusalem in a press release sent to ZENIT.

For the Pesach celebration on the other hand, which is the Jewish Easter, Israel guaranteed full access for the Jewish faithful who wanted to go into the Holy City, this was not the case for the Christian Palestinians who went to Jerusalem. "Jerusalem should never be left to a single side with the power to govern it", explains the text. "The children and young people were humiliated and they were prevented from celebrating this holy day".

"Today the price is paid dearly by the Christians of Jerusalem, who are forced into leaving their own homes and the Holy Sites. These violations by the State of Israel should cease – declares the Committee. The steps taken against Christian Palestinians are illegal. We would ask consulates, embassies, Churches and Christian organisations as well as human rights organisations to intervene without delay, so that religious freedom and freedom of faith in Jerusalem might be guaranteed for all religions". (source: Zenit)

THE "LIVING STONES" of Christians in the Holy Land

After so much media interest regarding the situation in the Holy Land, after many voices that are being heard day after day about the military and political operations in the Holy Land, I felt the desire to personally touch that Land that gave life to the first Christians who then propagated faith in Jesus Christ from there.

The journey commenced from Peter's home, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee where the first followers of Jesus met to take communion and nourish themselves on God's word. From there, running through Jesus' life between Palestine and Israel, it was not easy to imagine how the cities, the towns, the houses must have been...because things have now been transformed by centuries of history. Actually, you run the risk of feeling disorientated and a little bit disappointed before many sites such as the Holy Sepulchre, the Grotto of the Nativity and many others.

Nevertheless, two thousand years later, the only stones that remain standing are the "living stones" of the Christians of the Holy Land. It is from them that I drew all the topicality of the Christian message which was proclaimed in past times, in fact, not from the places was it possible for me to draw from faith, but rather, from those who incarnated it and who experience it on a daily basis.

I experienced their extraordinary hospitality, the evangelical logic of non-violence that the Christians exercise every day in the over six hundred checkpoints that fragment their personal and family existences.

Although from Jesus' era, the vocation of Christians was that of the "little flock", the tragedy of their growing emigration due to the consequences of military occupancy and financial suffocation, has led Christians to make up less than 2% of the entire population.

For Palestinians in particular, it is a life that is strangled by a system of permits and military restrictions, expropriated like their native land, walled alive by that illegal and immoral wall of apartheid which was built over a span of more than 700 km, not on the confines of the Green Line of 1967, but mostly within Palestinian territories, in order to steal land, water sources and resources.

It is difficult for priests to be granted visas by the Israeli military authorities. Treated according to the same standards as terrorists, they cannot leave their parishes to go to the patriarchy in Jerusalem or to pray at the holy sites and on occasion for years they are not allowed to visit their parents (sometimes not even on the day of their funeral), on pain of the risk of them being denied re-entry into the site of their ministry.

Christians are impatiently awaiting the visit of the "Saidna" (the Holy Father) during early May, so that he might be able to personally touch the prostration, humiliation and oppression that Christians (mostly concentrated within Palestinian territory) have been experiencing for decades, especially in the occupied territories. Many Christians will not be granted a permit to go and meet the Holy Father and they will not even be granted a permit to go to pray in Bethlehem or Jerusalem.

The faith of our Christian brothers is harshly tested by indescribable sufferings, worn out by the desperation of a life without dignity and without any horizons of peace.

Every Friday, from the 1st of March 2004, there are nuns, priests and lay people who pray the rosary under the wall that divides Bethlehem from Jerusalem, invoking the gift of peace. Let us join in this prayer with Mary Queen of Peace. Alessandro Macinai

The new Peter in the land of Jesus

"Go to Jesus through Mary". It is during the month of May, the month dedicated to the Most Blessed Virgin, that the Pope is a guest in Palestine...

Three Eucharistic celebrations will mark the most important moments of his pilgrimage: in Jerusalem, in the valley of Josaphat, in Bethlehem and then in Nazareth, at Precipice Mountain. The objective of his journey is to pray for peace and unity, for the Holy Land and for the whole world. Intense prayer will therefore take place at the Supper Room and at the Holy Sepulchre, followed by official meetings with the political and religious authorities. Red.

THE WORDS OF POPE BENEDICT

Without sacrifice there is no life

"Sacrifice and renunciation are part of an upright life. Those who promise you a life without this new gift of yourself, are deceiving you. There is no such thing as a successful life without sacrifice. If I take a retrospective look at my personal life, I must say that the moments in which I said "yes" to some form of renunciation were great and important moments of my life...

We too can complain before the Lord, like Job, and present him with all the questions that emerge within us, when faced with the injustice of the world and the difficulty of our self. Before Him we must not take refuge in pious phrases, in a fictitious world. Praying always also means struggling with God, and like Jacob, we can say to him: "I will not leave you, if you have not blessed me!"

(B. XVI blessing the Cross of the GMG, Sunday, 5th April 2009)

God makes us different

"Yes, my dear friends! God makes the difference... What's more! God makes us different, he makes us new. Such is the promise that He himself made to us: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 2, 5). And it is true! The apostle Paul says this to us: "If a person is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are gone, new ones have been born. But all of this comes from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cr 5, 17-18).

Having risen up to Heaven and having entered into eternity, Jesus Christ became the Lord of all times. And so, he may become our companion in the present, carrying the book of our days in his hand: in it he firmly sustains the past, with the sources and foundations of our being; in it he jealously houses the future, letting us catch a glimpse of the most beautiful dawn of all our lives that irradiates from him, that is, resurrection in God. The future of the new humanity is God".

(Angola, meeting with the young people in the dos Coqueiros stadium, 21 March 2009)

“Women, the living God is counting on you!”

“God entrusted the sources of life to women: Live and bet on life, because the living God has bet on you!” the Holy Father exclaims fervently as he addresses the women of Africa. In one of his recent trips to Uganda and Angola, Benedict XVI literally immersed himself in that portion of humanity that is so vibrant and alive, that is even capable of transforming situations of misery into occasions for joy and celebration.

We never grow tired of speaking to women and about women, because their value is great. Nevertheless, their suffering is also great. It is sometimes boundless, like that of babies, little girls, women who live in countries with strong male chauvinist cultures, countries ranging from Africa, to China, passing through Iran and Afghanistan, but to name a few. Yet abuse, violence, injustice, exploitation, be it hidden or manifest, is unfortunately a shared

inheritance for millions of women around the world. Women suffer and pay for their “feminine genius”.

“I would urge everyone to become aware of the unfavourable conditions that so many women have been and continue to be subjected to, examining the measure in which the behaviour of men, and on occasion their lack of sensitivity or responsibility may cause. God has many plans!”, continues the Pope in his speech.

In God, being a woman was not planned in a penalising manner, quite the opposite. In Scripture it is said that the Creator’s work would never have been fulfilled if man had been alone. How could he have been in the image and likeness of God who is one and triune, of God who is communion? For this reason, the Lord created woman and he equipped her in a special way, introducing the order of love in her, which was not represented sufficiently in creation”.

“We need to recognise, affirm and defend the equal dignity of men and women: they

are both people! Both are called to live in profound communion, in a mutual recognition and gift of themselves, working together for the common good and with the complementary characteristics of what is male and what is female.

Who does not feel today, the need to give more space to the “reasons of the heart”? In a world like this one, which is dominated by technology, people feel the need for this complementarity of woman, so that the human being might live there without becoming completely dehumanised.

“They have run out of wine” – says Mary to Jesus. “This is how we come to know her, from that wedding feast of Cana: as the gentle Woman, full of maternal concern and courage, the woman who becomes aware of the needs of others and, wanting to find a remedy, brings them before the Lord. Before Her, men and women alike can all recover that serenity and intimate trust that makes us feel blessed in God and tireless in the struggle for life”, concludes the Holy Father. *Editorial staff*

Catherine, released from her bandages, like Lazarus...

Catherine Ajok was in the second year of middle school when she was kidnapped by the rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army, from her school in the dioceses of Lira. In all, 139 girls were forced to follow their kidnappers into the woods. Risking her life, the vice-principal of the school, Sister Rachele, set out after them, she reached them and she managed to have 109 girls released. Nothing could be done for the other 30 however. Sr. Rachele pleaded, she knelt down and offered herself in exchange... but the rebels would not give in and they took them away, disappearing into the forest.

This is how the tragedy of these girls came about, they were made prisoners of the rebels, shared out as wives among the various commanders, mothers of unwanted children, forced to share the life and dangers of the guerrillas, camping out and moving through the forest, participants in ambushes, attacks and conflicts with the Ugandan army. It was a situation characterised by fear, suffering, hardship and above all, violence, and it went on for years. Four of the girls died. Others managed to escape or were captured during the conflicts between the rebels and the army. Two of them still remain in the forest after more than twelve years.

Approximately one year ago, after Easter, I myself, the bishop of Lira, had asked one of the delegates of the rebels to release them. The answer I was given was that unfortunately it was impossible, because Myriam and Catherine had become the wives of Joseph Kony, the head of the rebels. From that time, I heard nothing more.

Until a few weeks ago, when Catherine suddenly came out of the forest in Congo, carrying with her the 21-month-old baby boy that she had given birth to by Kony. Having fallen in with a group of rebels in one of the army’s ambushes, this 25-26 year old girl ran away, then finding herself alone in the forest. She wandered around for almost a month, feeding on grass and roots, miraculously escaping a whole series of dangers, including an encounter with a lion...

During the offertory collection at the mass of thanksgiving for her safe return, the symbolic gifts brought to the altar – broken chains, grass

and bitter roots, a lighting candle held by Catherine’s son – expressed what was already clear to the moved crowd, that had just listened to the Gospel of the resurrection of Lazarus.

Like Lazarus, Catherine too made her way out of the tomb of twelve and a half years of imprisonment, 4887 long days of suffering and violence. **Yes, in a certain sense, she was revived, returned to her family. When it seemed as though all hope was lost, she was offered the possibility of a new life. Today is truly Easter for Catherine and her son! We celebrated her, we gave thanks and praised the Lord for the miracle that in his merciful love, he wanted to fulfil today among us. And yet, I feel that something is still missing...**

During the celebration, I managed to look at that young woman on several occasions: her face was often relaxed, but it was as though she were absent, in an almost neutral behaviour, reserved, the behaviour of those who are there but at the same time could be elsewhere: Catherine’s face and her look did not betray any emotion. Even before good sense, psychology tells us that this is a wounded person, with deep traumas that need to be cared for patiently and over a lengthy period. Trained to hide, to run, to defend herself or attack to survive, it will take years for her to relax and behave differently, in a positive and constructive manner. She will have to learn and start living in a new manner again.

Like Lazarus. Risen, yet still enclosed and bound in her bandages. For this reason Jesus must say to his friends: “Release him!” Alone, without their quick and caring help, Lazarus would have remained...a living mummy! The Resurrection is the miracle that only God can perform, the free gift of his love for the children with whom, through Christ, he wants to share his very life. But this gift is accompanied by the invitation to play our part, that is, to walk and to grow in the new life that is given to us as a gift. Jesus allowed Lazarus to come out of the grave. God freed Catherine and allowed her to return home. God plays and has always played his part. Now it is up to us to continue and to complete his initiative so that it might bear fruit and be successful. We

are called to give God a hand so that he might complete our resurrection in the pathway of every day, making the new life that he has sown in us and around us grow.

It is the duty of Lazarus’ friends to release him from his bandages. The lengthy pathway of healing and re-integration that Catherine will have to undertake, with the support and loving accompaniment and gentleness of those who are alongside her. We all understand how the occasion of Easter puts us into play and invites us to make a decision about our whole life. First of all it is a question of choosing whether we want to joyously accept the gift of the dead and risen Jesus who pulls us out of our grave, or whether we think that we can manage our lives alone. And then, we must decide if we are happy to remain immobile, living mummies, prisoners of our limits, or whether we intend to welcome the invitation to get to work and loosen the knots and blocks that prevent us from walking and following the risen Lord into a new life, animated by his love.

All of us, without exception, are like Lazarus and Catherine, we are still tangled, withheld and bound in various ways by our bandages, wounds, fears, inabilities, closures and sins. Me, you, all of us firstly need to be freed once again today and resuscitated by Christ’s life-giving love. Then, in order to recommence walking and living the gift received in fullness, like Lazarus and Catherine, we need someone to help us, friends, brothers and sisters to untie us, to remove our bandages, to accompany us.

Aware of the fact that we will not succeed in being free alone, we will then discover that the others around us have the same need. We cannot celebrate Easter and experience it alone. It is by helping others, our neighbours – the many Lazaruses and Catherines alongside us – that we become freer ourselves, new and alive. For this reason, today, at the end of the Mass, I asked Catherine to help me and everyone gathered around her to celebrate her return. In Uganda nowadays (but not only here!) we really need wisdom so as not to repeat the errors of the past, to ensure that Catherine’s sufferings and those of many people like her were not in vain. *Yours, Fr. Giuseppe*

Being born from above, being born from something Other

by Stefania Consoli

Let's take a look around ourselves. Everything seems to be bursting with life. What appeared dead yesterday, closed within itself, is now a jubilation of colours: green trees, flowers in meadows and fruits that are slowly reaching maturation. From the winter sleep to the life reawakened in spring. It is a wonder that we will never grow accustomed to, because there is no obviousness in beauty, it is constantly new. Like life.

The Lord inserted the great event of Easter into this season of the year in order to help us to understand the reawakening of the man-God from the death *that* "first day after the Saturday". If we have really allowed the resurrection to act within our depths – to move what was buried beneath the winter blanket in our inner laziness – we will realise that the buds in flower are within us. Everyone in fact, including creation, is involved in a vital and very powerful movement that allows us to "be reborn from above" (cfr. John 3,3) through the Spirit that God spreads over us at the peak of the Easter events.

But what does *being reborn from above mean*? Jesus answered this same question: "What is born of human nature is human, what is born of the Spirit, is Spirit....The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going; So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3,6). We, a population of baptised people, have already received the Holy Spirit, but every year we need a new Pentecost to reawaken its gifts, because daily life risks making them drowsy and thus rendering them futile.

If what is born of human nature is human and needs to be nourished every day in order to

remain in life, then the spirit that is born of the Spirit needs to be sustained through food that is suitable for the soul: prayer, adoration, Sacred Scripture, sacraments...We realise immediately when *the flesh* dominates with its demands: we are distracted, absent, never full, and in the end never satisfied.

God is seeking a place to remain on this earth. To the question that the disciples asked Jesus: "Master, where do you dwell" today we will hear the answer: "In you! Inside you!" We are the *living temples* where God takes up his dwelling place.

Being reborn from above so that spring might come about within us, then means opening up our hearts to the divine Guest, to the *Other* and leaving him free to dwell within us and to act. In the desert of a humanity thirsty for truth and love, we will be a thriving oasis, an oasis promising serenity and life. □



Easter, a passage from old age to youth

All things that have been created are the work of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul spoke to us about a creation that "wails and suffers in the pains of childbirth". This cry in childbirth is nowadays mixed with a cry of agony and death. Once again "against its will" nature is subjected to vanity and corruption, different from those of

the spiritual order intended by Saint Paul, but deriving from the same source that is sin and man's selfishness.

Are we who have received the firstlings of the Spirit actually hurrying "the full liberation of the cosmos and its participation in the glory of the sons of God", or are we delaying it like all others?

But let's come to a more personal application. Let's say that man is a microcosm, everything regarding the cosmos in general is applicable to him as an individual. The Holy Spirit is he who makes each of us pass from chaos to the cosmos: from disorder, confusion and despair, to order, unity and beauty. That beauty that consists of being conformant to God's will and to the image of Christ, in passing from the old man to the new man.

The evolution of the spirit does not come about within man like that of the body, but in the opposite direction. We are born as "old men" and we must become "new men". Our whole life, not only adolescence, is an "evolutionary age"!

According to the gospel, people are not born children, they become children! A Father of the Church, Saint Maximilian of Turin, defines Easter as a passage "from sins to holiness, from vices to virtues, from old age to youth: youth is understood to be not of age but of simplicity. In fact we were falling due to the elderly status of our sins, but through Christ's resurrection we were renewed to the innocence of children".

The Holy Spirit is the soul of this renewal and this rejuvenation. Let's start our days reciting the first verse of the hymn in his honour: "Veni, creator Spiritus": Come creator Spirit, renew in my life the gift of the first creation, stir in the emptiness, the shadows and the chaos of my heart, and guide me towards the full realisation of God's "intelligent plan" regarding my life.

Fr. Raniero Cantalmessa
(freely adapted from his homily)

WALKING WITH THE KING

"There was once a King who was wealthy, wise and very good. His dwelling place was a garden brimming with delights, to be looked at and tasted. Colours, melodies and flavours that were combined in perfect harmony. Everything occupied its own place. For this there was peace, joy and light-heartedness in everyone's heart... Yes, because the King looked after each and every creature. He nourished them, he assisted them, and he cultivated them, assuring them all peacefulness and benefits. All they had to worry about was living, allowing themselves to be loved and giving that love back to that lovable and generous sovereign.

Among these creatures there was one who was different from the others, because he alone was similar to his Creator. He was called "man", separated into man and woman, and from the King he had received the gift of intelligence and creativity, sensitivity and the ability to love; but above all, freedom that placed him on a very noble almost divine level.

But, alas, this was not enough for that man. He wanted to do things alone! In the depths of his being he wanted to manage his life his own way, and so he attempted to seize the secrets from the King that had thought them up...

What happened next? It's a sad story, because what was pure beatitude was transformed into a curse: "May this land be cursed due to you! With great pain you will draw food out of it for all the days of your life...dust you are and to dust you will return!"

The harmony was shattered and that tremendous disobedience progressed, that disobedience that led man and his wife far from the heart of the good Sovereign and naturally, from his beautiful garden.

Many years passed, but the King could not forget that creature whom he had loved so much that he gave him his same qualities. He missed him. He couldn't bear to think that that man, a vagabond, was wandering around in the dry steppes of selfishness, risking falling into the gorges dug out of his same arrogance. He couldn't resign to the idea that he was poisoning himself with the roots of the idolatry because he was hungry for happiness. The creature who was most like him was definitively disfiguring all beauty within himself.

The king then once again started moving, and he started to send the man who was now far away, several messengers who might "wake him up", entrusting them with a word that would be transformed into advice, warnings, laws, and even scolding over the centuries...but it was all to no avail. Man seemed to be turning a deaf ear to divine warnings. Something else was needed. And so it was the Word itself that became heard, it became flesh, a baby.

But where could he be born? A suitable site was needed, a place as beautiful as that ancient garden where the Lord was used to walking, an appropriate place for that new *Adam*, who by sacrificing himself might one day have made up for the disastrous disobedience of that first man.

The king was used to making plans. He therefore devised a brilliant one, a garden in which nothing would be out of place. A space open to everyone, yet closed like a "sealed fountain". In that garden the seed would find the right space to take root and sprout, then growing "in holiness and grace".

The garden? It was Mary, *God's Eden...*

It is still open today, and it is not a fairytale. For many years the Virgin has attentively and insistently been offering us her Immaculate Heart. In that garden the breeze of the Spirit always stirs up fresh and it rests quietly in the cradle of an eternal "Fiat". It is there that our Mother invites us to enter and remain. Our King will also undoubtedly walk alongside us too.

S.C.

AT THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

With hands outstretched: meditate

“The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword: it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or joints from marrow; it can pass judgement on secret emotions and thoughts” (Hebrews 4, 12).

From their origins and still today, Christians find themselves living in a society where ideologies are mostly incompatible with the evangelical message. Terms change, masters alternate, formulae are multiplied, communications techniques are perfected. What remains constantly unchangeable is the need to keep the level of attention high, along with the level of study and assimilation of the evangelical directives.

Obviously there is no longer any need to hide in the catacombs, to hide behind barricades or to flee into the desert. The proposal is essentially positive: perfect your dialogue with God, discover it, attempt to understand its intentions, throw yourselves into the pathways of providence, take possession of its operational mentality when interacting with human realities.

This is the space reserved for meditative prayer. What does this mean?

Meditation is an attempt to reflect, to guess, to try to discover the sense and meanings that Divine Revelation conceals. It is a question of immersing ourselves in the interior world of the Master of Nazareth, allowing ourselves to be moved, charmed, involved in its radical and irreversible adhesion to the great Trinitarian project of universal salvation.

This is what Jesus did. This is what his Mother did, she learnt the art of concealing words and testimonies in her heart.

The “outstretched hands” are the symbol of this form of prayer that (legitimately) claims to be familiarised with the mysterious world of God as an essential premise to deciding the passage to precise choices that are such that they allow for an authentic following of Christ. In Christian meditation, the Gospel positions itself as the primary source of reference. I must learn to keep it in my heart, to serve it, but not use it.

This is a job that comes about in two separate stages: I listen to those who speak, I assimilate the message, I answer. In disarming simplicity. God speaks, I listen (I read peacefully, I filter, I savour every word). In peacefulness of mind and heart, like those who have established a personal friendship with him. Christ speaks to me of the Father. God speaks to me through Christ. A dialogue of love is born.

I listen. I welcome the Word. I bow down to it lovingly, as over the infant of Bethlehem. I remain open to the Word, I allow it to exercise its divine power. I enjoy listening to it penetrate my soul and my body, my thoughts and feelings, my desires. I invest everything that I have and that I am into it: dispositions, behaviours, feelings, choices. Present and future.

Here I can count on the Holy Spirit, who keeps vigil in order to ensure that nothing can get in the way of the Word that intends to make progress and penetrate hearts, leading them to react, to answer. The silence of listening thus becomes a voice without a sound, and it inevitably tends to transform itself into praise, a song of admiration, gratitude, adoration, love... *Lorenzo Netto*



Let us come to understand the value of silence

Oh Mary! My holy and good Mary!

Let me and everyone come to understand the great value of the silence in which we come to understand God.

Help me to make it into a perfect prayer, a prayer made wholly of faith, trust and love.

Teach me to remain in silence so as to listen to eternal Wisdom.

A vibrant, energetic, fertile prayer, capable of glorifying God and saving souls!

Teach me to take from silence everything that it contains, that is great, supernatural, divine.

(Marthe Robin)

SIMPLE THOUGHTS by Pietro Squassabia

All called to remain

Perhaps we sometimes ask ourselves: why do my work, my travels, and my commitments not bear fruit? Perhaps this happens because we do not remain in the place assigned to us, we do not remain in Jesus. The apostle Peter remains with Jesus, Judas does not remain with him, he escapes and finds himself alone.

The day that Jesus goes to Bethany to the home of the sisters whom he knows, Mary remains sitting at his feet and listens to him while *Martha is dealing with other chores*. Upon seeing this, Jesus exclaims: “Mary has chosen the best part that nobody will take away from her”. With the death of Lazarus her brother, Mary remains at home waiting for the Master until such time as she gets up in a hurry to run towards Jesus who sends for her. Mary understood how important it is to remain at Jesus’ feet, to remain alongside him. Her heart remains in him, it rests in him. Her going is not her own initiative but an answer to the call of her Lord. She knows that he alone can heal her from her wounds because she has understood that Love is medicine and a perfume that inebriates. She knows that it is only with him that her life will bear fruit, unlike the past.

Mary has understood the words of the Master well: “he who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit...if anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered;” (John 15, 5-6). She knows that only with Jesus, fruits will not be lacking, that Jesus is the fruit that truly satisfies. Mary has understood that the hidden treasure is discovered in remaining with Jesus, in doing what he asks and not what we want. She has understood that he is a treasure not to be lost. Mary certainly learnt from the Mother of Jesus. From her example she has learnt the importance of remaining with Jesus and how to remain with him. The Mother also teaches us to remain with the Son and how to remain with him. She knows that in him peace reigns constantly in our hearts, despite the difficulties that life throws at us; that in him we will never exclude anyone from our heart, not even those who hurt us; that in him we will never be lacking anything because *it will be given to us in our sleep* also; that in him we will possess God.

And so Christian life is more a “remaining” than a “going”, more a welcoming the place assigned to us than the conquering of a position, more the leaving of him to act than our action because: “If the Lord does not build the house, then the builders will work in vain. ...” (Psalm 127). It is true. The Christian may only give after having gathered, only after having received. Let us listen then, to the voice of our Mother. We will certainly learn to remain in Jesus as She did and as She continues to do, to bear much fruit, to bring the most beautiful fruit to others: Jesus.

The new Creature

After that first case of disobedience, people were “dying”, lifeless, because they had despised life, like Cain. Their actions were not good. God was very displeased about this because he had created man for Life, not for death. He ardently wanted to remedy that situation. And so he waited with trepidation for the right time during which at least one creature might welcome life without scorning it, as men did freely the past. Yes, the Father’s saving work was “influenced” by a creature to the extent that he sent his own Son to earth as an answer to the “yes” of that creature to Life. We know that this is Mary.

Mary is truly the creature of the “yes” to Life, the new creature who gave God “the possibility” of generating many new creatures through his Son, who might also correspond to Life. From that day, the land was populated with a new humanity, with new creatures who were no longer old like before, new like Mary, the new Eve, who became the Mother of God and our mother. But we are also given the possibility of becoming like Mary, as long as we welcome Life.

Thank you Mary, because with You, life is not quenched like it once was.

Thank you because with You, the Father gave man Jesus, Life.

Thank you, because with You, the Father showed men an example of a new creature to God’s delight and to the delight of the whole of creation.

Thank you because you became our Mother as well as our Sister, you too became a creature like us.

Make us into new creatures, on the model of Jesus.

Take us by the hand so that, walking with You, each of us might become, like You, the Mother of God.

Living in Medjugorje? ...a lengthy pilgrimage

I can still vividly recall the immense joy of those initial days, when upon finding myself living in that place which is unique on a worldwide scale, I incredulously repeated to myself: "I will live here now!"

Now I do miss many things, things that accompanied me and nourished me over those three years: first of all the **silence of Medjugorje**, which is a very special gift, an interior dimension, and then also the **ever new enthusiasm of the pilgrims, the communion** with all those people who, like me, in the most different manners, placed themselves at the service of Mary's plan and the living and palpable grace that certain special places transmitted.

Was it like a long pilgrimage? It all depends on what you mean by this term... it was not a continuous state of ecstasy, as it may be for many pilgrims whom Our Lady gives the gift of experiencing four days of "heaven" by experiencing rebirth within themselves.

Nevertheless it was a lengthy pilgrimage, understood to mean an inner journey in which, by gradually leaving everything that may have kept it bridled, the soul gradually began its flight of elevation... I understood that in order to embark on this journey

God's grace is not sufficient, **we need our daily answer where we meet the cross.**

In my youth I heard Medjugorje being described as a new Holy Land. Krizevac as the new Mount Sinai, the mountain where the Lord made himself known, Podbrdo as the new Mountain of the Beatitudes, and the valley in the middle... the battle field, the open space of the daily struggle that every son of the light must face up to in order to resist evil and decide within himself for the victory of Christ. Of that Christ who humbly allows himself to be betrayed, whipped and crucified, remaining pure love, sacrificed love, and in this way triumphing over every shadow of hate.

Three years in Medjugorje were an inner battle to truly maintain the humble behaviour of Christ, to not leave space for any type of rebellion against sacrifice, and to accept and love divine Will; an interior struggle made of successes and failures, but that led me to an inevitable interior transformation.

It is easier to pray in Mary's arms and it is easier to struggle, knowing that when the trial seems to be too demanding it is always possible to return and take "refuge" on

the blessed hills from which everything seems smaller and further away and where our problems also find the right dimension.

Now that I've been back in Italy for many months, I often feel a longing that brings my thoughts back to those places and those moments that return to be so alive and present within me.

I understand how Medjugorje is not only a physical site, it is an interior place, a space that has opened up within my soul and to which it is always possible to return. Difficult moments constantly mark every single period of my life and our lives, this will always be inevitable, but from every place and at every moment it is always possible to return with our thoughts and our souls to Podbrdo and to the foot of the Cross; to find within ourselves those places of an intimate meeting place with the Lord, those places of grace that bring peace back in every choice and in every action.

The heavens are nearer in Medjugorje and life seems to be a pilgrimage along a pathway already clearly traced out by Divine Providence, our hearts are filled with gratitude, the soul is lifted up in true prayer, every gaze is transformed into a blessing, every breath becomes a hymn of praise, our life a testimony of His Resurrection.

Francesco Cavagna

PILGRIMS OR SIMPLE TOURISTS?

The warm period of the year has commenced and this also marks the beginning of trips to relax the body through nature or to come to know populations and cultures different from our own. However, many of these trips start out with another intention: people travel to "treat" their soul. They become pilgrims.

Some of them set out alone, others with family members; mostly however they join up with organised groups, which occasionally become actual masses of pilgrims who move towards places of prayer or Shrines, all promising those graces of conversions, healing and salvation that everyone hopes to take back home.

The pilgrimage used to have two meanings, devotional and expiatory. In particular, the first has existed since the early-Christian era and it was part of the conversion process: to free themselves from the anxieties and tensions of the world, people set out towards Jerusalem, where they lived as "foreigners", as "exiles" (according to the etymology of the term "pilgrim").

And today? People set out on journeys for the most wide-ranging intimate and personal reasons and therefore they should be respected. But there are certain *rules* that are common to everyone, because although the reason for which people leave is always a good one, the outcome is unfortunately not always what people could obtain.

Is it God's fault if he betrays our expectations? No, certainly not. And so, how should we experience the pilgrimage in such a way as to ensure that it is truly effective, deep and authentic above all? These are important questions, because often, unfortunately, the journey is in vain when people face into it superficially, as though they were going on any kind of trip; or it is filled up with exterior ac-



tivities, meetings, chats, souvenir purchases, drawing us into chaotic settings that dissuade us from that essential quiet that is necessary to meet the Lord.

Medjugorje is a preferred destination by many, in that place grace is alive and operational because Mary, who is the mediatrix, is present in a living, visible and palpable manner with the senses of the soul. For this reason during the "warm season" many people plan their visit to the "beautiful Lady". We need to then value every instant as though it were the only one, because everything is precious in God, and as such we must face up to it.

Pilgrimage guides know this through experience. On many occasions they have been witnesses to authentic miracles in the hearts of pilgrims, the majority of full conversions are sudden and come about in the most unthinkable manners. Thus they are the first ones to be invited to reflect on this subject, because their way of planning the day and of preparing prayer influences the success of their journey enormously, and as such, the interior "transfiguration" of pilgrims, which is the true aim of the pilgrimage.

By its very nature, the pilgrimage is an itinerary. It is movement par excellence. But

in the majority of cases this is understood on a purely exterior level. People tend to move from one place to another in an almost convulsive manner and thus they miss out on the opportunity to take advantage of those essential pauses to assimilate all the grace that every place transmits.

In reality, the true movement of the pilgrimage should be interior, a movement from "I" to God, from *my* world to *His* world, made of silences and prayer, of solitude and communion; made of meetings with His Face through the tools that God places before us: the Word, the Sacraments, His ministers and above all, His Mother. Yes, because you can **go to Jesus through Mary**, who is the shortest and safest pathway: "Dear children, I wish to renew you and lead you with my Heart to the Heart of Jesus which is still suffering for you today and that invites you to conversion and renewal. Through you, I want to renew the world..." says the Queen of Peace in the message of the 25th of October 1996.

This is the route, this is the movement, **this is the true pilgrimage to be fulfilled**: to immerse ourselves in Mary's heart and there allow ourselves to be transported directly into the heart of her Son. We will then find ourselves, as though by magic, in the arms of our Father. Enjoy the journey!

Stefania Consoli

MESSAGE TO MIRJANA, 2ND APRIL

"Dear children, God's love is in my words. My children, this is the love that wants to turn you towards justice and truth. This is the love that wants to save you from blunders. But you, my children? Your hearts remain closed, they are hard and they do not answer my calls, they are not sincere. I pray for you with maternal love because I want you all to rise up in my Son. Thank you".

Mary, our “Shepherdess” for the last twenty-eight years

Every year thousands of priests fill the presbytery of the Parish of Medjugorje to directly draw from the grace that is abundantly flowing forth from that blessed site. Many bear witness to how their priesthood is constantly renewed by their meeting with Gospa, the Mother of the Church and the mediatrix of all grace.

With the approach of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the apparitions, we interviewed a priest from Italy’s Marche region, father Manlio, who is an assiduous visitor to the Shrine.

What is Medjugorje for you?

Beginning from what I have read and from the readings and reflections made, Medjugorje is the final point and the completion of the message of Fatima. John Paul II even went so far as to say that today Medjugorje is the spiritual centre of the world, although he did not officially speak about this, in order to avoid compromising himself and to avoid compromising a phenomenon that is still ongoing.

Our Lady appeared a total of three times in Fatima; in Medjugorje Our Lady has been coming down from Heaven every day for 28 years! Why such prolonged apparitions?

Because the situation of Christianity is very critical and Our Lady is working to change it. People still do not want to accept conversion of the heart. Mary prays for this and she urges people to pray; she wants to save the Church, the family, couples, young people, she wants to save the whole world! She has been appearing for such a long time because she wants to create a model of a Christian community that might know how to welcome her messages and transform them into life!

Why does Medjugorje continue to encounter opposition?

Because so many bishops and priests are not informed, they have failed to take an interest in this phenomenon from the beginning and therefore they are indifferent and apathetic, as though it were a fact of devotionism.

What is most surprising about Medjugorje?

The rediscovery of faith, conversion. Those who confess, personally touch this reawakening. There people touch the miracle in various moments, under various forms. Many people who pray and convert, countless prayer groups and charitable associations that were founded there, the expansion of the message everywhere. It is a continuous miracle! The Church will have to deal with this miracle. Medjugorje is the last step in the work that Mary is doing in order to prepare the coming of Jesus; because the triumph of Mary will be the conclusion and it will come about through the preparation of the Kingdom of Christ.

Is it right to return often to that place?

Yes, it is right, because we need to recharge ourselves and enrich ourselves spiritually. Nowadays life is rife with problems and if we do not *refuel* with graces that come to us from Mary, it will be difficult for us to face up to the burdens of everyday life.

It is known that the Church is currently undergoing a serious crisis from the point of view of vocations, while many vocations come about in Medjugorje from a living meeting with the Lord. Do you think that this is meaningful?

Certainly! After the conversion of hearts, vo-

cations represent one of the best fruits.

One of the criticisms that these apparitions often come up against is that Our Lady speaks too much. In the Gospel Mary limited herself to contemplation, saying very few words, how can we explain so many messages today?

I have my own opinion on this point. I had also prepared an article in reference to the synod of bishops which took place last October on the Word of God. I compared the theme of the Word of God with the word of Mary. Why does Our Lady speak so much? In all the latest apparitions, Our Lady has done nothing other than represent the Gospel to us. This insistence has a precise significance: Mary’s intention is to bring us back to the essential, she wants to re-evangelise the Church of today and I believe that She is the person best suited for the job! This is why the Word of God is not understood and accepted today; it is as though people have become accustomed to it: people think they already know everything! I am convinced that Our Lady, as our Mother, wanted to say to us that the Word as it is communicated to us, is monotonous, cold, stale, a Word that no longer touches our hearts. We need a warmer Word, a Word that comes from our Mother’s heart. Our Lady wants to be today’s catechist.

First of all, she listened, she assimilated, as saint Luke wrote. Mary listened, observed and kept... This is because the moment was to come when she would unveil the casket in which she concealed God’s Word. Within the family the father has one role and the mother has another: she is more affectionate, she is more capable of being understood and of sensing the needs of her children. Our Lady wants to give this help to the Church of today.

There is a title that Our Lady attributes to herself during these times: she defines herself as the Divine Shepherdess. If Christ is the Shepherd, Mary is She who continues Christ’s work. Our Lady has many titles!

How do Mary’s monthly messages enrich your life as a priest?

I believe that we need to read them, meditate on them, screen them better and make them an exegesis to come to an understanding of the logic that connects them. They would appear to be the same, almost monotonous. But there is something deeper that cannot always be understood, like for example the concept that it is only through prayer that we can come to know God and His Will as regards us. I refuse to say that they are simply repetitive; they are as repetitive as the extent to which we are unable to welcome them and experience them!

I hope that the day will come when all these messages that Our Lady gave in Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje are welcomed and become the object of a more in-depth study; I hope that an international committee might be established on these messages, because Our Lady cannot speak heedlessly, and up to now she has not been given the attention she deserves.

Jesus was “a sign of contradiction so that the secrets of many hearts might be unveiled”. Is this the case for Mary today?

This goes without saying, there is no need to be surprised about this! It is good that nowadays there are some generous souls who diffuse her messages and who have welcomed the invitation to be Mary’s witnesses.

What is the future of Medjugorje?

The time will come in which the Church will have to make a stance... □

The voice that says

“My dear children...”

The pilgrims of Medjugorje know that “due to causes of force majeure” father Jozo cannot meet them, as he used to do, in the Church of Siroki Brijeg. But he has said a lot over the past few years. Let’s take a look at some of his considerations in order to celebrate the twenty-eighth year of the apparitions of the Queen of Peace with him.



“Pilgrims come from all over the world who have heard the voice saying “My dear children”. How is it possible to hear this voice? Thousands of times the experts from the committees have asked the visionaries: “Did you hear the voice on the inside or the outside?” Did you hear “my dear children”, did you hear Her voice like you hear mine?”

Our Lady is not dead, Our Lady is not an idea, Our Lady is the Mother of God, Our Lady knows how to talk because the Catholic family risks collapse, and young people risk dying...

Millions of pilgrims have been onto Podbrdo, where Mary lives and waits... Her presence is visible, palpable, she speaks in a manner that we can understand, she teaches in a manner that we can accept. Her healings, her miracles have been great signs.

Come Holy Spirit, enable us too to answer. We pray that everyone might wake up, see, hear and answer the call. We are all called, not by chance. Let us pray to the Lord that he might make us understand what he wants from us, what he expects from us.

Medjugorje is not a show, it is not something strange that can replace our mission. No! It is a set of open eyes that are meeting what each of us is seeking: joy, peace, faith, and love. For this great gift, let us pray that our eyes might be opened.

(Father Jozo - from “Aiutiamoli”)

The “Mother” Jesus

*“How true it is that
God is our Father,
So is it true that
God is our Mother...
Our most dear Mother Jesus.
Our Mother in nature,
Our Mother in Grace...
Because the service of the Mother
Is nearest,
Readiest and safest:
Nearest
Because it is the most natural,
Readiest because it is all love,
Safest because it is all truth”.*

Julian of Norwich
English mystic (1342 -1416)

Our readers write...

Evelyne Grousset from France: "I am always very glad to receive Echo so as to find all the news on Medjugorje; the articles are always very interesting. It is a means of evangelisation.

Like your distributor, I also encounter, so much a refusal, although this came to me from a person who is involved in the Church, but a certain resistance, sometimes on the part of Catholics and also on the part of religious people. This pains me. Besides, other younger people like to find these teachings, especially those who have not yet had the opportunity of receiving a Catechist teaching. I am sending you a modest offering, and I will renew it in a few months. As you say, we must live in hope. Mary always provides for us. In communion of prayer and of heart with you. Please accept my profound gratitude and my friendship.

Marie-Andrée Bisch from France: "I would like to extend my thanks to you for your admirable spiritual support, which you have been sharing with us for many years and which derives from the purest "Source". Your Echo of Mary is a pearl that all those to whom I regularly send it are glad to receive. But your discretion regarding your financial needs has become too great. It is easy for we readers to forget about the "free nature" of your little magazine that we hope to receive for a LONG TIME TO COME! Do not lose this chain of friends that has been created through Mary".

Nicoletta di Salizzole -VR (Italy): I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for what you are doing with "ECHO", you manage to keep me united with Medjugorje, where I went on a pilgrimage for 3/4 consecutive years. Then a serious car accident rendered me immo-

bile. After two years, I am slowly getting over this period... Your little magazine, Echo of Mary, has kept me united with that blessed land, full of the Holy Spirit, where there is an indescribable atmosphere and where it seems that you are in another dimension...

A FRATERNAL EMBRACE TO THE WHOLE WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY of the Echo of Mary, Queen of Peace.

Tarceo Cinelli from Canada: "Echo of Mary is a pleasure. It is as though I were receiving "The Good News" addressed directly to me. The Holy Mother is so near...I thank all of you at Echo for this great work!!!"

Lisandro Portillo from Caracas (Venezuela): "I would like to salute you through this e-mail and wish you Peace in Christ and the Blessing of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. I am writing to you from Venezuela. My country is currently experiencing a difficult period...pray for us!"

Doober Alejandro Arias Torres da Tolima (Colombia): "Dear friends from Echo of Mary, I would like to humbly offer my prayers for the editorial staff, the translators and the Management, that you might continue with this precious work of transmitting the Light that the Virgin Mary sends us in Medjugorje with her messages of love and peace".

Ana María de Lourdes Zepeda de Fragoso da León, Guanajuato (Mexico): "Dear friends from Echo, for twenty years we have been spreading the Messages of the Queen of Peace, we even bring Echo to the Archbishop of this Dioceses of León and in all, we manage to distribute about one thousand copies...never let it cease!"

Rosa Hauser from Austria: "To the colla-

remain in such a state for a day or more; then assess the reaction of the heart before such a choice: if it gives peace, if it is harmonised with the rest of our choices; if something within you encourages you in that direction, or on the contrary if it leaves a veil of worry.... Repeat the process with the second hypothesis. All of this in an atmosphere of prayer, of abandonment to God's will, of opening to the Holy Spirit.

The danger, in certain modern ways of understanding and practising discernment, lies in accentuating the psychological aspects to such an extent that we forget the main agent of all discernment, which is the Holy Spirit.

The concrete fruit of this meditation may be a renewed decision to entrust ourselves completely to the interior guidance of the Holy Spirit, as though for a sort of "spiritual direction". We must not undertake anything if it is not in the Holy Spirit. The brightest example of this is to be found in Jesus' life. He never undertook anything without the Holy Spirit. We need to abandon ourselves to Him. Like good actors, we must keep an ear out for the voice of our hidden prompter, so as to faithfully recite our part in life's scene. It is easier than we may think, because our prompter speaks within us, he teaches us everything, he educates us on everything. Sometimes a simple inner glance is sufficient, a movement of the heart, or indeed a prayer.

Fr. Raniero Cantalmessa
(freely adapted from his homily)

borators at Echo: please continue with Echo. I willingly distribute it (94 copies) because it is so joyously received everywhere. It would be a real pity if I were to no longer be able to distribute it. I would like to thank you all wholeheartedly for your commitment and your efforts. I greet you with great affection".

Echo invites you

In her messages, Mary often asks for our help. Obviously somebody wants to impede her work in Medjugorje, not to mention in the world. We know that Mary's work passes through her children, priests, and all the people who welcome her message and her protection. But Mary's tools also seem to be the object of the arrows of he who wishes to impede her plan, a plan that we believe Echo also expresses. For this reason, Echo needs your help and is counting on you readers: only in this manner will it be able to continue its work, that many people are asking for from all parts. Mary is certainly happy to sustain it through you. And so you are very important for the Mother's plan and for the life of Echo. Yes, your prayer is essential, as is your support. Perhaps in this manner we will all become a vehicle of good for many.

Pietro Squassabia

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*"You created the universe
to spread your love over
all creatures
and to gladden them with
the splendours of your glory".*

(IV Eucharistic Prayer)

Villanova M., 10 may 2009

CAPABLE OF DISCERNING THE SPIRITS

The guidance of the Spirit in the spiritual pathway of every believer goes under the name of discernment of the spirits. The first and fundamental discernment of the spirits is that which allows us to distinguish the "Spirit of God" from the "Spirit of the world" (cf. 1 Cor 2, 12). Saint Paul provides some objective criteria for discernment, the same criteria that Jesus had given: that of the fruits. The "works of the flesh" reveal that a certain desire comes from the old sinful man, "the fruits of the Spirit" reveal that it comes from the Spirit (cf. Gal 5, 19-22). "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature" (Gal 5, 17).

On occasion however, these objective criteria are not sufficient because the choice is not between good and evil, it is between one form of good and another form of good and it is a question of seeing what God wants, in a precise circumstance. Saint Ignatius of Loyola developed his doctrine on discernment especially to meet this need. He invites us to look at one thing above all: our interior dispositions, the intentions (the "spirits") that lie behind a choice.

Saint Ignatius suggested certain practical means by which to apply this criteria. One is this. When we find ourselves before two possible choices, we firstly need to linger on one, as though we were to follow that one, then