

# Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Message of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011:

“Dear children! In a special way today I desire to call you to conversion. As of today, may new life begin in your heart. Children, I desire to see your ‘yes’, and may your life be a joyful living of God’s will at every moment of your life. In a special way today, I bless you with my motherly blessing of peace, love and unity in my heart and in the heart of my Son Jesus. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

## New life in your hearts!

The towers of human pride crumble, causing death and wars. Earthquakes and tsunamis crush people and sweep away their homes...The nuclear energy harnessed by man escapes his control and, rather than wellbeing, it produces mortal contamination. The difficult relations between individuals and countries lead to fights for survival. Problems of cohabitation seek solutions in the law of the strongest rather than the rights of the weakest...

The scenario of the world is still that of the hunt out of Eden: but did Jesus Christ come into the world in vain? If we stop at the images that television screens bring into our homes and demand that we pay attention to, it would appear so; but in-depth reality escapes all media coverage, it is to be sought in a dimension denied to the media and that necessarily escapes all scientific analysis and cannot be reduced to photographic documentation. Reality cannot be confined to the apocalyptic scenes of these days, but even less so can it be identified as a world of wellbeing, apparent yet blazing, the hedonistic world that is brought to our attention every day. Between these extremes there is a humanity that does not make the headlines, that does not draw the attention of the news, but that holds up and supports the world: it is the multitude of those who, even without being fully aware of it, honour the Image that they carry within themselves (Gen 1, 26-27). The reality, and it is present in every corner of the Earth, is that of those who love the image of God that they carry within themselves, even without seeing it clearly because *for now we see in a mirror, dimly* (1 Cor 13, 12a). This reality resides in those who do God’s Will, that is, in those who live according to His Plan, and this is possible for all men; it is sufficient for us to say our *yes* to the Father joyfully and to ask him to allow us to experience it in our existence: His help will not be lacking! **Children, I desire to see** (not only hear but SEE) **your “yes” and may your life be a joyful living of God’s will at every moment of your life.** Mary did it and we too can do it if we abandon ourselves to Her.

This is the **new life** towards which Mary calls us; not a life that is renewed in its exterior façade, in its appearance, but a **new life in our hearts**, that is, new not only in



Message of 25 April 2011:

“Dear children! As nature gives the most beautiful colours of the year, I also call you to witness with your life and to help others to draw closer to my Immaculate Heart, so that the flame of love for the Most High may sprout in their hearts. I am with you and I unceasingly pray for you that your life may be a reflection of Heaven here on earth. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

## Let your life be the reflection of Heaven

### 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APPARITIONS

*Once and for all, two thousand years ago,  
Mary said her yes  
to the Lord of Life and of history.  
Faithful to divine will over time,  
over the past thirty years He allowed  
her to remain physically among us...  
In this way the Mother points out  
the pathway of littleness to us  
and of obedience to the Father,  
so that our yes might also be given  
to Her as a gift,  
so that it might become  
a channel of salvation for humanity  
and of redemption for the whole universe.*

works but also, and even before that, in our desires, in our expectations, in our dreams. A life that might be inhabited by Jesus, a life animated by his Holy Spirit, a life with a simple taste but capable of giving flavour (*like salt*) to what it comes into contact with. A life illuminated by Faith, founded on Hope, consumed by Love. This is the life that does not fear either collapses, earthquakes, or evil radiations, because it is anchored on the Rock that is Jesus, and founded on the Rock (cfr Mt 7, 24-25).

Let us open ourselves up to the blessing that Mary gives us at the end of this beautiful Message. It is in Mary’s Heart, in Jesus’ Heart that we must position ourselves so as not to hide, but to offer ourselves totally to Them, to experience the **new life** that Mary calls us to, a life that might be a testimony to Their Love and a prophecy of salvation for the world.

You brother, you sister, who feel useless and tired, you who feel crushed by your sin and by your limits, you who taste the bitter and sour flavour of your life of success and power, you can save yourself and the world: it is sufficient to open the doors of your heart to Christ! Dear brothers, the death of Christ was not in vain: may the living Water from his pierced heart pour forth and purify everything, along with the Blood that gives life to **new Life.**

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Man, the human creature, cannot set God aside, he cannot do without Him. This is not a limit that mortifies our existence, as ancient temptation would have us believe, but actually, it is empirical proof of the greatness of each of us. In fact, man is not great for what he does but for what he is. Made in God’s image, he has always been called to implement the image that he carries within himself in life; called to be the Son of God in His Son Jesus, man is invited to allow this filiality to grow, it alone releases him from all frailty, from all limits, to elevate him to that dignity that no creature can ever dream of reaching. Vice-versa, forgetting that we are made in His image, that we are called to be children, perverts the nature of man and his true Essence and, unlike what it may seem, it mortifies the quality of his life, even his biological life. Within such a framework, Mary’s Message appears in its true capacity: It is an existential appeal, it is the sweet and terrible warning of the Mother who sees her child in danger, and it is a danger that threatens life in its inseparable biological and spiritual integrity.

Stunned by the chaos of our cities, snared in thousands of formally necessary things, whirled around by our activism, we, inhabitants of the so-called wealthy countries have less and less time to reflect, to think, definitively to...live. Having fallen prey to advertising that imposes unnatural models of life, we are losing the sense of dignity of the person, standardising it more and more to a market product. More and more comfortably we lie down on our couch of apparent wellbeing, in it we seek and delude ourselves that we have found salvation and happiness, and we drag the whole world into this illusory dream, and when someone falls victim to their illusions, we accompany them more or less falsely, but we do not stop this crazy race towards self-destruction. And when the Earth itself rebels and suddenly reveals the fragility of the works of our opulence, we do nothing other than rebuild the rubble with an extreme blindness that is as dark as death.

## Life as a spiritual cult

by Chiara Bernardi

No, this is not the way, Mary says to us, she said it to us with her Life before her words; she said it welcoming God's Will as it was presented to her by the Archangel Gabriel, she said it to us preserving in Her Heart what was mysterious or incomprehensible to her in her experience as a Mother, she said it to us in the holy and bitter days of the Passion and Death of her Son. She said it and continues to say it from Medjugorje. And still today she says to us: **I invite you to testify with your lives and help others to approach my Immaculate Heart so that the flame of love towards the Most High might bloom in their hearts.**

The testimony that Mary asks us for passes through our lives, not through our words; it is not founded on discourse, or on occasional or only formal gestures. It is in observing how we live that we can help others to approach Her Immaculate Heart and **this is necessary for the flame of love towards the Most High to bloom in their hearts.** This is a great, beautiful and tremendous responsibility at the same time, because it can favour but also impede us in our approach to Mary's Immaculate Heart. Perhaps this is another reason why **Mary prays incessantly for us, so that our lives might be a reflection of Heaven here on earth.** Strengthened by this prayer, let us deliver ourselves to Her so that she might consecrate us to Her Immaculate Heart, from which we will draw the **flame of love towards the Most High.** Peace and joy in Jesus and Mary.

N. Q.

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### Grace is greater than sin

"Hail Mary, full of grace...", exclaims the Angel who visits the Virgin of Nazareth, revealing her deepest identity to her in this way, the "name", so to speak, by which God himself knows her: "*full of grace*".

The *full of grace*, the Immaculate, is a source of inner light, hope and comfort. Amidst the trials of life and especially the contradictions that man experiences within himself and around himself, Mary, Mother of Christ, tells us that **Grace is greater than sin, that God's mercy is more powerful than evil and that he knows how to transform it into good.**

Unfortunately we experience evil every day, it manifests itself in many ways in relations and in events, but its root lies in man's heart, an injured, ill, heart that is incapable of healing by itself.

Sacred Scripture reveals to us that at the origin of every evil there is the disobedience of God's will, and that death has dominated because human freedom has given in to the temptation of the Evil one. But God does not give up on his plan of love and life: through a long and patient journey of reconciliation, he has prepared the new and eternal alliance, sealed in the blood of his Son, who was "born of a woman" to offer himself in expiation (Gal 4,4). This woman, the Virgin Mary, benefited early from the redeeming death of her Son and from the time of her conception, she was preserved from the contagion of sin. And so, with her immaculate heart, She says to us: trust in Jesus, He will save you.

(Benedict XVI - from his homily)

With baptism we all received the calling to become new creatures and to participate in Christ's priesthood. Obviously each of us will implement this calling and this mission in a different way, according to our originality and the gifts that we have received. On many occasions however, Christians live passively, they do not know how to recognise their mission and they think that only very few people receive a special calling from God. But God does not call some to holiness and others to lead a mediocre life! God addresses the same calling to all his children, and for this reason we are called to understand the infinite, universal value of all our actions and all our interior steps.

#### Offering ourselves to be transformed

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God". (Rm 12,1-2).

These words by Saint Paul help us to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of offering our life to God, which lies at the basis of our Christian calling. Offering ourselves as a *holy and living sacrifice that is pleasing to God*, does not mean dying, becoming ill or doing anything in particular, it means learning to live as God wishes us to, learning to consecrate our bodies to God, but also our feelings, the things that we do, the people and situations associated with us. It means learning to allow God to enter our lives and thus give an in-depth value to everything that we do. Saint Paul adds: "this is your spiritual cult". The cult is a celebration, and the priest is he who presides over the celebration. For this reason, experiencing God's offering means living our royal priesthood fully, entering into Christ's priesthood.

#### A living, daily celebration



If experiencing the offer means celebrating a spiritual cult, then we will no longer be able to experience the Eucharist as something separate from our lives, from what we do during the day. On the contrary, our day should be an extension of the Eucharist, a giving of life to the sacraments that we receive.

How can we experience the royal priesthood in our lives? How can we make a cult and a celebration of the simple things that we are called to do every day? We must simply learn to take the same steps during our day that we are called to take during every Eucharist: open ourselves up to experience a deep meeting with Jesus in the Mass, this should prepare us to open ourselves up to others, to meet others in God. Receiving God's forgiveness should teach us to forgive, to help others to free

themselves from many of the burdens and feelings of guilt that oppress them. Listening to the Word of God should lead us to listen to everyone, not to close ourselves off in our ideas, but rather, to open ourselves up to communion. Experiencing the moment of the Eucharistic consecration should teach us to consecrate all of our work, every meeting, every thought or plan, to God. Receiving God's blessing must awaken the call to be a blessing in us. Every baptised person should know how to transmit the blessing to creation, to people, to situations encountered every day, thus distancing evil.

If we succeed in taking these steps in our daily lives, then we will experience the beauty of offering ourselves together to Jesus in the Holy Mass, and we will truly feel that Jesus elevates everything that we have experienced and tried to offer in our day, to the Father.

#### The Eucharist is a cosmic event

«If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good» Saint Paul continues in his letter to the Romans (Rm 12,18.21). The Eucharist is a cosmic event. The priest who celebrates it embraces the whole of humanity, the living and the dead, in the Eucharistic sacrifice. If we want to live our regal priesthood to the fullest, we too must desire good for everyone, leave our judgements behind and do everything to help others, to live in peace with everyone. Saint Paul says: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good". Jesus Christ alone has power over evil; by means of the offering, if we live united with Him, then we will experience his strength in us. And the more God's love grows in us, the more we will be able to conquer and distance evil from us and from others.

We cannot conquer evil with our own strength and sometimes we cannot even solve or change negative situations. But if we experience the union with God, we will experience that even in suffering, evil will not have any power over us, that is, it will not distance us from God, it will not quench faith in us.

#### A respectful welcoming

"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way" (Rm 14,1.12-13).

Spiritual maturity is expressed in knowing how to welcome and respect others, whatever level they are on. In order to know how to behave it is sufficient to reflect on how the Lord behaved and behaves with us. Jesus approached and welcomed us even when we were far from Him; he never humiliated us, not even when we were incapable of understanding his words, he bent down over our insignificance, helping us to grow and mature gradually.

Jesus establishes a personal relationship with us, without comparing us to others, without putting us into competition with others. We too should learn to behave like Him, we should know how to approach others with his same gentleness, welcoming each other with respect and love. □

# Our Lady is alive in Medjugorje

From the beginning I've believed the apparitions of the Mother of God in Medjugorje to be the work of the Holy Spirit. Today in particular, I see a clear distinction between the apparitions of Our Lady, understood as an extraordinary grace linked to a special place and historical era, and the presence of Our Lady which is everywhere in space, in time and in eternity.

The apparitions are a grace, they are the confirmation of the maternity and care of Our Lady for all of humanity, of her mission as the Mother of God. And this is a grace given to all of us. And so I understand that the aim to be attained is not to stop at the apparitions as a supernatural phenomenon, but to learn to experience Mary's presence, that continually attracts us into the life of the Most Blessed Trinity. Our Lady has been appearing for such a long time in Medjugorje because she wants to teach us to live in her presence and in the presence of God.

## She guides us to the essence

The theology of the Easter mystery is profoundly accentuated in Medjugorje: the passage through the passion and death that leads us to the Resurrection. This is the fundamental message that the apparitions leave us and it cannot be otherwise, because the Mother always guides us towards what her son Jesus experienced, towards the only true pathway of healing. And so the Virgin guides us towards the essence, towards the mystery of Christianity: The Eucharist, the Easter mystery. And in the end she manifests the Trinitarian dimension to us, because in reality we cannot find Mary in her fullness, if not in the Most Blessed Trinity.

## A living relationship

In my opinion we are called to enter into a living and continuous relationship with God and with Mary. In fact, Our Lady does not appear in Medjugorje to remain with us for just a few minutes a day, but to enable us to understand that we were created to be in God, to relate to him continuously, to recognise his voice.

A priest friend of mine once said to me: "My dear Father Tomislav, who will keep all of this under control?". I answered him saying: "This is precisely our problem, that we want to keep everything under control, while God calls us to walk and grow, to direct people towards the Holy Spirit through Mary, so that she might guide them towards Jesus and, together with Him, towards the Father". This is a precious truth: after everything that I experienced initially with the visionaries, then with many faithful and consecrated people, I understood that I cannot and I do not want to control anyone. I must only worry about walking, about experiencing God's nearness and about showing people how it is to have a relationship with God, so that the Lord might guide and direct everything and everyone.

## The novelty of Medjugorje

The novelty that Medjugorje brings to the Church and to humanity is the meeting with the living God. Perhaps this doesn't say much to some people, but if we find ourselves before the living God and we allow Him to in-



volve us totally, changing everything within ourselves according to his plans, then this is an absolute novelty.

I believe that God's intentions through Medjugorje are these: to draw man towards Him through the Immaculate Heart, to attract the Church, and through it, the whole world.

Everyone must meet the living God and, in faith, contemplate him face to face.

## Called to be simple

This meeting with God brings other novelties with it: Christian life must become simple, it must free itself of formulae and of what weighs down upon it and encloses the Spirit in empty precepts. Let simplicity guide us towards a direct relationship with God, to whom Jesus wanted to lead the people he preached to.

We are called therefore towards this simplicity that Pope Benedict XVI spoke about when he was still a Cardinal: "The renewal of the life of the Church is not about a set of exercises in piety and the creation of institutes, but in a full and unique belonging to the community of Christ...the novelty, the renewal means becoming simple, converting to that real and true simplicity that is the mystery of all that exists...but this is none other than the echo of the simplicity of the One God" (J. Ratzinger, *God's New People*).

## Everything is renewed in the Holy Spirit

The outcome of this newness is the same as what happened in the First Church, which was made up of the Assembly of the Apostles, Mary, the women and the disciples who were present when the Holy Spirit descended upon them and filled them with himself. Everything becomes new and everything is continuously renewed. It is not a newness that is detached from the Gospel, but with a new dynamic, a new vitality, like the Spring is a novelty for the Winter, the summer a novelty for the spring, and so on...it is a vital and continuous process that bears many fruits. It is the sign of the dynamicity of the life of faith, that singles itself out from stagnation which, in certain forms of religiousness, often finds different and very dangerous shades.

## A spiritual quality of life

Already on the fifth anniversary of the apparitions, I underlined that many people are wrong in thinking that the parish of Medjugorje will become a second Lourdes or a second Fatima. I personally believe

that we shouldn't even talk too much about Medjugorje, so as not to transform it into an ideology. Our Lady does not call us onto apparition mountain, onto Krizevac, or to the parish church because Medjugorje is one of many shrines, but because she wants to introduce humanity to new times.

A new era has commenced with the apparitions in Medjugorje. It is a new quality of spiritual life, a new quality of life in general, that embraces all of our being, because the Christian calling not only aims at making us rise up in spirit, but also in body. We almost never think about the resurrection of the body, and so as a consequence its transformation cannot come about. The transformation of the whole man is the true novelty.

## Grace is stronger today

I see that graces in Medjugorje are even stronger now with respect to the beginning. The graces during this time are so strong that they attract all those who are walking towards eternity, towards the living God. And these faithful enter into the mystery of life, they enter into that communion that Saint John spoke of at the end of the Apocalypse: "And He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, God himself will be with them and be their God". "Behold, I make all things new" (cf. Ap 21, 3-5).

At the same time, the strength of these graces leaves those who are uninterested aside, it leaves them cold, not because God pushes them away, but because they close themselves off from this grace of growth, of transformation into a new man.

## Promises are fulfilled

In certain faithful there is scepticism and immaturity. In their behaviour we encounter something strange: they deal with the things happening around Our Lady, but they are uninterested in the life of the Mother within them; they are more interested in what is happening around themselves, in external activities, rather than opening themselves up to God, to work with him and allow him to fulfil all of his promises.

Our calling consists of entering into the living temple of our soul, in remaining open with Mary so that the Holy Spirit might descend, work in us and transform us into new creatures, through the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Only in this way can we reach true resurrection.

By **Father Tomislav Vlasic**

(Taken from: *Our Lady is alive in Medjugorje*)

**"Do not feel as though you are strangers to the destiny of the world, but rather, feel that you are precious parts of a beautiful mosaic that, like a great artist, God is creating day by day...by offering our pain to God through Christ, we can collaborate in the victory of good over evil, so that God might make our offering, our act of love, fertile".**

*Benedict XVI*

# Reflections of light from Mary's land

by Stefania Consoli

## Thirty years of public life...

The thirtieth year of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje has struck. We could say it is not necessary to utter a single word. The grace that moves all of this, in fact, is truly exceptional and it leaves us open-mouthed...this is indeed a unique event in the history of humanity! Our generation has had the privilege of welcoming the Mother of God for such a lengthy period and a period that is so rich with messages that always carry the truth of the Heavens.

Rivers of people flow into that small town that has changed so completely over the years in order to meet the needs to feed and accommodate pilgrims from all over the world. The somewhat mundane atmosphere that has been created around the Church – which was once surrounded only by vineyards and forests, is not always easy to share. But at the same time, we shouldn't linger too much on this subject, because the value of Medjugorje is on a whole other level: that of the Spirit, that of the life of God.

**Therefore there is a celebration in Medjugorje.** Those who have been going there for years do not want to miss out on this event. Many more are going there for the first time, and for them too, a new pathway of life is opening up: there are unexpected opportunities for conversion, revision, rebirth.

There is something for everyone in Medjugorje. There, everyone can find what they need the most, as we can see from the



letters written to us by many friends after their journey, and that we have published in part here. This is the voice of Mary's children, *children* who are dear to Her because they answer *her call*. Some sooner, some later. Some in one way, some in another. The important thing is to arrive there with the desire to meet the face of She who, reflecting on our face, is even capable of changing its features, that lose all signs of tension and gradually acquire peace, allowing themselves to be reached and transfigured by Love.

Obviously it is not sufficient to go to Medjugorje or to listen to Our Lady's invitations to change our behaviour, which often still expresses an attachment to ourselves: selfishness always tries to dictate law to our daily choices... But apart from Her words, which are filled with maternal wisdom, Our Lady gives us a *supply* of grace that helps us to conquer ourselves and attempt to walk along the pathway that She, with patience and faith, continues to trace out for all of us. It is sufficient for us to know how to carefully keep this *reserve* and wisely administer it, day after day.

Often, even through our Echo, we have urged people to use their time in Medjugorje well, avoiding superficial time wasting that does not encourage true immersion in prayer and grace. Everything comes about in the depths, within ourselves. If it doesn't touch the most intimate cords of our being, then our journey is almost useless, a waste. The greatest wish therefore that we can make for the Queen of Peace on this, the thirtieth anniversary of her coming, will be our ability to experience everything as She would: with simplicity, recollection and humble faith. God will do the rest and He will fill us with gifts. The greatest among these, is the living presence of Mary, our Mother and Queen. □

## A departure point

We travel throughout life. But our destinations are not always predictable. Actually, on occasion we are even forced by circumstances to change the platform of our train: unforeseen circumstances, unexpected situations, missed objectives, suspended relations... Without foreseeing it, all of a sudden we find ourselves changing direction, and having to choose an arrival point that we might never have imagined.

This too is what life is made of. And it is not always easy to deal with the uncertainty of the direction or the disappointment in seeing that what we thought was infallible actually led us to a dead end.

Those who experienced this and at a certain stage in their journey, found themselves going to Medjugorje, most often see a new road opening up in front of them: a pathway that seemed closed off and that instead has unexpected thresholds to be crossed in order to travel beyond... beyond illusions, beyond disappointments; beyond the fear of a future that threatens us because it is apparently difficult to face...



**In the testimonies that we publish there are stories of lives that have been transformed,** there are stories of situations that have turned around completely, there are stories of the grace born out of the meeting with Mary and a living and personal God. In these cases however, it is easy to fall into error: to believe that we have arrived at our destination – *“in Medjugorje everything is different, everything is easier...”* – people think.

This is more than comprehensible. A stop off for a rest is necessary to get our breath back from the running around that the world often forces us to engage in: *“Come to me all of you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* we read in Matthew's gospel (11, 28). **But then we must start out again!** It is not possible to stop. The journey is long and it needs our willingness to start out continuously, to leave the old behind and follow Jesus on new and original pathways.

**This is why Medjugorje cannot be a terminus on our road.** If we truly meet God there, through Mary, we will necessarily feel an urge to get up and set out towards unknown destinations, motivated by the grace that makes us living witnesses, but also protagonists of history in a new way: more keenly aware of ourselves and of the reality that surrounds us, and above all, less influenced by the *relativity* of daily life because the *absolute* of God has now taken its place.

No, Medjugorje cannot be the last stop. **Medjugorje is true only if it becomes a departure point.** The various stages of our life are only intermediate stations. The final destination, thanks be to God, will be Heaven! □

## I sell my gold in exchange for a treasure

by Tosca Fabriani

I often go to Medjugorje. Once you've tasted the flavour of that new life you cannot but go back there! And every time I do go back, I find a *pearl* on my way, when I walk along the mountains and sites blessed by the presence of Mary, and above all, when I accept to venture into the depths of my being to meet God's true face, He who loves me, educates me and gives me all of his wealth.

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...”* (Mt 6,19), says the Master. An invitation to all men, that they might free their hearts from attachment to material goods to make space for celestial goods. But for me there was a more concrete proposal, which became a reality when my husband was in financial difficulty for many months. Not wanting to use shared money for my trips to Medjugorje, on each occasion I choose a small piece of gold jewellery from the drawer, from among the pieces that I was given over the years and I sell it to pay for my trip: *“Therefore I prayed and prudence*

*was given me; I pleaded and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to sceptre and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her, nor did I liken any priceless gem to her, because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand and before her, silver is to be accounted mire... (Wisdom 7, 8-10).*

Once again Sacred Scripture confirms what has become a reason for joy to me and a constant element in my trips to Medjugorje: in fact, I almost feel a sense of urgency in depriving myself of that which enriches my vanity, to earn those treasures that no man's hand can create. And so I sell my gold, and each time I leave feeling lighter and more ready to take what Mary has once again prepared for me.

Of course, I have to admit that when I look at the area around the church - the place that should be the utmost expression of the sacredness of Medjugorje – and I see the amount of shops with window displays full of gold to attract pilgrims to make “significant” purchases, - I say to myself: *“Lord, how miserable we are...how we exploit your grace for our little interests! Lord, help me not to judge, but to give an example to those who do not know the value of true wealth and who do not truly welcome the gift of your Mother!”* □

## Lighter

by Elena Ricci

“Lighter, projected towards a more unrestricted love...”. This is how I feel I can summarise my inner state twenty years after saying “yes” to the Queen of Peace.

Thirty years ago came the annunciation that Our Lady was appearing to a group of young children in a small town in Herzegovina. I followed the Apparitions almost from the beginning, through the media: in the printed press, on the radio, on audiocassettes, listening to the messages and testimonies. 1990 marked my first trip to the land of Medjugorje, with the majority of my family.

From the beginning I recall my “here I am” through Mary, in welcoming the invitations of the Queen of Peace; the inner reawakening in some parts of my heart that needed to be touched and healed; the depth of my prayer; the living Word of the Lord who speaks in life; His promises; an opening to a new blooming within me and around me...

And immediately came the trial, the action by Satan. Every beautiful thing, everything that I perceived as a vocation was constantly blocked, something got in its way. But the grace of the Lord made its way through! In every loss, the grace of the Lord made its way

through! By following the Gospel throughout life’s occurrences, I was led to a continuous loss, not only of bad things and sin but also of those good things that need to be purified.

Blessed Mary accompanied me on the pathway of Jesus who, rich as he was, became poor; He did it to enrich us, I did it to lose what was cumbersome within myself and to be able to follow on his pathway. To follow Jesus first, so as to be able to follow His plans. I follow Jesus and the rest is given to me as extra, given freely when I expect it the least, in a different, new manner.

The fact that I had lost a lot in the field of relations, in desires and plans, in abilities, and in my body, which is growing old – although with all God’s gifts – led me to feel this sense of lightness bubbling up within me, a feeling of fluidity, adaptability and inner speed that is more difficult for the enemy to strike... And in substance I become more versatile for God. I perceive that the more I manage to lose, the more the Spirit of God can be free and effective in me. A corruptible part is destroyed and an inner youth is born.

By following Jesus, in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I am able to go beyond all evil and enter a new dimension. The source of Resurrection that the Lord placed in my spirit thus flows more freely. □

## The last big stone

by Giovanni Saiani

Almost a year has passed since my last trip to Medjugorje and finally we’ve set a new date: we’re leaving on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March! The countdown begins a few days beforehand. The nearer our departure date comes, the more the days become intense, work is more and more stressful, and until the night before we set off, there’s lots to be done...

But thank God, the time comes. After the classic controversies during the journey, we reach our destination and immediately feel at home. Smiles and embraces welcome you: “Welcome back!”, and a sense of profound peace enters your heart.

The first appointment is with the Mother, on Apparition Hill. I experience it almost like a preparation for tomorrow’s climb up to Krizevac, where everyone will have to face up to their own Golgotha... How can we even start out without the comfort of a Mother, who is as sweet and intense as always?

At the foot of Cross Mountain, the day after, I feel a little trepidation. I know that this Via Crucis is not like the others... The invisible rucksack that I am carrying on my shoulders is full of “stones”, of different shapes and sizes. But there is one in particular that stands out: the stone of selfishness... *I am ready for the climb, Lord, I will leave everything under your Cross...*

But after my very first step, the sadness in the eyes of a woman comes to mind, a sadness that I had seen a short time earlier. Her sixteen year old niece is seriously ill. What to do then? I decide to leave two of my “stones” and to carry two to the summit for them.

I climb and I don’t change gears, but rather, I finger my rosary, the only true walking stick necessary for this climb. I leave some stones on the way up and I take up others: for people who cannot be here, who cannot climb up with me, but who need to... Only my “big stone” remains. *Lord, I am here for this!*

The stations of the cross pass me by, one after the other. Here we are. I see her: tall, imposing... I am happy and tired, I am at the Redeemer’s Cross.

I kneel down, I slowly empty out my rucksack, entrusting everything that I brought with me to her. *Now it’s my turn Lord: I am holding the last stone in my hand, the “big stone”.* But once more, an image comes to mind: two suffering eyes... A suffering that I am well aware of, that I understand. *I know too that you alone, Lord, can console her.* And so, below the Cross I place that stone too, not for myself, but for that person.

*I did not offer my sin Lord, but you immediately consoled me after just a few hours, giving me the joy of the smile of that aunt; enabling me to see the other person queuing up for confession and those eyes a little less sad a short time afterwards.*

All of this was worth my third trip to Medjugorje. *Thank you Father, thank you Mother...* □



## From disdain to wonder

by Nilde Totti

And so, dear friend, after having gone to Lourdes and Fatima on various occasions, you wanted to “try” Medjugorje..., despite the mistrust of the Fathers that you frequent. Many of your friends had spoken to you enthusiastically about it, and even simple acquaintances who stopped you on the street, told you of their experiences and asked: “You who are so religious, how come you’ve never been to Medjugorje? Everything is different there: just think, my husband went to confession after over twenty years, he’s changed a lot, now he never misses Mass, he used to never go...” and so on.

And so you went. I met you when you came back, I didn’t even have time to ask you how your experience was, and you started speaking, agitated and resentful. You were scandalised by the market stalls, by the traders wanting to sell you everything, “even grappa!”, by the fact that the Virgin Mary was printed on all kinds of merchandise, and by the confusion, “even in the Church! I had been told that there was a special atmosphere there, that the prayer in many languages was particularly touching... but I felt bewildered, I felt like I was suffocating and I left”.

At this stage I felt a terrible pain in my heart: criticism of Medjugorje hurts me, as though it were addressed to my mother, and I was trying to say something, but you continued to ramble on.

In the square you saw lots of priests hearing confessions, and that too seemed like a show to you. And you remained there with your anger boiling up inside, when a brother with a long beard made a gesture to you to come close to him; at the time you thought he was gesturing to someone else, but you were the only person there, and so you went towards him telling yourself that you weren’t going to go to confession... And looking into your eyes, the brother asked you kindly: “What’s the matter, my daughter?”. This was enough for you, like a swollen river, to spew out your words to him of disappointment, anger and whatever else.

“I truly don’t know how it happened”, you concluded, “but when, having been invited by the Priest, I went back into the Church, everything that had seemed off-putting, vulgar and unacceptable, became marvellous and full of charm for me. I will never forget it!”.

And I will never forget the light that came on in your eyes, as you said those words. Our Lady truly is alive in Medjugorje. □

### MESSAGE TO MIRJANA OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> OF MAY 2011

“Dear children, God the Father is sending me to show you the way of salvation, because he, my children, desires to save you and not to condemn you. That is why I, as a mother, am gathering you around me, because with my motherly love I desire to help you to be free of the dirtiness of the past and to begin to live anew and differently. I am calling you to resurrect in my Son. Along with confession of sins, renounce everything that has distanced you from my Son and that has made your life empty and unsuccessful. Say “yes” to the Father with the heart and set out on the way of salvation to which he is calling you through the Holy Spirit. Thank you. I am especially praying for the shepherds, for God to help them to be alongside you with a fullness of heart”.

## Beyond sin, beyond the past...

by *Stefano Salvatore*

For over twenty years and more, I've had the possibility of going to Medjugorje, as a sinner, like now. Some dear friends of mine went before me, they believed and still now live *in Christ and through Christ*. I waited "sinning", in inverted commas because every sin is freedom in God, as is every virtue. Blow after blow, He alone is capable of forging strength from the swords at his service. It is merely a question of making his job easier. I did not make his job easy, but He believed in me.

Through his Mother and through the words of my wife, the calling came...

### A welcoming that opens up to the meeting

I arrive from Italy with my family at sunset. The low lying sun cloaks the façade of the Parish Church of Saint James, it also cloaks the outlets for souvenirs, the bars, the restaurants and the homes, all of which are like farmhouses, undetermined in their architectonic aims... Once we've set down our bags at the house of the Community that welcomes us warmly and affectionately, we spontaneously walk towards the Parish Church. The Church is full to the brim. The Croatian mass that we listen to from the outside microphones – tightly wrapped up in our jackets on the benches – enables us to understand that the Annunciation will be celebrated the day after. We've unknowingly reached the Village of the Queen on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the month, in the year of the thirtieth anniversary!

But the grace of Medjugorje is not only present in the "sacred" sites. It is in fact the essentiality with which people live that enables you to experience the Lord's tangible love. The table of the Community where we are staying is in fact a meeting point with God's gifts that sustain us and that are offered in simplicity and harmony. I feel a deep sense of joy in serving other people their food, sharing stories, anecdotes with an extended family, like we once were, at least in my memories of feast days. The afternoon rest in the House, then, is more restoring than a meal: silence carries you straight into the arms of Our Lord, who cradles your heart... I feel that I am continuously speaking to Someone I don't know, but I am certain that I am being listened to without even saying a word.

### One to one

It's evening time and in the church that is full but not packed, there is the adoration of the Eucharist. The monstrance is on the altar, the faithful are all gathered around and it looks like they are praying in shifts: they come and go with the utmost respect and silence; first they are facing towards the central altar and then they move to the feet of the statue of the Queen, in the right hand aisle; some lie on the ground, face down on the floor before the altar where Christ is. My wife and I remain there in recollection for an hour; partly in prayer, partly hand in hand, adoring the blessed host. I give thanks for the first fifty years of life that I have lived and immediately my life becomes visible to my gaze, a judge. We too move to the foot of the Queen. I give thanks to her with the deepest Hail Mary that my heart has ever managed to pronounce and that shakes my bones like the strings of a harp. A profound

sense of forgiveness towards myself embraces me and regenerates my heart, furling my face with tears of joy and deep inner peace.

### The wind of She who is full of grace

The next day Apparition Hill attracts us towards it and a pleasantly fresh breeze, that is firm but not strong, pushes our bodies and helps our steps, that smooth over the stones that are already shiny from the steps of those who have gone before us. Like drops of water moving against gravity, from the base of the Mountain, the pilgrims are scattered along the wall and, each on their own pathway, they spread out a weft of prayer... Hosanna's cloak seems to embrace us all, brothers and sisters, unknown to each other but recognised by their One Mother, who calls and wants all of them.

Before the statue of Mary a few prayers repeated mentally flow together with my blood that is spraying through my body; immense joy and a living sense of belonging colour my heart. Among the budding leafy branches, the face of that Celestial Mother is marvellous, like the countryside from up here.

We descend calmly, feeling joyful after that experience. The breeze now caresses our faces, refreshing them, and it slows our pace. When we reach the Blue Cross, a well-dressed man, who almost looks like he's on his way to the office, turns to us on the descent and says: "...when the breeze caresses the Mountain, I am with you", and he salutes us with a smile. These are the words of the Mother.

### In the mysterious embrace of the Church

The Parish awaits us for the most solemn mass that I've ever been to. The roof of the building seems incapable of containing the pressure of the prayer. I don't understand a word because it's in Croatian, but I abandon myself nonetheless among the faithful, genuflecting and bowing. I put my head on my knees and feel myself being almost transported as far as the main altar, as though my body were being lifted up horizontally and passed from hand to hand, purifying itself at every touch. All of a sudden I clearly perceive the strength of the Church in prayer, that offers welcoming, protection and purification to the soul that participates in it; sin melts away like snow in the sun, forgiveness comes to point out the new pathway to you, preventing you from looking backwards towards the past. And so you are reborn in a new gaze... The air outside has changed, it has become cold, a sky filled with clouds promises rain soon.

### The mountain that washes away sins

The next day, before dawn, I poke my nose outside of the house and the rain wets the lenses of my glasses. It's heavy. I regretfully renounce, but only until the afternoon, when I start my climb up to Krizevac, alone and full of desire. My loud prayer gives my pace a rhythm: Our Father, and a step, who art in Heaven, and another... until I arrive at the foot of that Cross that stands out imposingly, directed towards the Heavens. The rain starts to fall more insistently, the summit is all mine, but a short time later I think it would be better to start going back down. It seems to me that this water falling from

above is capable of cleansing me on the inside, within my intimate self, there, where sin found somewhere to nestle in the past. I arrive at my car dripping wet, cleansed by the Holy Spirit, as happy as a child, full of answers to questions that I hadn't solved, full in my heart...

### Food of peace

We end our trip saying goodbye to Medjugorje by participating in the Holy Mass. I feel that a new pathway is opening up before me. In his homily, the priest invites us to forgive ourselves, to give absolution to our heart, because this alone will allow us to close the door on our past and open ourselves up to the present and therefore to the news of the future, reconciled with God, safe on the pathway drawn out by Jesus, who converted suffering into full Love for us, through the Resurrection.

And so I find myself in total peace with myself and ready to receive the Eucharist. I joyfully await it. Finally I receive the gift I had waited on for so long and had never understood... A shiver runs through my whole body, my skin seems to catch fire. I feel taken by a bodily embrace that is so full that once again I invoke forgiveness for the time wasted in His absence...

Since then I have found myself on a new journey, that now includes conscious renunciation, that still brings suffering, but not torment, not disorientation. I am certain that this will allow me to recognise what is happening within my soul and to meet my neighbour with more freedom, to read the history of men together, as God wrote it for us, according to His will and for our good. □

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## WE, the face of God's people

by *Salvatore Sigillo*

It's so nice to see the face of these brothers of mine in Medjugorje as they are intent on praying, speaking and listening, as they go to confession, as they walk around, as they eat...

We come from many different parts of the world, we are all there: bishops, the ill, married couples, the faithful, priests, tourists, Christians on the threshold, noisy people, and young people,... The Church of God is present. Its universality. We have all come to say our *thank you* to the Mother. It's so great.

My wife (\*) and I spent a few weeks praying, in silence, going to confession more frequently, listening to the Word, participating in many celebrations, in personal reflection, in adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ. I personally spent the time I had at my disposal **taking photos (but not with a camera)** of these brothers of mine, of God's people. They are photos taken with my "eyes", with my "ears", with my "heart". When taking them I don't think I was distracted from the true reason of my stay in Medjugorje and I hope I didn't distract or disturb others.

**I am printing them now, confusedly, without any particular logic.** I don't want the memory of them to disappear from my mind:

- ❖ A very elderly married couple, perhaps Germans, hand in hand under a burning sun, kneeling, praying before the statue of the Risen Christ...
- ❖ The radiant face, the voice often broken by emotion in celebrating the Holy Mass, of a

# ISLANDS OF AN ARCHIPELAGO

## Details of a pilgrimage to Medjugorje

by *Alberto Ripamonti*

The spiritual guides asked none other than you to tell the story and grasp the in-depth meaning of this pilgrimage. They say that you'll certainly know how to do it.

**And you know well that you won't succeed in doing so, unless you use words other than theirs.** Because you, unfortunately are still among those (the many people: more than people are willing to believe) who, despite everything, have not managed to cross the narrow, but solid barrier that divides those who aspire to meeting God, from those who – lucky them – have already met God and know how to treasure him in their hearts.

**In front of the blank page, you already know that you will only succeed in expressing the summary of "your" pilgrimage.** The uncertain meaning of your tottering search for true spirituality, on this land blessed by Mary and protected and animated by Her.

Sure, there has been no lack of intense adoration, passionate Stations of the Cross (and not only on the rugged Podbrdo and Krizevac), vigorous homilies at the Masses, many, concentrated prayers, inflamed testimonies, strong confessions, Vicka's warm, living and joyous words... Everything that normally creates that wholly special *atmosphere* that characterises Medjugorje, **you encountered it and as usual, it moved you.**

And it is also undeniable that, on this occasion, everything came about on the basis of a perspective that is very different from the usual one. People weren't only looking vertically, upwards, towards the heavens and their contents; but those who guided us on this journey also pushed us up vertically, in a peaceful and decisive manner, along the rugged paths that lead to the unknown (or forgotten) depths of our soul. Down there where God has always knocked and asks only for the door to be opened to him and for him to be allowed in. A fairly difficult perspective, that is decidedly perceivable day after day, I suppose by everyone.

About what has happened, each of the pilgrims will have seen, tasted and acquired a wholly personal facet of Medjugorje. **Since all of us who live on the surface of the sea of life, are and remain "islands".**

We, or at least most of us, are poor, roving and unprepared islands, who come from afar. We lead our daily existence (that we will soon return to) on the turbulent surface of this stormy sea, amidst violent waves, vortexes and hurricanes that strike us from all sides. We all have wounds – some more, some less, as well as traumas and intimate fractures to be healed.

We are islands of an archipelago that only in the depths of this sea (different depths for each person) are linked together by a common solid base that unites them all. A link that nobody sees but that we have all always

greedily aspired towards. A depth that, with wise, intense and knowledgeable words, we are urged to approach with trust and love.

**You, like the others, listen with anxious trepidation to the voice of these guides** who have **already** allowed themselves to be moulded on the inside by the Holy Spirit; these are people whose eyes of faith can see everything, beyond fleeting appearances, they are in harmony with God, they speak to him, they feel him in their hearts and they live only and joyously with Him and for Him.

**You who are (and despite everything remain) closed within yourself,** you who do not yet know the secret to unlock the rusty latch of your heart, look enviously and embarrassedly at those who speak to you about it with such simplicity, as though it were the easiest thing in the world to succeed in doing.

And for you, it is as though someone were insisting on telling you how simple it is to pass through a pane of glass, while you have been continuously bumping against it for the past twenty-five years.

**You think that you have already learnt** (at your own expense) how it is logical and easy to abandon yourself

completely into the hands of the Father, with the unlimited faith of an infant in the arms of his mother. But – obviously - this is not the case.

You fail to perceive that there is a Divine Guest living in the core of your soul: the Holy Spirit, with whom it is essential that you return to having that original relationship that you had with him at your birth. You know that God will judge your spirit, but you do not even realise where that spirit lies within you.

**You do not know how to allow God to bring about His plan of love in you.** You do not know how to enter into harmony with Him through faith and prayer. And so you do not know what the mission to be carried out is, that he made you for.

You probably do many deeds in God's name, but you do not do God's work.

**You do not allow Christ to live in you.** And you do not know how to live in Christ and through Christ.

You know that the mystical union with God can be attained only through *sincere and free giving of ourselves to God in Christ through the immaculate heart of Mary...* and, to your ears, this sounds like a formula that is difficult to interpret.

Obviously, knowing that you were created free, you are terrified by the burden of responsibility, the consequences of your actions, because you do not know to what extent they are unadvised... and so on! There are so many things that you don't know!

**But you continue to try;** you say – sincerely – to God: *"Look at me, here I am, I am here. I am stripping myself of all other thoughts, of all other aspirations, of all other desires... I offer you everything: my incapable heart, my barren soul, my reluctant spirit, my awkward thought, my old body that is in poor health (all these things are already yours). I offer you what remains of my life, for others. I hope that all of this is still worth something... Do with it what you wish. But Lord, I beg of you, speak to me. And ensure that I notice"*.

young Indian priest who has been living in Italy for seven years and who has come to Medjugorje for the first time...

❖ The overheard chat at a restaurant of two couples discussing the differences between Lourdes and Medjugorje, concluding that Lourdes was better because in the hotel where they were staying, they cooked the pasta al dente...

❖ The confession by a Korean woman that was heard by a young Korean priest: during confession the priest was kneeling at the feet of the penitent, at the end of the confession the priest was standing and the woman was kneeling...

❖ The joyful night-time carousel of around one hundred Poles in the square in front of the Church, gathered around the statue of Our Lady...

❖ The bright and happy eyes of so many faithful...

❖ The harmony that transpired from a young local man, who knelt down under the lashing rain and remained immobile for the entire duration of the night-time adoration...

❖ The radiant and beautiful voice of a young Italian man who, from his wheel-chair was singing: *Jesus loves me...*

❖ The bright cross-shaped outline seen by all those present, in the starry sky above Medjugorje...

❖ The regret of two distinct gentlemen, who with pipes in their mouths and money printed on their faces, were complaining that there was no elevator in their hotel...

❖ The constantly bright face of my wife, with the exception of when she was saddened upon hearing my impatience and useless clarifications...

❖ The hurried and joyful running of the Koreans on their way to Church...

❖ The joy of an entire family from Avellino upon having managed to successfully fast on Wednesday and Friday...

❖ The peace in my heart after having gone to confession, underneath a tree...

❖ The litter picked up in front of the statue of the Risen Christ, by an Italian gentleman...

❖ The hymns to Our Lady improvised on the street, with the guitar, during the night by a kind gypsy with lots of people following him...

❖ The sad face of our guide upon seeing our constant lateness, our time wasting in useless things...

❖ The many noisy, constantly switched on mobile phones...

❖ The rosaries prayed beneath the afternoon quiet of the blue cross...

❖ The smiles and slight bows of the Koreans when we ran into each other in the streets of the city centre...

❖ The peacefulness of the local children...

❖ The wonder upon seeing that a refuse disposal site was transformed, by Brother Slavko, into a well looked after community for children, totally immersed in the thriving local vegetation...

- The peaceful faces of many young people who managed to get out of the tunnel of drugs...

And so, this **too** was Medjugorje for me. The Virgin Mary knows these photos well, and not only these. She knows us all. She knows our anxieties, our indecision, our joys, our up and down walk towards eternal Salvation. She never ceases to urge us on. Her love for us is never ending...

*To You, Mother, I present these brothers of mine, myself, my wife, my family and above all, those who are far from me. Always remain near us. Help us always... Thank you.* □



## With my daughter

by *Elena Casucci*

I've been sitting in front of this blank screen for some minutes now. It's blank, it remains blank. The cursor on my computer is flashing, as though it were in a hurry to write something. Nothing. Or better: everything. Everything that I have in my heart is pushing to come to the surface, to come out. I invoke the Holy Spirit, who, as always, guides me out of the blockage. Oh, if I didn't have You Lord! Every instant of the day, in the car, at work, at home, you are constantly with me, you never leave my side... I don't even feel abandoned now that Maria is in the arms of the Mother.

Maria, a daughter I wanted so much, but who never came into the world. What immense joy when I found out I was pregnant! I didn't even wait for my husband to come home from a business trip to tell him the news. "You're a father!" I whispered to him between one word and another. The enthusiasm led me to share this news with all those who are dear to me. The bond with Maria is immediate: I feel her, not so much on a physical level, but spiritually...

Maria lived in my womb for just over a month. Joy leaves space for suffering, it retreats but doesn't disappear, because I *am* a mother! The mother of a baby that I will not be able to hold here, on earth, but I pray that I might be able to do so for eternity.

The bond, the communion that links us is not broken with death. Love overcomes all barriers, even physical ones. I am grateful to the Lord for having entrusted one of his creatures to me. I will take care of her by praying, certain that Mary will do the same.

Suffering? It is there, and so much of it! Every day I offer it up to the Lord. The cross does not crush me, it saves me. When it attempts to make me give in under its burden and fall, I think of Jesus Christ: how much he suffered due to our fault! We continuously wound him and at the same time we expect him to answer our prayers! Despite this, Jesus loves us and if we seek him out, He is there. And so I take His hand and I get back up, thinking that it is a grace to be able to be on the cross to keep Him company.

## Death is conquered in God!

by *Francesco Venuti*

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, I was coming out of a supermarket with my wife, our daughter Giulia (aged 5) and little Lorenzo. As my wife and I were returning the shopping trolley, Giulia attempted to cross the road, taking two steps off the footpath; but at that same moment a car came along at high speed and knocked down our baby girl!

It was just darkness after that moment. Three days of painful Calvary (from the hospital in Olbia, where Giulia was brought in very serious condition, to the Hospital in Sassari, where she underwent two operations, which were unfortunately unsuccessful), then her little martyred body gave in: it was Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> of January.

**Our awareness of the eternal life that Giulia has entered into** does not alleviate our pain, it does not fill the emptiness that we feel in our hearts, the darkness does not disappear!

A pathway gradually opens up, at the end of which there is a Light: **Medjugorje! We had never been** there before but more and more we began to feel the need to reach Mary where she loves to be found. And so, after the thirtieth day, we decided to go to Medjugorje in the hope of obtaining our lost peace from the "Queen of Peace".

And so on the first day there, I took a photo with my digital camera and when I went to download my pictures later on the computer, we saw Giulia, **as she was on the memorial card that we distributed on the thirtieth day after her death** and that we had taken some months previously!

I would like to add some good news: upon returning from Medjugorje, after several attempts to give Giulia a little sister, which she had wanted for over a year, my wife discovered that she was pregnant! I will never cease to pray to and thank Jesus, Mary and Giulia for this gift... Now I know that they truly exist!

## The boundless dance

Dear mother,

I know it may seem absurd, but I'm writing to you because, in spoken words it seemed impossible for me to describe the immense joy that I felt when, thanks to your help, I climbed onto the stage for the first time to attend a dance lesson.

The happiness I felt inside was immense, not so much due to the fact that I would later have danced in public, but rather, because you helped me to enter a world that has no confines or limits. In this magical land, my wheel-chair, that represents my physical limit, becomes a departure point to create a dance. You cannot imagine the sadness and pain I felt upon seeing my classmates going to dance lessons. Every time I heard them talking about the subject, I became sadder than a bare tree in winter and I thought: "How can they go when I can't? **Perhaps it is just a simple wheel-chair that is preventing me from accessing the magical world of dance?**"

Until one day, in my life, another door opened. My wheel-chair was "no longer there" and I was free to express myself and share my feelings with the other girls who were dancing with me.

In my opinion, what truly makes you a unique mother is this too: you made my greatest wish come true, although it was something truly unusual.

I want to conclude by reminding you of a few things. First of all, I want to remind you that for me, dancing means expressing myself, sharing my feeling with others and, to do this, we certainly don't need the ability to run on our tip-toes, but just to desire it.

I want to remind you of one more thing... One hundred mothers love their children, but what does truly loving your children mean? It means making their greatest wish come true and you transformed what seemed to me to be an unattainable dream, into reality: to dance.

With love! Yours Miry

(Miryam has suffered from a serious physical problem since her birth - spina bifida and so she is confined to a wheel-chair).

## Our readers write

**E. F. O'Sullivan from Tea Tree Gully (Australia):** "Thank you for the Echo! Reading everything that Our Lady continues to say to us, is good for the heart... In this world that is so confused by material and individualistic gratification, all shared values have been lost... God bless you. Continue this great work, we need you!"

**Paula Kuemper from Terrace (Canada):** "I am always delighted to receive the Echo of Mary, which is regularly delivered to me by post. I read it all in the blink of an eye; I like to see what new things are happening in Medjugorje. A big thank you and a small donation for you to help you to continue".

**Myriam Dupont from La Verziere (France):** "I receive your wonderful magazine from a friend! It brings consolation to the solitude and many difficulties that everyday life proposes. With prayer, full trust and by listening to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mary is with you and with all of us. In the hope and action of grace, I would like to express our friendship to you".

**Bregeon Rene from France:** "What joy to receive the Echo once again! It benefits our souls greatly and it stimulates us to go towards the celestial homeland".

### 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 onehundredfold!

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