

Reflection on the Message of February 25, 1999

"Dear children. Also today I am with you in a special way contemplating and living the passion of Jesus in my heart. Little children, open your hearts and give me everything that is in them: joys, sorrows and each, even the smallest, pain, that I may offer them to Jesus; so that with His immeasurable love, He may burn and transform your sorrows into the joy of His resurrection. That is why, I now call you in a special way, little children, for your hearts to open to prayer, so that through prayer you may become friends of Jesus. Thank you for having responded to my call."

February 25, 1999

I greet all who are waiting for Mary's message and who are trying to follow Her message with their whole heart. First, let us remember the message of January '99 in which Mary again invited us to prayer. We should not forget that the invitation to prayer is Mary's most frequent message. However, in this message She says that we should discard all excuses which we so readily find in order not to pray and that we should really make a decision for prayer. It is clear to everyone of us that we Catholics have actually become specialists in finding excuses to keep us from praying and that we let ourselves be so easily distracted from prayer. However, it should not be this way. Our decision for prayer is an important step, but it is not everything. In prayer, we should open ourselves, as Mary says. We cannot open our heart just like that, there is no key for it; but we can create the conditions so that it will be possible. The first and most important condition for our heart to open is to take time in order to create the circumstances necessary for prayer: to prepare a corner in one's home, with a cross, a picture, a Bible and a rosary where one can pray without being disturbed by the outside world. And then, one has to regularly set aside a time for prayer every day. That is what we can do. We cannot have absolute control over our thoughts and feelings, over what we receive or don't receive

and, therefore, we should not worry about times when we are absent-minded, when we feel empty, when we feel and sense nothing - that is not up to us. This simply comes when we pray regularly. Mary also invited the families to renew prayer. During this season of Lent, we should really be hearing this message because, if the family does not pray, there will be no religious upbringing. Mary said something special in the message of January and that is that we should develop a new relationship towards Holy Scripture. First of all from an exterior point of view, we should place it in a visible spot in our home, so that we see this book, through which God speaks to us, that we then read it and meditate on it with the ultimate goal to recognize God's love, with which He leads His people. But, we are His people, each one of us; and when we begin to recognize God's love in our lives, even in the situations which were difficult for us, then the healing of our heart will follow and the healing of our relationship to God and surely also to the others. The unique sign of God's love in these times, so Mary has told us, is Her special presence here in Her daily apparitions. In order to be able to recognize all that, one has to enter and immerse into these happenings and then one will surely recognize how God loves each one of us, our families and the whole world which, through Mary, He calls on the path of salvation.

At this moment Vicka, Mirjana and Ivanka are here at home; Jakov spent a week visiting various cities in Poland, meeting many people and giving his testimony; Marija is in Italy and Ivan in America, from where he travels to various places in order to also give his testimony. More and more pilgrims are coming to Medjugorje. At present, there are groups here from Poland, Italy, France, Australia and also from Korea. One can say that things are as always and we hope that it will continue that way.

Mary gave us this message at the beginning of Lent, saying ...

ALSO TODAY I AM WITH YOU IN A SPECIAL WAY...

And we believe this. We must not forget that, without the special presence of Mary, Medjugorje cannot be explained. Also today, there are still people who believe to have other explanations but, without Mary, it is absolutely not possible to explain Medjugorje. It surely depends on each one of us and on how we answer to the call in our own lives, how important Medjugorje can

become in our lives, in our families and in the Church and it depends on our collaboration if what God promises us through Mary can actually be realized. This season of Lent is a time in which we can reconsider and scrutinize our own readiness to go on the path with Mary. Certainly, no one can say for himself that, in each and every situation, he is completely and wholeheartedly going on the path with Mary to Jesus; but it is important that in our hearts there is always a renewed good will and that we remain faithfully on the path. Mary continues in Her message with words that, at first sight, may seem surprising ...

CONTEMPLATING AND LIVING THE PASSION OF JESUS IN MY HEART.

These words may raise some theological questions. For example, what does it mean, when Mary says that She is 'contemplating and living the passion' of Her Son? When She lives the passion of Jesus, it means that She is suffering but, on the other hand, we know that there is no suffering in heaven. It is written that in heaven there exists no suffering, no sorrow, not even a trace of sorrow - only eternal joy and eternal peace. So, how are we to understand Her words? If we want to find an answer to this question, we must recall that, in various situations and also in Medjugorje, the visionaries have said that Mary was sad, or that on the third day of Her apparitions, on June 26, 1981, when She appeared with a cross (which we all surely know), She wept and said, "peace, peace, peace and only peace - peace between God and man" and later She called us to pray and fast, because through fasting and prayer even war and natural disasters can be averted. We also recall Mary's tears in Syracuse and in various other apparitions and we also remember the experiences of many mystics who saw the suffering Jesus etc. It may be difficult to work out a clear theological answer to this question but there is another dimension in which we can understand everything. The Church is a community of the glorious, the suffering and the traveling, pilgrim Church; the glorious is in heaven, the suffering in purgatory and the traveling here on earth. There is a correlation between them, in the sense that the glorious Church is, of course, closely connected with the traveling, pilgrim Church and the traveling Church, that is we here on earth, can help the suffering Church through our prayers

and sacrifices. These are not three realities which have been separated from one another, but they are simply interconnected in love and through love. And, where there is love, one sympathizes and, as St. Paul says, when one member of the Church suffers, then the whole Church suffers or when one member of the body suffers, then the entire body suffers. So, Mary, through Her contemplating and living the passion of Her Son, Jesus, is actually an example for us to do likewise. She is with us, as our mother and our teacher and She wants to teach us how we should live during Lent and what this season should mean to us. When we decide to contemplate and live His passion, then we are also near Mary and Jesus Himself and so this season of Lent will become more meaningful to us and this is really the way to the resurrection. Mary continues in Her message ...

LITTLE CHILDREN, open your hearts and give me everything that is in them:

This is the same problem as in Her message of January: the heart opens only when we take time for prayer and then remain with God and meet Him in prayer. Our heart will also only open itself to Mary, our mother, under these same conditions. We know that, when we have love and trust for a person in our heart, our heart is open and we are prepared to confide and also to open the depths of our hearts to that person. So, therefore, Mary, as mother, invites us to give Her everything. How often do we hear people say that they feel they are closed, that they cannot open themselves, that they are afraid of God or of other people and, naturally, that they themselves also suffer due to this. Lent is really a time, in which this opening of ourselves should happen and we should make good use of this opportunity and open our hearts to Mary and give Her everything that is in our hearts:

JOYS, SORROWS AND EACH, EVEN THE SMALLEST, PAIN,

Joy means goodness in general; sorrow means also everything which causes us suffering. Here we could surely also add our egoism, our pride, all negative feelings which cause us pain, but also our sins and the consequences of sin. The person who opens himself and is able to give everything to Mary will certainly be purified and then his inner being will be able to be renewed. I hope that we have all experienced that, when something was weighing heavily

on our heart and we were able to impart this to another person - especially to God - we then felt relieved and joy and peace returned into our heart. At this point, we should also become conscious of the fact that we should give to Mary the good as well as the bad; that is, we should liberate ourselves from everything in order to become free for God. We could formulate it like this, when we 'stick' to something good, this can also hinder us on our way with Mary to Jesus; for example, if I did something good yesterday, if I forgave, and then, if today I am being hurt again and I don't want to forgive because I had done so yesterday, then the good deed of yesterday is hindering me in my deeds of today and that is not good. When the good hinders us on our way, then there is also the spirit of Pharisaism within us that we surely should and must combat. Also, of course, the bad can hinder us on our way; because, when we have problems, then we easily lose trust and the will to continue, as well as the courage to begin anew. The heart must be free of all good and of all bad and this is why it is so important that, in Mary's spirituality, we understand the following: the day must end when the day ends; that is, if there were good things, we thank for them, give them to God and forget them; when there were bad things, we forgive, ask for forgiveness, give them to God in His mercy and forget them - so that we are able to begin the new day which God gives us in freedom and in love. Also, the day should not begin before it actually begins; that is, we should not lure the fears of tomorrow into today and then live in constant anxiety. This is of no help and, in addition, makes living today more difficult. This is actually what Jesus says, that each day has its sorrows and its cross. So, if we start to work on giving everything to Mary, as She has invited us to do, then we will be free and thus more easily hear God's will and more easily see and feel the persons around us and be more ready to help them. Mary continues in Her message, saying what She will do with the things we give Her ...

THAT I MAY OFFER THEM TO JESUS;

Mary is our intercessor. In order to understand this, let us think of the situation in Cana, in Galilee. Mary was present at the wedding and so was Jesus with His disciples. She saw that there was a problem, that they ran short of wine. She presented this situation to Jesus who, at the first instant, almost

refused Her, saying, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." But He then performed the miracle and transformed the water into wine. So, when we give Mary our problems and everything that is in our hearts, She will bring them to Jesus and He will surely not refuse what She brings to Him. Mary continues ...

SO THAT WITH HIS IMMEASURABLE LOVE, he may burn and transform your sorrows into the joy of his resurrection.

This is our hope, that everything will really be transformed into the good. During this Lent and after this message, we will surely 'take advantage' of this. Mary offers to help us and we shall accept this help and Jesus will transform everything into the good. And this is again the purpose of our prayer, our fasting, our opening up and giving all that is within our hearts to Mary so that we can then be liberated from sin and evil and reach the resurrection. Jesus' love for us is immeasurable and that is the love with which He is being loved by the Father and with which He loves the Father. And, in this year which is dedicated to the Father, we will surely want to especially pray for the love of the Father to manifest itself in our heart because it is only this love that can liberate our heart from evil and give us inner freedom. And, with this freedom, love, peace and trust will also come, and we will then surely feel a deep longing for God's love, which will bring about an exchange in our heart: God's love will touch our heart and, the more we are being touched by God's love, the more peace we will have and, the more peace we attain in this manner, the more we will long for God's love. And this will last into eternity. This is what every human heart longs for. Finally, at the end of the message, Mary says once again ...

THAT IS WHY, I NOW CALL YOU IN A SPECIAL WAY, LITTLE CHILDREN, FOR YOUR HEARTS TO OPEN TO PRAYER, SO THAT THROUGH PRAYER YOU MAY BECOME FRIENDS OF JESUS.

According to this message, the ultimate purpose of our prayers is to become a friend of Jesus and, let us not forget, prayer is the meeting with Jesus. However, in order to be able to become His friend and to remain so, we must free our prayer from every egoism and every selfishness. Egoism and selfishness are the most dangerous enemies of any friendship. If someone only

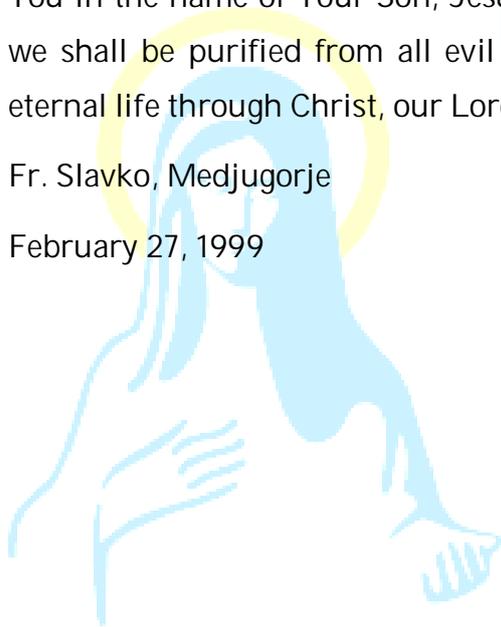
comes to us when he needs something - when he is egotistical and selfish - then we shall certainly not easily take up a friendship with him and live in friendship. This is also how it is with regard to Jesus and us. If we only pray for selfish reasons when we need something, then we will surely have experienced that we do not get everything we asked and hoped for. Selfishness then brings about anger which, in turn, brings forth rage, opposition and distrust because, if a selfish person does not get what he wants, he inwardly becomes still more and more unsatisfied and unhappy and nothing else. In order to be able to live this friendship with Jesus, we must, therefore, pray to be liberated from selfishness to be truly free in prayer so that, after having asked Jesus for something, we can say in freedom and with love and trust, "Your will be done!" If we are really serious about this and have it in our hearts, then our friendship with Jesus will grow because then we will know that He does what is best for us, even then, when we don't get what he had prayed for. So, Mary teaches us also at the end of this message that we should begin a new, good relationship with Her and also with Jesus Himself, and She gives us the hope that everything will truly be transformed into the glory of the Resurrection, into eternal joy and eternal peace. And for this let us pray ...

Lord, our God, heavenly Father, we want to thank You for Mary, Your humble servant, our mother and intercessor, the Mother of Your Son, Jesus. Thank You for sending Her to us and that She guides and teaches us in Your name. With Her, we ask You, O Father, give us the grace that, during this time of Lent, we contemplate and live with Her the passion of Your Son, Jesus. Give us the grace that our heart is open before You, just as Her heart is open before You. Mary, thank You for inviting us to give You everything - and we do this now. We give into Your motherly hands all the good which is within us, the positive and all joys. We thank You and give all this to You so that the good shall not hinder us on our way with You. We give You all our good deeds of our past and present and also all our good deeds of our future - we give You everything. But we thank You for also encouraging us to lay into Your hands the negative, the bad and the sin and so we entrust to You our pride, our selfishness, our envy, our jealousy, all our negative feelings, all our dependencies and all our passions, all wounds, all wounded relationships between us and members of our families, all problems which we carry in our

hearts and which we experience in our families, in the communities, in the Church and in the world. Thank You, Mary, that You want to offer everything to Jesus. Jesus, we thank You for listening to Your Mother, as You did in Cana in Galilee, and we ask You with Mary, Your Mother, to transform our hearts, to transform the sorrow into joy, the hopelessness and disappointments into hope, every discord into peace, every hate into love, every distrust into trust. Take away from us every spiritual death so that we can live in You and give us the grace to tirelessly cherish Your friendship. We ask You, Father, in the name of Your Son, Jesus, and Mary to forgive us whenever we did not trust, love, hope and when we did not believe. Give us the grace, O Father, we ask You in the name of Your Son, Jesus, with Mary that we live this Lent so that we shall be purified from all evil and thus attain the resurrection and gain eternal life through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Slavko, Medjugorje

February 27, 1999



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