

Reflection on the Message of March 25, 1999

"Dear children! I call you to prayer with the heart. In a special way, little children, I call you to pray for conversion of sinners, for those who pierce my heart and the heart of my Son Jesus with the sword of hatred and daily blasphemies. Let us pray, little children, for all those who do not desire to come to know the love of God, even though they are in the Church. Let us pray that they convert, so that the Church may resurrect in love. Only with love and prayer, little children, can you live this time which is given to you for conversion. Place God in the first place, then the Risen Jesus will become your friend. Thank you for having responded to my call."

March 25, 1999

Heartfelt greetings to all who are hearing Mary's messages from Medjugorje and who also are trying to live them. As always, let us, before we begin thinking about this month's message, remember and think about what Our lady told us last month when she began Lent with us. She told us that she lives with us in a special way in this time, and that she also lives the suffering of her Son Jesus. Although we do not really know what this means, it still remains clear that Mary is mother, that she was always with Jesus during His sufferings, and that she is with each of us in our sufferings, for she is the mother who always accompanies us. Moreover, she is also the one who teaches us because she also spoke with us about her role. When we entrust everything to her, she brings everything that we have in our hearts to Jesus. Then, due to her intercession, Jesus will burn away everything negative in our hearts and will, with His Love, change everything into a resurrection. This is the inner process of healing, and this is also an indirect invitation for confession. It is always important to remember that our inner healing begins the minute we start believing that everything will turn out for the good. When we are wounded in the family, between husband and wife, between parents

and children, and by all those other things that can happen in life, but still we begin to believe that the behavior of those who are making us suffer can also bring about good for us, then this is a real grace. This then is a real inner resurrection. For such a grace one can really only pray for before the cross -- the cross that especially during Lent, is so clear to all our eyes. To remain friends with Jesus, as Mary called us to do in that message, we must first free our prayers from all selfishness and all pride. This is a constant process within us, and I would also say a fight against our selfishness that hinders us from being friends with the others around us, with nature as also with God. We know that our friendship with God, with nature and with the others around became lost at the moment of the first sin, so the reverse process is the overcoming of all sins and their fruits, and an entry into the resulting friendship with Jesus.

The stream of pilgrims is again growing from day to day, and at this moment, for Our Lady's Feast of the Annunciation, we have groups here from Germany, both the Czech and Slovak Republics, from Italy, Poland, Korea, France, England and the USA. But we also know that many more would wish to be here now, but because of the conflicts in Yugoslavia, Serbia and Kosovo, they are also fearful of coming now. Here in Herzegovina, however, everything is quiet and peaceful as usual, because Kosovo and Macedonia are after all still a long distance from here, and we pray that it will soon be over, and that peace may come to all people. At the moment Jacov, Mirjana and Ivanka are all here at home, while Vicka went to Rome for a short visit. Marija is in Italy and Ivan is in the USA, and we hope and expect that they too will be here for Easter.

As we all know, Mirjana has her annual apparition of Our Lady on her birthday, March 18. Since Christmas 1982, Mirjana no longer has daily apparitions, but Mary promised that she would appear to her once a year for the rest of her life, and for this Mary chose Mirjana's birthday. The apparition lasted for 6 minutes and Mary came to Mirjana from 10:14 until 10:20 in the morning. Many people had gathered in prayer in Sr. Elvira's sports arena. Mirjana told us that Mary spoke to her about the secrets that remain just that -- secret to us -- and that she blessed all those who were present. The message that Mirjana wrote down for us is the following:

"Dear Children! I want you surrender your hearts to me, so that I may lead you on the path that leads to the light and to eternal life. I do not want your hearts to wander in today's darkness. I will help you. I will be with you on this way of discovery of the love and mercy of God. As a mother, I ask you to permit me to do this. Thank you for having responded to my call."

The topic that is repeated so very often here in Medjugorje is not only that of prayer, but also the opening and the giving to God and to Mary of our hearts. We know that we can only supply the conditions to be open and to give our hearts when we come to love and trust someone. Love and trust can only grow when we spend time with someone. It is this way too with God and with Mary. When we have decided for prayer, and take the time for it, already then it concerns an open heart, so God gives us the first impulse to open ourselves, and then it depends on us whether we wish to cooperate. So Mary, as mother, wishes to lead us on the path to light and eternal life. She also, as any good mother would, offers herself as the one who can lead us out of the dark into the light. God's light is often a topic in the Bible, and Jesus says: "I am the light, the way and the life." Darkness is the result of sin and is where all evil thrives, so Mary wishes to lead us away from evil into which we have fallen by way of our sins and others' sins, and then lead us toward the light of God, but we may never lose the hope that a path away from all sin is possible for everyone of us. When we think about the dark sides of the present world, we quickly think of all many wars, the hate, the endless destruction, so much alcohol and drugs, the many abortions and the legalized euthanasia, the overall lack of respect for life and for all of nature. All these are dark sides of this time that we live in. While when we look at ourselves, we discover that the dark sides are always effective when we ourselves fail to see the good that is inside us at the same time. It is the same when we only see what is bad inside us and at the same time we fail to see what is good in us. The dark side in us also takes over when we do wish to see what is good in the others, and when we neglect to thank and to praise God for all that is good in them. The same happens when we fail to spread what is good in the others, because darkness is most effective when we constantly have before our eyes what is not so good in them. It is when we constantly accuse them that we fail in learning how to forgive. We must really listen to Mary in these times and reach our hands to

her so that she may lead us away from what is in darkness, and to where there is light. She urgently wishes to accompany us on the path where we will meet God's love and mercy. Since August 2, 1987, Mary prays with Mirjana on the 2nd of every month for all non-believers, and this means for those who have yet experienced the love of God. This is one of Mary's primary intentions and she offers herself as our guide and teacher on this path of conversion. At the end of Mirjana's message Mary even asks us that we may permit her to play this role of guide. Here she is in fact touching upon the problem of our freedom. Man has been given the gift of freedom, and in this freedom we really can discover the great secret of all human behavior. On the one side, every single human-being yearns so very deeply for what God is, through Mary, offering us here -- love, mercy, light, eternity, freedom from all dependencies, and from all darkness -- and yet, on the other side, man can say 'no' to God and seek his own version of love, joy and fulfillment on false paths and from false gods, and, as a side-effect, he can even destroy himself completely while doing so. God is asking us, by way of Mary, to open our hearts to Him and to also entrust our freedom to Him. He will never take it from us and it is not something unworthy of man to do, but when we entrust all our freedom to Him we will become capable of living our freedom in love. THAT then is the highest human achievement. A person who has recognized himself as a free being is the one who has recognized that he can always keep growing in love, in hope, in charity, in mercy, in faith, and in so doing offers himself to all the others with love. Such a person has reached the highest goal and the highest fulfillment possible in life's experiences.

On March 25, which this year was on the Feast of the Annunciation, we were again given a message from Our Lady by way of Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti. And the first thing that Mary again said was...

I CALL YOU TO PRAYER WITH THE HEART

Prayer is the most abundant Marian message. We know that because this specific call has been given us time and time again. It is important to say here that the one who decides for God and for Mary with love, and decides to give them time in prayer is the one who prays with the heart. This is the definition of praying with the heart -- to create the conditions for prayer no matter what

one feels at the moment, whether one is sad, tired, distracted, wounded, angry or whatever, one still goes to pray because Mary is the one who has asked us to pray a lot. This person will be praying with the heart. And when one has developed perseverance in prayer, when one prays every day, then one really also grows in prayer. I do not get tired of repeating that we may never judge our prayer. We may not use the mentality of results or successes as we do in school or at work in our experiences with prayer, because then we will soon begin to measure our prayer according to what we have received. God does not distribute graces because we might have expressed a pretty sentence at some time or because we were intensively concentrated, but He gives us graces because He loves us. When we simply pray the way we are, then our prayer is quite all right. We should really call prayer the 'encounter', because prayers of petition are merely one dimension of the many ways of 'encountering' God. So, please, let us all again renew our very conscious decision for prayer, and that because Mary calls us to do so and that then will be the beginning of praying with the heart.

IN A SPECIAL WAY ... I CALL YOU TO PRAY FOR CONVERSION OF SINNERS, FOR THOSE WHO PIERCE MY HEART AND THE HEART OF MY SON JESUS WITH THE SWORD OF HATRED AND DAILY BLASPHEMIES

Conversion, another of the fundamental messages that Mary repeats time and time again, means a departure from the world, from oneself, from sin, from what is dark, and turning toward God and toward His light. It means a departure from hate, and a turning toward love, a departure from stinginess and greed, and a turning toward mercy and generosity. Mary mentions hate and blasphemies here. Hate is really a negative condition in the soul of a person that came about by way of wounds that the person has received. So we find hate wherever people are wounded and are unable to forgive. Sad as it is, in that way one can also find hate even among the hearts of children toward their parents, in the hearts of parents toward their children, and in the hearts of husbands and wives toward their spouses. Wherever one finds a person who is being wounded, there the spring of hate is being tapped. Hate is then the condition in which negative powers are developed, and this then is the will

for destruction of one's own life, and that of the others. It is hate that causes all wars and all other forms of violence. It is the terrible destructive power that is caused by wounds that cannot be forgiven. God wishes to heal our hearts and Mary prays and wants us to pray for those who have become blind and deaf due to hate and therefore no longer see or hear anything and only wish to destroy. This is one of the most urgent assignments that we have been given by Mary in these dark times. Blasphemies are also really the fruits of hate. People blaspheme against God and what is holy, against people, and this includes all cursing and swearing and all other negative ways of expressing hate. St. James says in his letter: "The one who does not sin with his words is a complete person." So, blasphemy comes from an unclean and wounded heart in which the negative feelings are developed, and are then, in the form of words, used to continue wounding others. We must also be very aware that we are responsible for those people who blaspheme -- in that we are obligated to always pray for them with the intention that they may all come to experience God's love and mercy, that they may be so deeply touched by the hearts of Mary and of Jesus that their hearts too will open themselves to the good and the merciful, and so that in the end their words may only be used for what is good and that prayer may finally be born through their resurrected hearts. It is this responsibility that Mary is giving us in this message.

LET US PRAY ... FOR ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT DESIRE TO COME TO KNOW THE LOVE OF GOD, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE IN THE CHURCH

Mary, as already said, is praying that all of us, including the non-believers, may receive the grace of experiencing the love of God. Sadly to say it is true that one can be a member of the Church and even go to church occasionally, but at the same time never be seeking God's love because one has never opened oneself to it. In another message Mary said, SEEK GOD, NOT ACCORDING TO YOUR NEEDS, BUT THE WAY HE IS. God is the loving and merciful God, He is Our Father, He yearns with great love for every one of His creations, and most especially so for every human-being because humans are the highest level of creation here on His earth, and because every human is His child that He created out of pure love. He had thought of every one of us

even before we were conceived in the womb of our mothers. He tells us through the prophets, "Even when a child's mother forgets her child, I will not forget you." So, this love is a father's love that every one of us also needs, but we can be blinded and give our hearts to false hopes and expectations so that we may never seek the Father's love for us or may even refuse it. That, in turn, is again our freedom. A Christian who does not grow in love, does not yearn for God's love, does not try to come closer and to delve into God's love is really only superficially a Christian who, in turn, only belongs to the Church as an organization. Many of the problems in today's Church are coming about due to these people, in that so many endless discussions are needed, and so many divisions have occurred about so many serious matters that the most important of all things here on earth is missed -- that of experiencing God's love for each of us. We can have all wisdoms imaginable, but if we are not in God's love, we can simply not be real or even good Christians. We can know the whole Bible by heart, but if we are unable to grow in love, than even all that will not help us. St. James tells us, "Satan knows everything, but what good does it do him?" Love is the gift that God wishes to give us, and Mary calls us to pray so that all Christians may receive this grace, because if love is not abundant here then the Church is dead, man is dead, the family is spiritually dead; and because we are now coming closer to the Feast of the Resurrection, God, of course, wishes for us to become alive through love. Twice in this message Mary says...

LET US PRAY

...and so she prays with us, and is also calling us to pray with her, telling us that she wishes...

THAT THEY CONVERT, SO THAT THE CHURCH MAY RESURRECT IN LOVE

All of the Church throughout the world is today suffering with great problems, but the ONLY way that these problems can be solved is when love among all its millions of members again resurrects. Mary, as mother of the Church, carries the Church and worries for the Church, and is here, in this message, giving us the ONLY way for love to resurrect in her Church. So, when we know of all the difficulties within the Church, when we ask ourselves what we can do

to help it, when we can see that many churches stand empty, when we see that youth no longer go to church, when we see that many are officially disengaging themselves from the Church, and so forth, then we may not say, "I cannot do anything". Here it is clear and simple, we can easily do what has the best possible results, pray that the Church may resurrect in love. Then the Church will also become a witness to love and to peace. The Church must be a mother, and here in Medjugorje we can speak about the Marian and thus motherly Church. This is the Church that out of love, and from being a mother, is serving God's people throughout the whole world. Such a Church has always and everywhere and at every standard and within every structure had its own room which simply cannot be taken over by anyone. When the Church is trying to do something else somewhere, it will certainly lose its place there. Through the resurrection in love of every one of us, the whole Church will be helped to resurrect, and we should not wait until all of the Church resurrects for us to then begin trying to resurrect with it, but rather the other way around. Through each one of us, through our personal love and resurrection in love, the Church will be helped to resurrect.

ONLY WITH LOVE AND PRAYER ... CAN YOU LIVE THIS TIME WHICH IS GIVEN TO YOU FOR CONVERSION

This time of these apparitions is certainly a special time in which many people, precisely by way of these apparitions, have found their way to conversion. We may not forget that God sends us Mary, as the Queen of Peace, and this is the time of grace. Therefore we also wish to be grateful to God for this time that He gives us, but also to ask for the grace that every one of us may become aware to live this time in conversion. The beginning of conversion is to...

PLACE GOD IN THE FIRST PLACE

He is Lord, and no-one else. ONLY He can fill our hearts, ONLY He can bring us to the light, the way, the truth, and to life, and all else for which our heart yearns. Now is the time to ask ourselves, "Who is it who is in the first place in our hearts?" If I have little time for prayer, for Holy Mass, for Adoration, and if I do not actively yearn for God's love in the Holy Sacraments that He has given us, then I cannot say that God is in the first place in my life. When we

place God in the first place in our lives, we will then also begin to place ourselves, all material things, all Godless ideologies, all worldly distractions, and everything else in our lives, in their correct places. Wherever God has lost the first place, there is no light, no love, no faith, no trust, but rather there is darkness, distrust, and selfishness; and that is why there is such disorder today and so many problems in the lives of single individuals, in the families, in the Church, and also throughout the whole world. We must, to save ourselves, to survive, place God in the first place and really begin opening our hearts to Him. THEN we will resurrect and have the Resurrected Jesus, Emmanuel -- God with us -- really with us. THEN we will experience Him like the two Apostles of Emmaus -- as the One who is with us, who explains life and suffering to us, who then warms our hearts, and we will also experience Him the way those said that He burnt their hearts when He explained Scripture to them.

THEN THE RISEN JESUS WILL BECOME YOUR FRIEND

Mary also mentioned the friendship with Jesus in February's message. The Risen Jesus is here for us. He, with His life, with his Resurrection, brought us the proof that life is stronger than death, that love is stronger than hate, and He leads us as the only Way to Eternal Life. And, knowing this, let us again pray.

God, our Father, we thank for Your fatherly love -- the love that yearns for us because You created us in Your love. We thank You for the becoming of man of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and we thank You for Mary's open heart who, at the Annunciation, said, "Father, Thy will be done." In the name of Your Son, and with Mary, we ask You, O Father, give us the grace that we may encounter You in our prayers. Bless all people who are wounded in their hearts and who therefore live in hate. Cleanse their hearts and fill them with love. Fill with love the hearts of those who are embittered and are therefore blaspheming, and let new and good words develop in their hearts. Father, give this grace to all those who, through Baptism, have become Your children and members of the Church that they may all yearn to experience Your love. Free every heart of false expectations, of false paths, of false lights, and so that all of us may grow in love. Let the Church resurrect in love so that she may overcome all

problems and then may become witness for love and peace in this world. Father, give each of us the grace of conversion, because Yours is the first place in our lives so that we may decide for You, and in the name of Your Son, we resist all sin and all evil, and wish to keep our hearts free for You. Come, O Father, with Your Son in the Holy Spirit, let us resurrect and become witnesses of Your Love and Your Peace, through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Slavko, Medjugorje

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