

(From the Blue Book - Abandon Yourselves Totally to me)

(P. 95 - )

"The first thing to understand is the Will of God, even in suffering"

Welcome to everyone. The apparitions still come every evening. Every evening, Ivanka, Vicka, Jacov, Marija and Ivan still see Our Lady. They have been seeing her for 46 months; by the 24th April it will be 46 months.

It is already a long story. None of us ever dared to wish for anything like this. Apparitions like this are unknown in the history of the Church. And everybody keeps wondering how on earth is it possible? And we too wonder how is it possible.

But what can we do with these five (originally six) who have said from the first evening until today 'we see Our Lady'?

And they are personally sorely tried, and not only they, but also the Parish and the Franciscan community have had a lot of trouble and trials, but the contact with Our Lady goes on in spite of all our problems. Even today, we are in trouble, but we feel secure because we have learnt a lot from our past history, we have learnt that Our Lady will find new solutions, and that from these we will emerge purified. But we can see here that every cross, every difficult situation does not come to destroy us but to make us rise again. And this is the first message for all of you, for all of us.

All the crosses you have to bear, all the troubles you have, do not come to destroy, they are not in your lives to destroy but to help you rise again. For example, the message that Our Lady gave through Ivanka on Good Friday is this: *"All of you in the Parish have a heavy and difficult cross to bear, but do not be afraid to bear it. My Son is here and He will help you."*

What is said for the Parish is said for all of you, you are the Parish. And so I repeat: of course there are many who come here for cures - physical or psychical cures, but I tell you that the first thing to look for is the Will of God, that His Will be done even in trouble, sickness, or in suffering.

So, in any situation, we must look for and try to do the Will of God. And this is the meaning of the message of the 24th March, the eve of the Annunciation.

Our Lady said: *"Today I invite you to make your confession, even if you have already done so recently. I want you to live my feast day in your hearts but you cannot live it without giving yourselves completely to God. I invite you to reconcile yourselves with God."* To be reconciled in this situation, said on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation, is deeply significant.

To be reconciled with God does not only mean forgiving someone; the deep meaning is to accept God's plan for us with all our lives. We lost this reconciliation with God when we began to sin in the earthly paradise; when men said: I do not want to follow you - I will go my own way.

Our Lady invite us to reconciliation on the day she herself consciously said "Yes" to Our Lord. She had her own programme, her plan for her life, she was engaged to be married. God came to her and said to her "You shall be the Mother of Jesus". She did not understand but she said "Yes".

This is reconciliation and this is also the meaning of peace, of conversion - accepting the Will of God.

That is why we say when you come here and when you want to live the message Our Lady has given, the only thing you must do now and always is to live the Will of God. The Will of God is hard for us of course, but in another message, she said: *"Accept me, dear children, and then you will be happy."* Everything Our Lady asks for is for our own good.

Then in a message given to Jelena, she said: *"Dear children, I am saved but I want you to be saved too."*

A very important message is that of the 28th March when she said: *"Pray, pray, pray. You will find the greatest joy in prayer."* No one amongst us is against this joy, the greatest. And so no one refuses joy, we search for it all our lives. But why do we so often not find it? Perhaps the reason is that we do not yet know how to pray.

And from this message we can see what is meant by prayer. Prayer is a way of meeting Our Lord, and meeting Him is very important. On a human level, if you want to meet someone, you must have time for him, sit down, have a coffee or eat and talk, see what he wants, how he is, listen to his problems and tell him your too; this is a meeting, at least on a human level.

To be able to pray, to feel a deeper joy, one must take time for prayer. Prayer does not mean just saying a Hail Mary or an Our Father, it means meditating in your hearts.

The prayers asked for in these apparitions are: The Creed and seven Our Father's, the whole Rosary, monthly confession, the Mass and fasting. At the beginning Our Lady asked for one day of fasting and as from August 1984, two days.

How you fast and if you fast, I do not know. It does not interest me. What I want to tell you though is what Our Lady wishes. When she wishes for some thing, it is for our good. Prayer is the way to feel a deeper joy and peace. Fasting, too, is a way. We do not fast for fasting's sake and we know that fasting is first of all a service for the faith.

You must be very careful. Our Lady has announced atheism and here we can say that she is fighting against atheism, our practical atheism. We are all a bit atheist and when Our Lady asks for fasting, she is asking us to live two days a week like poor people before the Lord.

Fasting means leaving everything and opening our hearts to God. Our Lady also fasted two days a week because it was the custom to do so in the early Church, on Wednesdays and Fridays. And Our Lady lived like the early Church.

So we must open our hearts and wait only for God.

The Holy Fathers say fasting is the prayer of our body. This connection between fasting and faith means that if one is poor, one cannot ever say 'I do not need you.' The poor in spirit will never say to Our Lord 'I do not need you.' They are open to Him. Atheism enters into us when our love is full of our plans and projects, and our thoughts are then closed to God, then we become atheists.

There is another aspect of fasting - it sets in motion a process of purification. In this materialistic world, we become blind because of the things we have and always want more of. The heart of man knows no bounds to this desire to have, unless he can find them in the process of purification.

To be purified of these possessive desires, wanting only to have. Fasting helps and if we begin and if we go on, we will realise two things: that we have enough and that there is no need for much fear and anguish about how to live, and we shall see that thousands all over the world are, at this moment, dying of hunger or are without the bare necessities for life.

Our Lady, as Mother of all, invites us to share, to give; but fasting is not giving something to others. A poor man has to fast, too, so as not to feel the bitterness of his poverty, to be free even in poverty. One does not ask a poor man for money for others.

A rich man must fast, live on bread so as to see the others, to be able to see that he, too, needs to feel near Our Lord, in spite of his riches. Therefore, we can say that prayer and fasting are as fundamental to our lives as Christians, as breathing and eating are to our physical lives. When we breathe and eat, our lives develop according to our situation.

Our Lady begins like this and gives us the means of living as Christians who feel and listen and love God above everything else and love their neighbours as themselves.

But we cannot discuss fasting for long; Let me give you some advice ! Begin to fast and you will see.

Just recently I had an interview with a professor of spirituality for a newspaper, a convert. We also talked about fasting and he said: 'I know that fasting helps me, I know that when I fast, I can pray much better and have more time for myself, for God and for the others. I am happy to have discovered this.'

So many people tell me they cannot fast. A pilgrim said: 'I am ashamed to meet Fr. Tomislav because once in confession he asked me if I fasted and I said I could not.' And he answered: 'Yes, I can believe that you cannot start, but I do not believe you cannot try !'

After some months, she said: 'I am ashamed to meet Fr. Tomislav, because I realise that I can fast even three days a week and still feel well.' Then she said something else: 'I am happier and my family has become quite different. Now I see that there is no reason to be worried if I live on bread for a day. I save many things. If I live like this for one day, I am more open for many other things.'

And so I say: 'Try!' if you cannot do it, it is not a sin to try ! Our Lady asks for an ideal, one can say, and we must gradually stretch towards this ideal.

But again I say: do not fast just for the sake of fasting. Do you know the story of the Pharisee to whom Jesus said: you already have your recompense when the Pharisee said to him: I fast twice and pray and give alms. So I am better than this man in the corner. So he judged: I can, the other cannot.

No, we do not pray so as to pass judgement on those who do not, we do not fast in order to pass judgement on those who do not. I pray, I fast because in this way I can meet Our Lord. I can feel His presence more and I am more open to others, too.

One thing I want to conclude with is this: in one of her inner conversations with Our Lady, Jelena asked Her: 'Why are you so beautiful ?' The answer was: "*Because I love. If you wish to become beautiful, you must love.*" Wonderful advice.

There is no one in the world who does not wish to be beautiful, even when they have faces that only a mother can love. All of us would like to be beautiful and to become so, we must begin to love, to open our hearts to love. One can live with someone who loves, who is ready to be

reconciled even if they do not really have external beauty. As for inner beauty, we all have the chance of it; this chance is always with us and in us.

A beautiful mother wishes to have beautiful children: this is why Our Lady came and has stayed so long with us.

We all know that it is not easy to love, but love is not a word, it is a life. It means forgiving, seeing others, visiting the sick; all this means love. If we say it is difficult, it does not mean that it is worthless; the difficult things are so often the worthwhile things, the valuable things. I also wish, in the name of the Parish, of the visionaries, in the name of Our Lady whom we cannot see but whom we feel, that you may have the experience when she said: *"Pray, pray, pray. It is in prayer that you will feel the deepest joy."*

Not just beginning today but going on when you go back to your families. Last year, after Easter, Our Lady said: "There are so many sick who have not received graces because they stopped praying when they got back to their homes."

We must go on with prayer and fasting and open our hearts and look for the Will of God. When we do this we are sure Our Lord will always be with us.

(Fr. Slavko Barbaric - 10th April 1985)