

(From the Yellow Book - I beseech you, listen to my messages and live them)

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"We are once more invited to say our 'Yes'"

Why these apparitions ? Our Lady herself has answered this question, "*I have come to bring you peace. I am the Queen of Peace.*"

All this time Our Lady is with us is of no use if it is only to give us new invitations and messages, but it should serve to educate us in the search for peace. What does Our Lady do to teach us how to attain peace ? What does She propose to us in order that we may be ready to achieve complete peace ?

Our Lady has given us several indications as to what we should do. it was not by chance that on the third day of the apparitions She appeared with the Cross. Marija said, "Our Lady came with a big cross and crying, She repeated three times, 'Be reconciled'"

On looking at all the messages and at what this one shows, Our Lady had to teach us about the Cross and sacrifice in order to teach us about peace.

Our Lady has no complexes before the Cross. Many pilgrims have testified that they have seen the Cross changing, becoming whiter or taking another shape. Many said they had seen a statue in place of the Cross or near the Cross.

The visionaries say that when Our Lady goes away they see the Cross, the Heart and the sun. In her messages She said, "*Come near to the Cross, from it come numerous graces. Pray before the Cross*", and She also said about the Cross on Krizevac, "*The Cross has been built according to the providence of the Lord. Pray before the Cross.*" Why does Our Lady do this ? What significance could this message have ? The peace to which Our Lady invites us is a gift from God - it cannot be bought or sold, it can only be accepted as a gift. This peace is an invitation to open our hearts, to accept it as a gift from the Lord and afterwards to bring it to others.

So, this peace requires a very deep reconciliation in us ; in fact we can only make progress towards the advancement of peace if we are reconciled to God in every situation, and to others.

The problem of reconciliation and peace is not that others are aggressive or may have offended us, but it is a matter of our forgiveness. The problem is not the wound, but our own egoism which is wounded - if we were as Our Lady, we would always forgive. To forgive is not easy, it is inevitably a cross ; but only by forgiving do we receive peace and are able to grow in love.

The Cross is naturally a symbol of the union between God and man with the two dimensions, horizontal and vertical. The Cross is also a sign of balance. In the image of Our Lady and the Cross we can feel the greatest invitation to reconciliation. We cannot be happy, we cannot experience joy and peace unless we are reconciled. Let us now see why wars occur, why all these disasters ?

In today's readings the Church proposes that we meditate on the first mother, Eve and the first man, Adam. Something convinced them that if they abandoned the Lord they would obtain something more. they would have become new masters. They believed in this promise from

the devil. The Bible tells that the devil, the enemy of man, had promised them this. Having committed this sin and having lost the friendship of God, a great disaster followed - they were unable to love God any more or to listen to His voice and they had to hide themselves when they heard His steps because they had to accept the responsibility of what they had done.

God asked them, "What have you done?" The man replied, "The woman you gave me tempted me" and Eve said, "The serpent deceived me." So nobody was responsible, but it was a great disaster. And here, according to the Bible and according to our faith man was wounded in his entirety. From then on he had no peace either with God or with any creature. The vertical and horizontal dimensions were broken and there was no more any balance.

God restored this balance again with man, and Our Lady shows us what is possible. I pointed out that Our Lady was created without sin, as also the first human beings who were not wounded by sin. The problem is not whether one is created with or without sin, but what do we do with all we have received. The Virgin Mary is today before us telling us how we can be saved, reconciled - with the Cross. As only through the Cross on which Our Lord died with love have we received the treasure of so many graces. If we now want to proceed towards peace, if we want reconciliation, to create in our hearts the state of Paradise, we have to confront ourselves already from today with the Cross, as an invitation to forgive. We cannot find excuses any more for not forgiving, we cannot say, "I am unable to forgive." But when can we forgive? When we are anxious to do so, when it would be a burden if we did not forgive, when we see the Virgin Mary beside the Cross, when we feel in our hearts what Our Lord promises us if we abandon sin, if we give up sin and its attraction. It is for this reason, I believe, that Our Lady lets herself be seen Immaculate beside the Cross. She lets herself be seen by the visionaries as She is. They describe this to us and so we can once more with an earnest wish go forward.

If we are ready to help Our Lord fulfil His plan of Paradise, then Our Lady invites us to something which seems to us impossible.

We have today read in the Gospel about the Annunciation and this, not by chance.

In fact the "yes" of Our Lady is the reconciliation with the Lord. With her "yes" Our Lady has made good the "no" of our ancestors. Our Lady, when speaking to the Angel did not altogether understand everything, but after having heard that with God everything is possible, said "Here, I am ready". So to be reconciled, purified, today is a sign for us to say again with all our heart "yes". It is not easy. It is not by chance that Our Lady said to us all, personally, "*For Our Lord nothing is impossible.*"

When we speak to the visionaries we hear them speaking of Our Lady in this manner. Marija said, "I may come completely tired out to the apparitions, but afterwards I could embrace the whole world." If in this Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary we could also feel a little the desire for an inner purity, for love, for peace, for reconciliation, then we will have made a big step forward, because already feeling that it is possible we will no more be afraid in the face of the Cross and we will not ask ourselves any more, "How is it? How many times did I have to fast, how many times must I pray?" When we have understood what Our Lord is promising us in giving us Our Lady for all this time, then we will be full of joy and in trials we will no longer find ourselves in difficulty.

Understand me well - we will no more have difficulties with our crosses because we will know that whatever happens in our life may well be for our own good. Our Lady repeated many times, "*Pray in order to be able to accept the cross with love as Jesus Christ accepted it.*" She also said, "*Start doing all I am telling you and you will not be sorry.*"

I trust that your stay here in these days may be a sign to you and a reason for you all to be touched by Our Lady the Mother, in the depth of your hearts.

Recently I experienced something very beautiful. An Italian boy said to me, "Father, I cannot recognise myself any more. When at home I so often miss Mass, it meant nothing to me. Here I do not understand a word but I feel so good. How is this?"

I replied, "I do not know, but perhaps all I can say is that here Our Lady, with Her presence, has touched your heart and so now you feel a little more the presence of Christ even if you do not understand it." I have told you that for a long time peace has been possible, since Christ died on the Cross, but we have become somewhat hard and we no longer wish for peace, reconciliation and love, with all our heart. We are witnessing a very special grace here if we start with an open heart.

Your presence here is a clear sign of the wonderful work of Our Lady. I am also convinced that you will all receive a great purification now to enable you to continue following Our Lady.

But do not forget that in the beginning Our Lady let herself be seen beside the Cross which is our goal. And the path is often hard, it sometimes becomes really a burden and we will feel weak, but this does not matter; do not forget the reason why and then all will be for your own good.

Once Our Lady told us in a message, "*All the temptations that come from satan, all the difficulties, these can be converted to the glory of God and for your own good as long as you pray and love.*"

So I would say that this phenomenon of Medjugorje is a new beginning which Our Lord gives us, He presents Our Mother to us and says, "Look how Blessed Mary was, not however so much because of her strength, but because of the grace with which She collaborated." It is as if He were saying to us that we can also become like Her. Our Lady once said almost the same thing, "*Give me your hearts, I want to change them and make them become like my Heart.*" This means that my heart and your heart can become like the Heart of Our Lady.

How is this possible? How is the heart of Our Lady? A faithful heart, a heart which has more room for the Word of God in which love and peace can grow. The Heart of Our Lady is a Heart that loves, that does not tire, that did not tire, that will never tire because it is a loving heart.

At this moment is my heart perfect? Or, who can say: I am so worn out that I cannot bear love in my heart any more? Nobody can. We can all begin to open our hearts more and in so doing, Our Lord can continue to do His work. This is an invitation, Our Lord's plan - that we become as our Mother.

A fortnight ago Our Lady invited us in a message to consecrate ourselves with love. And so this invitation to the consecration is the same thin as when She invited us saying, "*Give me your heart as I want to change it according to my Heart.*" Because the word 'consecration' is not an empty word, but means - I become sacred, saintly with One who is already holy and I entrust myself to Him on my path.

This is the first meaning of the consecration - I give my hand and my heart to Our Lady who is holy in order to attain holiness.

When we consecrate ourselves another very important thing takes place. In the earthly Paradise, after sin, man had to hide himself, he was left alone. Consecration means that I

come out of my solitude, I am no longer alone, but with someone who is my mother, sister, my brother, my all.

So you see then, if we want to start again with the Blessed Virgin Mary, or continue, let us consecrate ourselves. Today it is possible - we are once more invited to say our "yes". It does not matter what our life has been like up till now, Our Lady never asked how we were before. She said, "*Open your hearts, Our Lord wants to purify them.*"

In order to be purified one must also have the courage to go to confession and with humility to accept one's own truth, one's own weaknesses, recognise one's own selfishness, pride, and not to abandon one's own responsibilities saying, "I do not know who is responsible, whose fault it was." Because this is only a repetition of the words Eve said, "I am not responsible."

We must have the courage to say, "yes, I am responsible for peace, but I am also responsible for strife in my family, in my community, in the Church."

It is not easy, it is the Cross. It is not always easy to fast, to renounce sinful habits, but if we do not forget the reason why, all will not only be easy but also sweet.

Let us look at the life of the many saints. In his testaments, St. Francis said that all things before his conversion that were sweet now become bitter after having discovered Our Lord, whereas the bitter things had become sweet. Here we cannot pretend to take the bitter thing for the sweet and vice-versa. We see here a process, a growth.

So, in showing herself beside the Cross, the Blessed Virgin speaks to us today about our responsibility and invites us to utter our "yes", even if we do not understand, even if our past has been really disastrous. So today we can start again.

I hope this can help you to understand a little that this feast is a new beginning with Our Lord. The other has been a failure. This has been successful because a woman had the courage to say "yes" and by saying "yes" She became the Mother of the Messiah and on becoming the Mother of the Messiah, She became mother of us all. When one becomes a mother one starts to cultivate life and to cultivate life means to prepare for peace.

Our Lady was alone. She said "yes" on her own. Look how many we are here. Let us again say "yes" and without doubt next year there will be an explosion of peace and reconciliation everywhere.

(Fr. Slavko Barbaric - 8th December 1986)