

From the Grey Book 'Open your hearts to Mary Queen of Peace'

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It is necessary to start praying, to start with Our Lady

There is a general message: THE PRESENCE OF OUR LADY FOR EVERYONE.

The Second Vatican Council defined Our Lady as 'Mater Ecclesiae': Mother of the Church, and we are the Church. This presence of Our Lady is the strongest message of Medjugorje and this presence is seen in the daily apparitions. These daily apparitions are a problem for many people: how can it be possible ? I would never have believed that it could be possible, but I see that this is what Our Lady is doing because, for forty-two months, with absolute certainty, the visionaries say: 'We are seeing Our Lady' in front of everyone, from the Bishop down to the last pilgrim who comes here.

I would never have thought it possible, but I can see what is happening and that this is the way Our Lady has of saying "I am with you." Consecrating ourselves to Our Lady, as we did on 25th March this year (in the whole world), means: 'I accept you as my Mother and keep you in my life.' To keep Our Lady in our life means allowing ourselves to be taken to Jesus because this is what Our Lady wishes. She behaves as she did in Cana in Galilee when she told Jesus that the family had no more wine and said to the servants to do everything Jesus told them. I am sure Our Lady did not know what Jesus would say to the servants, but she knew He would say something to save the family. It was important that the servants did as He told them. This is how Our Lady is behaving here: she comes and invites us to search for Jesus because she wants us to find Him. Many times she has said: *"I need your prayers, help me !"*

A person of responsibility in the Pentecostal Church told me here that he was afraid to come to Medjugorje because Our Lady has not yet been given a place in their churches, but after coming here and seeing what is happening and that at the centre of the apparitions there are the Eucharist, the Cross and Jesus, he was able to accept the apparitions. This is very important from the ecumenical point of view.

Our Lady tells us: *"I am the Mother of everyone."* She presents herself as the handmaid of the Lord who wants to help for the salvation of her children.

A famous Franciscan sculptor was given money in America for a statue of Our Lady at Medjugorje. He came here and told me he had the time and the money but wanted confirmation from Heaven: if Our Lady permitted him to, he would make a statue, but if she did not want it, there was no one on earth who could persuade him to do it. The question was asked through Marija Pavlovic and the answer was: *"Not mine, but that of my Son (the statue) and let yourself be inspired by the words 'Come to Me all of you who are weary, I will restore you.' "* He was breathless and said he would make the statue of Our Lady's Son with her permission, but would also make Our Lady's statue without permission from Heaven. We can see that Our Lady shows herself as the humble handmaid who wants to be of use for our welfare and for our heavenly salvation: *"I am with you, but fast and pray so that you may have peace."*

In the last message before Christmas she said: *"Dear Children, I invite you to take a real step for Jesus, bring flowers. I wish every family in the Parish to bring a flower as a sign of abandonment and for each member of the family to have a flower on the crib so that Jesus may see your abandonment and come."* Like this Mother who loves us, we must prepare ourselves for the coming of her Son.

In another message Our Lady said: *"I am with you also in your sufferings."* Vicka told me that Our Lady had been present during her forty-five minute operation which took place at 4.00 pm. A young man was in the room after the operation and Vicka was still under the effects of the anaesthetic when, at 5.45 pm, she woke up, without an alarm, and had an apparition lasting five or six minutes. Immediately after the apparition she was under the effect of the anaesthetic again. The young man told me that if only he had had a video recorder it would have been the proof of all those who still have doubts. This apparition during Vicka's operation is a message for all of us. Our Lady said: *"You do not yet understand: if you want to understand my love and Our Lord's love, you must pray."* By this message she has told us something very important about prayer which is, not saying a Hail Mary to someone who is in a corner of our life, saying a Hail Mary or a Glory Be in the morning or evening and then going about our usual life; prayer is something else. Prayer is being together with someone who is listening to me and replying to me. Prayer is this communication. If we remain at a level of just asking for something, we are not praying. Prayer means taking time in the way we find time for a friend who comes to visit us and not allowing ourselves to be disturbed until we have finished our talk with him or the time we have dedicated to him. So it is in prayer, Our Lady will show herself little by little if we want to pray in this sense of prayer. We must take time. I have asked you if you can do without the telephone and all the rest for an hour, or a quarter of an hour, in your families in order to pray and to be with God ? If you say you are distracted and cannot pray it does not matter, you are distracted, but you have never looked for the place to pray. So continue or begin to pray but find both the time and the place to be able to pray. I think that we are all very busy, but we will always find excuses if we have not discovered that the whole of prayer is 'what does God mean for us.' Nobody can convince us: we must begin in in order to find out. A few months ago, I read some statistics about the hours spent watching television in France: a percentage of families watch television for eighteen hours each week, that is three hours each day. And we say we have no time to pray. We will not have time until the day in which we rediscover prayer. Prayer is being together with Our Lord. Our Lady asks us for the Creed which means decision. We live in a world full of atheism so how can we begin ? There is a personal practical atheism and an organised atheism. The practical atheism of the Christians is more dangerous for the Faith than the organised type. We must start to pray, to start with Our Lady who us asking us for Faith. Practical atheism means that I have everything and do not need Our Lord: I know Our Lord exists but I have everything. it is the most dangerous atheism for the Faith, for peace and for love. Our Lady is asking us for the whole rosary as well, all the 15 mysteries but not just to make us say one hundred and fifty Hail Mary's and then say that we have to do this again tomorrow. She is asking us to become closer to the mysteries of the Redemption, to become closer to God and to other people. The first joyful mystery means allowing Our Lord to enter our life, into the intimacy of our life as when Our Lady said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.'

The meaning of her visit to her cousin Elizabeth is: 'I am bringing the Lord to those who are waiting for me and to whom I have to go.' Each mystery should be said in this way. To pray with our heart means to find the answer for myself and this must drive me to search for reconciliation and to forgive. If the Word does not urge me to act, I remain with my sins. Conversion begins when, on hearing the Word, I start to put it into practice. Our Lady visited her cousin, Elizabeth, and if I contemplate this mystery, it means that afterwards I must know who is waiting for me today, which sick person. This is the meaning of reciting the rosary.

Fasting is something else. Fasting means 'eating' not 'not eating'. Many people think that when we fast we do not eat anything. This is not so, we eat bread and Our Lady has asked for bread and water. People have asked me if it is possible to fast on tea rather than water. Of course. Why is Our Lady asking us to fast on bread ? I believe there is a deeper reason: Our Lady is not asking us to go hungry, but to live a life of the poor. A poor person as Our Lady, is open to Our Lord and to mankind.

Practical atheism means: I do not need you. If we start to live one or two days like a poor person with just a piece of bread, little by little, a process of purification starts whereby I become detached from the material world and my egoism, and open myself to God and to others. A person who is poor in spirit forgives easily. One who is proud, for example, tries to vindicate himself, whereas a person who is poor in spirit tries to make peace; a person who is poor in spirit can never say to Our Lord he does not need Him. A proud person, full of himself, can say to Our Lord that he does not need Him.

Our Lady's teaching is quite radical but is quite possible to practice. It is radical, not in wasting our time in prayer or making us live on bread, but in order to prepare us. Prayer and fasting are indispensable means for reaching peace, faith and to be able to abandon oneself to God. The experience of not needing much when we fast, serves us and helps us to understand this passage of the Gospel that Our Lady requests every Thursday. She said: *"Every Thursday meditate on the Gospel of St. Matthew 6, 24-34 during the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament."*

This passage tells us that we cannot serve two masters: or Mammon (money) or God.

It is the same, when at the beginning the Madonna asked us to recite the 'CREED', which means to take a decision. For all else: look at the birds of the air. Why do you worry ? For all your worries and fears you cannot prolong your lives: abandon yourselves to God and search first of all for the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven consists in this: if I am open to God, if I am able to forgive, if I look for peace, if I love others, If I help as much as I can... this is the Kingdom of Heaven.

(Fr. Slavic Barbaric 29th December 1984)