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Curación y liberación a través del ayuno

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HEALING AND RELEASE THROUGH OF FASTING

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Introduction

You have hurt your leg and you have a bad wound. After a week, the wound is
It becomes infected. It becomes increasingly painful and your entire body begins to weaken. Worried, you begin taking various measures to stop the infection, spending a lot of money. But the infection resists all your attempts. Then, a specialist analyzes your infection and determines the identity of the germ. He tells you that there are only two drugs to combat this infection, and they must be used together. Each one, without the other, would be ineffective. This is a "double-dose solution" that was well known in the past.

"I want it," you say. "How much is it?"

"It's free! But you must follow the instructions carefully."

"Free? A drug as effective as this? Are you making fun of me?"

"Yes, at no cost. It's very powerful and requires very little effort."

"Great! I'll take it."

Two thousand years ago, Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the name to this incredible "double solution": prayer and fasting! But over time, we've forgotten. Today, Our Lord Jesus Christ sends us His Mother, and She simply repeats the instructions, step by step, with her typical maternal gentleness.

If we want to collaborate with the Virgin Mary, we must take seriously the practice of the instructions she gives us. Sometimes we have our own opinions, our own ways of serving the Lord, but the best way to serve the Lord and defeat the devil is to listen to Mary, the Queen of Peace.

Never before has she explained so thoroughly the best way to live the Gospels and to triumph in following Jesus Christ. She offers us the light. She teaches us these ways of acting in that incredible school of love and prayer that is Medjugorje. She tells us: "I am giving you messages like never before in history, since the beginning of time." So for 2,000 years she worked hard, but now, in a very direct way, she is speaking to our hearts because the darkness is thick and terrible. We have never been in crisis like this, and she is giving us the weapons to triumph over the devil and to help hundreds and thousands of people.

people.

When we fast and pray, we enable God to work many more miracles in our lives and in the lives of others. We give up daily food, and this creates space (freedom in our hearts), a space in which God can act, work, and do truly exceptional things within us, in our lives, and in the lives of others.

Would you jump into the water?

To test your reaction, we start with this question. Let's say you're walking along

along a river on a freezing December day. Suddenly, you hear screams: a child of barely two years old is drowning in the river! If you don't rush to his rescue, the child will die. What do you do? Do you jump into the icy river water, or do you stay still?

Of course, you jump into the water to save him. You can't let a child die, since you have the chance to save his life, and it's so easy to jump in!

Fasting is based on the same principle. It allows us to save lives: it prevents young people from committing suicide, saves children from dying, and saves families from breaking up. We have lost the meaning of fasting. According to the definition of the Catholic Catechism, fasting is the renunciation of habitual food and drink and helps us imitate Jesus Christ (Fasting: *"To renounce food and drink as an expression of intimate penance, in imitation of Jesus' fast for forty days in the desert. Fasting is an ascetic practice recommended in Scripture and in the texts of the Church Fathers; sometimes it is prescribed by some precept of the Church, especially during Lent"* - Catechism of the Catholic Church).

Unfortunately, in the West, over the last half century, we have abandoned fasting (this is not the case in Eastern countries), and we have caused real destruction to our physical and spiritual health (*"Over the centuries, I have given myself completely to you. Is it too much to ask that you dedicate three days to me? Do not work during those three days. Take up your rosary and pray. In the Catholic Church, fasting has been forgotten during the last quarter of a century"* - message of May 1984).

Have you noticed the relationship between the abandonment of the practice of fasting in the Western world and the increase in the activity of Satan and his demons? Today, Satan can easily penetrate various areas of society, even the Church, because if fasting is not practiced, the doors of protection are left open!

From Medjugorje, Our Lady warns us of the risks we are running, not because of Herself, but because of Her love for us. She realizes that we are abandoning the practice of fasting («Dear children! Today, as never before, I invite you to live my messages and to make them a reality in your lives. I have come to you to help you, and that is why I invite you to change your lives, because you have taken a wretched path, the path of perdition. When I said to you: "Convert! Fast! Pray! Fast!" you accepted this message superficially. You began to live it, but then you stopped because it was too difficult for you. No, dear children! Know that, when something is good, you must persevere in the good and not think: "God does not see me, He does not hear me, He does not help me!" And so, because of your wretched interests, you have distanced yourselves from God and from Me. I wanted to create for you a Oasis of Peace, Love, and Goodness. God wanted you, with His love and help, to perform miracles and set an example. Therefore, this is what I say to you: "Satan is playing with you and your souls, and I cannot help you because you are very far from My Heart. For

"Thank you for responding to my call!" (March 25, 1992). "Many people, after beginning to pray, to convert, to fast and to do penance here in Medjugorje, forget everything when they return to their homes and their bad habits" (April 24, 1992).

Through the visionaries, the Holy Virgin has suggested five basic points to practice, which are fundamental to our journey toward God. Often, fasting is one of the points that people tend to overlook. It is the "rejected message." I travel all over the world, visiting people who are fervent devotees of Medjugorje. I observe how they apply the other four messages very well: they hear Holy Mass, read the Bible, go to confession, and pray the Rosary. But when I ask them about fasting, they lower their gaze and don't answer, having given up on not fasting. For we have not understood the importance of fasting! Together with the other four points, it allows us to achieve holiness. Through these five points, we attain the fullness of God's Love and defeat Satan. Our Lady defines for us the meaning and beauty of fasting as the power of God working through us, a powerful instrument placed in our hands, which can perform extraordinary miracles for us and obtain what we need (*"You must strive to pray. Prayer is the only way to peace. If you pray and fast, you will obtain whatever you may have asked for"* (message to the prayer group, October 29, 1983)).

So, just as you have the courage to jump into icy water to save a life, listen to Our Lady, and she will explain to you how to save not just one child, but many. I'm sure you'll want to do it!

Fast two days a week

Fasting is an aspect of Jewish and Christian tradition, as well as of many other religions. The Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Jesus, and all pious Jews of the first century fasted two days a week. To rediscover the rules of this practice, we must return to Jesus' early disciples, who wrote about life and culture in the first century. The Didache—an ancient church document written by the first disciples around 90 AD—contained the following instructions for early Christians: "Do not fast like the hypocrites, who fast on the second day (Monday) and the fifth day (Thursday), but fast on the fourth day (Wednesday) and the sixth day (Friday)" (Didache, Doctrina Apostolorum, Epistle of Pseudo Barnabas (Patristic Sources, volume 3), Ciudad Nueva, 1992).

In Medjugorje, Our Lady brings us back to those early days of fasting, asking us to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays with bread and water (*"I ask people to pray with me on these days and to pray as much as possible. I ask them to fast strictly on Wednesdays and Fridays, and to pray at least the entire Rosary every day: the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries"* (August 14, 1984). Isn't it incredible to think that Our Lady is reestablishing this dynamic tradition that goes back to the early days of the Church, when she herself was alive?

Although Our Lady has not yet fully explained in her messages to the world the reason why she asks us to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, we know that everything the Gospa ("Lady" in Croatian) asks of us has a single purpose: to reveal Jesus. She comes for Jesus, to help us love Jesus and to bring us closer to the Heart of Jesus (*"Dear children, today also I invite you to fast and to renounce. Children, renounce that which prevents you from being closer to Jesus. I especially invite you to pray, since only through prayer will you be able to overcome your will and discover what God's will is, even in the smallest things. Children, it will be through your daily lives that you will have to be an example and bear witness to whether you are living for Jesus or against Him and His will. Children, I desire that you become apostles of love. From the love you have, children, it will be known that you are mine.*

Thank you for responding to my call" (March 25, 1998). *"Dear children! I invite you again: be open to my messages. Children, I wish to bring all of you closer to my Son Jesus.*

Therefore, pray and fast. I especially invite you to pray for my intentions, so that I may present my Son Jesus to you, and so that He may transform and open your hearts to love. When you have love in your hearts, peace will reign within you. Thank you for responding to my call!" (July 25, 2004)

Our Lady asks that every Thursday we commemorate the gift of the Eucharist and the Priesthood. One way to honor this memory is to fast with love on Wednesdays and Fridays (*These suggestions came from the Our Lady prayer group, created in 1983, when the*

The Virgin spoke to Jelena through internal locutions: "Gather about twenty young people who are ready to follow Jesus without reservation. Gather them together in a month. I will instruct them in the spiritual life. There may even be more than twenty. Adults and children can also participate, anyone who accepts the rules. I will ask these people to do penance for certain intentions. They will fast and pray for the Bishop. They will renounce what they like most: alcohol, coffee, pleasures, television. There must be some who want to consecrate themselves to a religious life. Others must be prepared to consecrate themselves especially to prayer and fasting. I will give them the rules they must follow. Anyone who follows these rules will be consecrated, whatever their state in life." In those days, we will remember with joy, faith, and gratitude that Jesus gave us his Body and Blood to nourish us and quench our thirst.

Wednesday. We prepare like the Jews in the desert, during the Exodus. God gave them manna, the bread that came to them from heaven. He was preparing his people to be the first to receive the mystery of the Eucharist. They were prepared for years, for centuries! Likewise, the Mother of God is currently preparing us. She is so in love with the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, that she offers us all of Wednesday to prepare for Thursday's celebration. Starting on Wednesday, she wants to distance us from the distractions of food, shopping, cooking, and all the problems related to food.

He wants us to immerse ourselves in the taste of bread, the bread that becomes the true Body of Jesus. On Wednesday, we shouldn't think, "I can't wait to eat." Therefore, let us begin to fast with joy and with heart, and let us begin to enjoy the reality of bread.

Thursday. On Thursday, the institution of the Bread of Life is celebrated and commemorated through the Holy Mass. The Holy Mass is at the center of everything because Jesus is at the center of everything! And Jesus ardently desires to be our Divine nourishment. The Blessed Virgin said: "During the week, I beg you to live every Thursday as if it were Holy Thursday." On Thursday, in our hearts we must celebrate—and celebrate in a truly special way—the gift of the Bread of Life that Jesus gave us during the Last Supper. On Thursday, Jesus gave humanity the most beautiful gift.

He gave Himself through the Bread of Life. That is why He could say: "I remain with you until the last day." In all the tabernacles of the world, He is with us: that is His true presence among us. Every Thursday should be a holy day for us, because on that day Jesus gave us His Body, His Soul, His Heart, and His Spirit through the Eucharist until the last day of the world. It is a very important day; it is the day of the Bread of Life.

Friday. When I listen to the Medjugorje visionaries, I am always surprised to see how the Blessed Mother never mentions the Friday fast as a commemoration of Jesus Christ's death on the cross. She never mentions it! Instead, Friday is the day after Thursday. Our Blessed Mother doesn't want us to quickly return to the distractions of food. Rather, she wants us to remain focused and not immediately return to those very special dishes like lobster, chicken, or ribs. She wants us to continue savoring the bread on Friday, so that we remain attentive to its Mystery as long as possible. It is the same attitude that the Jews have toward the Sabbath, their most sacred feast day. When Saturday morning

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As the sun sets, the Jews continue to sing and recite hymns as if they wanted to ward off the end of the day. For Jews, their relationship with the Sabbath is like that of a bridegroom and his bride: they never want it to end! Similarly, when we fast on Friday, we do so to cherish the taste of bread as long as possible.

Love the Eucharist

I always imagine the Blessed Virgin when she remained on Earth with the apostles after the Ascension. When she entered the kitchen, how could she look at the bread as she had before the Last Supper? As soon as she saw the bread, her maternal heart must have leaped. She must have thought, no doubt: "My Son gave himself to us through the bread. That is the substance into which my Son has been transformed!"

When we look at a simple seed of wheat, from which bread is made, we have before us the whole story of Christ's death and resurrection and the fruit of his Redemption. When Jesus speaks of the seed of wheat in the Gospel, we see that this seed of wheat must fall to the ground, be buried, and die. It is through this death that life returns and produces abundant fruit: thirty times more, sixty times more, or a hundred times more (Matthew 13:8). To bear fruit, the wheat seed must be crushed and produce flour, so that it can become bread. Jesus, too, was crushed: His Body, His Heart, His Soul, His entire Divine Being. The story of the seed represents the story of Jesus' love for us. He allowed himself to be crushed so that we could be redeemed by Him and sanctified through His Food.

When Jesus spoke of the Bread of Life, he said: "Whoever eats this bread will have Eternal Life."

For this reason, we can welcome Wednesday and Friday with love, with love for bread, with love for our redemption. The Blessed Virgin desires that we may grow, thanks to this, not only spiritually, but also practically. Like the sensitive Jewish woman that she is, she immerses us in the bread so that we may be with Jesus. Through fasting, she focuses our attention on the loving presence of Jesus. She makes us participants in the miracle through the fact that, in a profound gesture of humility, Jesus transforms himself into bread. This is the true meaning of fasting: her love for the Eucharist. Everything she says and transmits to us is centered on Jesus. If we fast in this way, with love for the Bread of Life, our fast is modified and becomes a joy! This is why the Most Holy Mother of God asks us to fast, and to fast with our hearts ("*Dear children! Today I invite you to begin to fast with your hearts.*

There are many people who fast simply because everyone else is fasting. It has become a custom that no one wants to abandon. I ask the parish to fast in thanksgiving, because God has allowed me to stay in this parish for so long.

Dear children, fast and pray with your heart! Thank you for having responded to my call! (September 20, 1984). In this way, we will acquire a profound love for the Eucharist. And this is an incredible grace.

Marthe Robin, a great French mystic, said: "Our glory in Heaven will be proportional to the fervor we have in our holy communions here on Earth." In her messages, the Blessed Virgin guides us toward the principles established by the Catholic Catechism:

«In order to prepare to receive this Sacrament properly, the believer

"should observe the fast required in his Church. Moreover, he should maintain a behavior, both in gestures and appearance, that is in keeping with the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment in which Christ becomes our guest." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, op. cit.) The more we receive the Bread of Life with attention, love, and profound gratitude, the greater will be our glory in heaven.

Fasting to be free

The moment we offer to God something related to our body, we can say

We are truly offering Him our very being. Giving money, time, a kind word, or our services is one thing; but fasting is something that affects our vital aspects. Food is a matter of survival, and it deeply implicates our ontological and metaphysical habits.

At the request of the Blessed Virgin, an English woman founded a community there. One day I asked her if the Virgin had asked its members to fast.

"Yes," he told me, "the Blessed Virgin asked us to fast every day."

"Every day?" I was shocked. "That's not possible!"

"We fast every day from four to six in the afternoon."

I laughed, and seeing my reaction, the woman explained to me that "we English were educated to take "tea every afternoon, between four and six."

Taking away an Englishman's tea time has a clear implication on his own identity: he is away from their childhood traditions and their national identity.

As Father Slavko Barbarie said during his fasting retreats, "Fasting reveals our dependencies, our addictions. When we fast on bread and water, various luminous signs appear to us: Coffee! Tobacco! Wine! Chocolate!" Our Lady doesn't come to take away our habits or make us uncomfortable, but rather wants to free us so that we understand how dependent we are on something during our daily routine. An indirect addiction is represented by the newspaper and television, since we don't even realize the chaotic effect it has on us. The Blessed Virgin told the Jelena prayer group that "if you watch television programs, if you read the newspapers, your head fills with news, and there is no more room for me in your hearts. Pray. Fast. Make it possible for God to act! Pray for the gift of love, for the gift of faith, for the gift of prayer, for the gift of fasting" (April 17, 1986).

When I began fasting on bread and water, my first discovery was the joy of being free from food. It didn't matter whether I ate or didn't eat. Giving up our bodies represents truly offering ourselves to God. ("Think about how much you have offended the Lord. What are you offering Him of yourselves? When was the last time you gave something up for the Lord? I do not want to scold you further about this, but I want to invite you once again to pray, fast, and do penance. If you want to obtain graces from God through fasting, then do not tell anyone that you are fasting. If you want to obtain graces from God through donations to the poor, then do not tell anyone, except God, that you are making donations. Listen to me, my children! Meditate on this message during your prayers" (June 24, 1986).

Fasting creates a vacuum that opens spaces in our souls, in our bodies and in our

hearts. If we don't worry about food, a free space is created in which God can reside like never before. Our hearts are large enough to accommodate God, but fasting allows Him to extend the goodness of our hearts to include all the heavenly dimensions. It is a new and tangible territory within us where God can invest. That is why those who fast have a special spiritual sensitivity and insight. During their mission, the apostles didn't care whether they had had time to eat or not, since their main task was to work intensely for God.

A Mexican friend once told me that she stopped fasting when she became pregnant, and it took her a full year after giving birth to fast again. During that time, she lost a certain skill in explaining life and the reality of life to her children. Her words simply no longer held any weight! As soon as she started fasting again, she was immediately inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak to them on their level, so they could understand her. The words came out spontaneously, and her children listened with open hearts. This is a wonderful example of how fasting invites the Holy Spirit to occupy that new space being created within us.
us.

Fasting to be pure

In Medjugorje, the Virgin invites us to give God all the evil that we have accumulated within us, so that He can purify us from our past sins. Only through prayer can we recognize what is evil and offer it to God so that He can completely purify our hearts. In this regard, She recommends that we pray constantly and prepare our hearts with penance and fasting (*"Dear children, today too I invite you to prepare your hearts for these days when the Lord wishes to purify you in particular from all the sins of your past. You, children, cannot do this on your own, which is why I am here to help you. Pray, dear children, only in this way will you be able to know all the evil within you and offer it to the Lord so that He may completely purify your hearts. Therefore, dear children, pray without ceasing and prepare your hearts with penance and fasting. Thank you for having responded to my call"* (December 4, 1986).

We have committed sins from the moment we were able to choose, and they have accumulated. Even after confessing our sins, we continue to suffer their consequences. The Blessed Virgin tells us that through prayer, She herself will help us free ourselves from the consequences of those past sins. If a child falls and hurts themselves, the mother will care for them and heal them from the consequences of that fall. Only the Blood of Christ can cleanse us from sin, but His Mother can help repair the damage. She is truly a Mother to us!

By fasting, we allow God to remove all that filth from us. Filth weighs heavily on us and makes us sad, depressed, and incapable of love. So, when God comes with the Holy Spirit to remove all that filth, we suddenly realize that we are capable of loving a neighbor we were never capable of loving before! This ability comes to us because through fasting we have allowed the Holy Spirit to increase His power within our hearts. By fasting, we invite the Blessed Virgin to heal us so that we may be purified more quickly. Jesus frees us from our past sins, and the Mother of God restores our beauty.

Satan's advice

The Evil One becomes furious when we make room for God in our bodies and souls, for he is eventually expelled thanks to our fasting. When we decide to fast, Satan offers us his advice: "Fasting two days a week? That's too much! This way you will isolate yourself from others! And on those days, you will look so sad, so pale and weak." Come on, have a hamburger! Even if it's Wednesday, it will do you good. God doesn't require anyone to be weak, and if you fast, you'll look weak. Be like the others, who don't worry about certain things. Enjoy life, eat what you want, be happy! Its seduction can be so

subtle! But fasting strengthens our faith («Be prudent because the devil tempts all who have decided to consecrate themselves to God, especially young people. He will tell them that they are praying too much, that they are fasting too much, that they should be like other young people and seek only pleasures. They should not listen to him or obey him. They should pay attention to the voice of the Holy Mother. Then, when you are stronger in your faith, the devil will no longer be able to seduce you» (June 16, 1983) Did Jesus in the Gospels say «behave like the others»? When we hear this kind of voice we can be sure of the source of the temptation. One way to put ourselves in Satan's hands is precisely to act like everyone else! The Christian life doesn't depend on each person's idea of what is right and what is wrong. Rather, it's about imitating Jesus! That is, being a disciple of the Master, acting like Him, going wherever He goes, and adopting Him as our model.

When Satan tempts us, let us not be so rash as to answer him. When he says, "You should eat. Don't you see how pale you are? Everyone is eating," we should not answer him, not even to say, "I want to fast. By the way, have you seen how ugly you are?" "Get lost!" No! We should never start a dialogue with Satan. If he bothers us, we must address God directly, "Lord, that one is bothering me, please do something." Satan would surely deceive us if we started a conversation with him. This is how he deceived Eve. Instead of starting a dialogue with him, if she had spoken to God, saying, "Lord, there is a serpent telling me the exact opposite of what You told me, what should I do?" she surely would not have ended up eating the fruit! When Satan acts, the Blessed Virgin says we have only one recourse: prayer. In prayer, we learn to trust in the Lord's plans, and the humility of Christ penetrates and envelops our deepest being. If we act with faith and humility, we will defeat Satan. In 1982, a year after the apparitions began, Jelena gave Father Tomislav Vlasic a message concerning some problems she had been unaware of. Jelena said, "Don't have resources for everyone. If you have a problem, you should keep smiling and praying. When God begins a work, no one can stop it." The Blessed Virgin Mary said: "Pray, fast, and allow God to act." If we can follow these warnings closely, it will be a great testimony to our Creator of our devotion to Him and our faith in His love for us.

Fasting to fight Satan

WHEN we pray and fast, we are united to the soul of Jesus and thus the Holy Spirit can establish an intimate dialogue between our soul and God. We receive His words and His confidences. We listen to His voice. With confidence, we speak to Him with our hearts, enabling an incredible unity between God and our soul. This unity, achieved through fasting and dialogue, is of course the most powerful instrument against Satan.

I must admit that sometimes I get angry when I hear people say, "We shouldn't see Satan everywhere; we're not even sure of his existence." In her messages, the Blessed Virgin reminds us that Satan exists. Her teachings about Satan include four aspects: 1) he exists; 2) today, he is stronger than ever; 3) he is continually active; 4) his goal is to destroy us—to destroy anything in us that is holy, including "destroying nature and the planet on which we live" ("Dear *children! Today, as never before, I invite you to prayer.*

Your prayer must be a prayer for peace. Satan is strong and desires not only to destroy human life, but also nature and the planet you inhabit. Therefore, dear children, pray, so that through prayer you may be protected with the blessing of God's peace. God sent me to you so that I may help you. If you wish, take the Rosary. The Rosary alone can work miracles in the world and in your lives. I bless you and will remain with you as long as God wills. Thank you, because you will not betray my presence here. I also thank you because your response is to serve God and peace. Thank you for having responded to my call! (January 25, 1991)

The Blessed Virgin also tells us the following: "Dear children, see how with a humble prayer we can disarm it." By "we," she refers to Our Mother and to ourselves, to her children.

Everything the Blessed Virgin teaches us responds to the problems that plague our world today. The world needs our prayers and our fasting, since for millions of people it is a matter of life or death. "You must inform the bishop as soon as possible, and the Pope as well, about the urgency and the great importance of the message for all humanity. I have told you many times that world peace is in crisis. Be brothers and sisters to one another; pray and fast even more, in order to save yourselves" (November 30, 1983).

In her message, the Blessed Virgin Mary warns us that Satan wants to destroy our families. Satan is angry and aggressive, especially in Medjugorje, because he knows he will lose if we pray and fast ("*Satan is enraged against those who fast and against those who convert*" (Jelena, August 1983).

The Mother of God has given us several examples to demonstrate the enormous benefits of fasting on bread and water. I remember that during the war, in 1992, we could hear the bombings falling on Mostar, Ljubuski, Citluk, and the surroundings of Medjugorje. We could see the bombs in the sky; we could hear the destruction, and, of course,

We watched what was happening on television. By the pure grace of God, I stayed in the village in my small Community of the Beatitudes. On April 25, 1992, we received the first monthly message since the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We all awaited the Blessed Virgin's response to the tragedy unfolding around us.

Everyone was waiting for her peaceful words as a Mother. So she said, very clearly: "Dear children! Only with prayer and fasting can the war be stopped." ("Dear children!

Today too, I invite you to prayer. Only through prayer and fasting can war be stopped.

Therefore, my dear children, pray and, through your lives, bear witness that you are mine, because in these turbulent times Satan wishes to seduce as many souls as possible. Therefore, I invite you to decide for God, and He will protect you and show you what you must do and the path you must follow. I invite all those who have said "Yes" to me to renew their consecration to Jesus, to His Heart, and to me, so that we may use them more intensely as instruments of peace in this world without peace. Medjugorje is for all of you a sign and a call to pray and to live the days of grace that God is giving you. Therefore, dear children, accept this call to prayer seriously. I am with you, and your sufferings are also mine. Thank you for having responded to my call! (April 25, 1992)

"Dear children! Even today I invite you to pray and fast for peace. As I have already said, I repeat to you now, only through prayer and fasting can wars be stopped. Peace is a precious gift from God; seek it, pray, and you will receive it. Speak of peace, and carry peace in your hearts. Take care of it like a flower that needs water, tenderness, and light. May you be those who bring peace to others. I am with you and I intercede for all of you. Thank you for having responded to my call!" (February 25, 2003) . It couldn't be simpler! He said, "only through prayer and fasting." That means that if you have another way of dealing with the problem, you can forget it!

This is especially important in our day, because we are often in the devil's clutches. At the beginning of the apparitions, Mary did not speak of military wars, but of wars between families. In this era, Satan is stronger than ever (*"Dear children! Today too, I call you to prayer. Now, as never before, my plan has begun to be realized. Satan is strong and wants to destroy my plans for joy and peace, and he wants you to think that my Son is not firm in his decisions. That is why I invite all of you, dear children, to pray and fast with even greater firmness. I invite you to a nine-day renunciation, so that, with your help, everything I wanted to be accomplished through the secrets begun at Fatima may be fulfilled"* (August 25, 1991). The culture of death has taken root in the East. We do not have to go far to see the destruction that Satan is causing in our families, in our children, and especially in our young adults. Mary tells us that the war begins in our hearts! (The Blessed Virgin said to Vicka: *"When I began to speak to you and call you to peace, you thought that everything was calm and there was no need to pray for peace in a special way. Peace was absent from hearts; now peace is also absent from the world."* Vicka continued: *"These words of the Mother of God are valid for*

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"Every war is in progress. When war comes, it is because there is already war in your hearts, and that is precisely when war begins. But if you carry peace in your hearts, the war that is taking place outside will come to an end" (Paris, February 1991) .

If I feel hatred toward my brother, if I have closed my door to that person or another, if I have judged them harshly, if I have felt envy of them, if I have spoken ill of them, if I have harbored bitterness and resentment toward them, then there is a war in my heart that is coming out.

These are the wars Mary wants to eliminate from us. The only way to achieve this is through fasting and prayer!

Many pilgrims come to Medjugorje because their children are using drugs or choosing immoral paths that lead to their death. These parents ask me to speak to the visionaries on their behalf. They ask me that the visionaries pray that their children stop taking drugs and stop trying to fill the empty corners of their hearts with diabolical distractions ("*Dear children, today again your Mother wishes to warn you that Satan wants, by every means possible, to destroy everything in you; but your prayers can prevent him from carrying out this purpose. When you fill all the empty spaces with prayers, you are preventing Satan from penetrating your souls. Pray, dear children, and your Mother will pray with you to defeat Satan. May this be the time when all of you can give and share peace with one another. Therefore, I beg you to cultivate peace in your homes, in your families, in the streets, and everywhere*" (March 21, 1988).

After promising to pray for them, I ask them: "Have you fasted for your children?" They answer: "No. But we have prayed a lot, we have done novenas, even to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and we pray the Rosary." Then I ask again: "But you are not answering my question. Do you fast too?" They answer: "No. But we pray, Sister. We pray." Then I remind them that Mary speaks of the wars that take place in their families and in the hearts of their children, and that these are the wars that can destroy their children's lives. And I also remind them that Mary has given them a powerful weapon to stop those wars.

Parents who pray for the healing of their children, children who plead for the reconciliation of their parents, you must know that you have a powerful weapon at your disposal. Always remember that none of the saints prayed without fasting, and that they obviously never fasted without praying.

Do you remember when Jesus saw his disciples return from a mission? Naturally, they returned happy and proud because the strength of Christ was with them. They said to the sick, "Be healed!" and the person was healed. They said to the paralytic, "Get up!" and the paralytic got up and ran. They said to the blind, "See," and the blind man saw. They were very happy at Christ's side. But one day it didn't work. They failed when they tried to help a poor man tormented by Satan and said to him, "Come out of this man!" But he didn't come out. Then they returned to Jesus, ashamed, and said, "Jesus, we tried to cast out that evil spirit, but we could not." Do you know what Jesus replied? "These demons can be cast out only by prayer and fasting." (While the word "fasting" does not appear in all translations of this Bible verse, it is very important to note that it appears in the original Greek text.) Now we have the key directly from Jesus himself. All through the Bible we can see the power of fasting. It is exactly the same today. If

We fast, and Satan will not be able to harm us or our families. I don't mean to say that we won't suffer, because a cross is a cross. But it's different, because one can suffer without being harmed. Jesus certainly suffered, but Satan never found in Him a pretext to harm Him.

Surely one of the strongest messages about fasting is the one Our Lady gave when she allowed Satan (disguised as a handsome young man) to approach Mirjana. After the encounter, Our Lady told Mirjana: "Forgive me for this, but you must realize that Satan exists. One day he appeared before the throne of God and asked permission to subject the Church to a period of probation. God granted him that permission for a century. This century [the 20th century] is under the power of the devil, but when the secrets entrusted to him are realized, his power will be destroyed.

Even now, he is beginning to lose his power and has become more aggressive. He is destroying marriages, creating divisions among priests, and is responsible for obsessions and murders. We must protect ourselves against all these evils through fasting and prayer, especially community prayer. We must carry blessed objects, place them in our homes, and return to the use of holy water" (December 24, 1982).

In 1992, the Blessed Mother said: "I ask you to defeat Satan" (*"I ask you to defeat Satan. The weapons to defeat him are fasting and prayer. Pray for peace, for Satan wants to destroy the little peace you have"* (to Ivanka, June 25, 1992). In a refuge, Ivan tells us: *"The Blessed Virgin invites us to persevere in prayer, for as fervent prayers we can defeat Satan. In that message, she repeated something she had always said at the beginning of the apparitions: that war can be stopped with fasting and prayer. Therefore, it is very important for us to pray, to be even closer to God, so that together with Him and with Mary we can defeat everything that is now imposed on us"* (April 16, 1992).

Faced with this, we can't help but wonder: "Is she asking me to defeat Satan? But who am I to defeat him? We are children of God, and she needs each and every one of us without exception. She tells us: "Dear children, without you I could not help the world" (*"Dear children! My desire is that in everything you be an example to others, especially in prayer and witness. Dear children, without you I cannot help the world. I want you to cooperate with me in everything, even in the smallest things. Therefore, dear children, help me by letting your prayers come from the heart, and abandon yourselves completely to me. In this way, I will be able to teach you and guide you on this journey that I began with you. Thank you for having responded to my call"* (August 28, 1986). Mary gives us the stones to overthrow Satan: fasting and prayer. She says: "Make novenas of fasting and renunciation to drive Satan away, and thus grace will be with you. I am at your side and I intercede before God for each one of you" (July 25, 2005).

During the first weeks of the apparitions, all the villagers listened attentively to Our Lady's every word. About two months after the apparitions began, Our Lady said: "Satan has a plan of destruction for this parish. Dear children, I ask you all to fast on bread and water for three days and pray the Rosary so that we may defeat Satan."

Each of them did what Our Lady had asked them to do. For three days, they all fasted together.

and prayed that their Queen of Peace might crush the serpent's head. On the fourth day, She said: "Dear children, thank you for your prayers and your fasting. Satan's plan has failed. We have won!" She didn't say, 'I have won!' but, 'We have won!' She needed the people of the Medjugorje parish to defeat Satan. It was a very powerful sacrifice. Otherwise, Satan's plan would have succeeded that day and Medjugorje would have succumbed. Today, this river of blessings that has flowed from Medjugorje for so many years would not exist. Without Medjugorje, how many lives would have been lost? How many families would still be separated instead of reunited? How many young people would have committed suicide? Look at the good Medjugorje has done for us just because 500 people from the village fought for three days to defeat Satan! God presents Medjugorje to the world, and since then, millions of pilgrims have come here to gather strength. Such is the impact of saying 'YES' to fasting and prayer! (As soon as *Our Lady* was able to count on the help of these young people, she entrusted them with a few special intentions that she had in her plans. For this reason, she sometimes asked them to add an extra day of fasting to Wednesdays and Fridays. "Fast on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday," for the group intentions (December 20, 1983). "Fast on Thursday and Friday for the bishop" (Jelena, December 15, 1983). For the prayer group intentions: "Each one can decide for himself. In the meantime, it would be advisable for you to fast on Thursday this week. Have you read and meditated on the Bible" (prayer group, February 29, 1984). In our case too, if we were close to her heart, being very attentive to prayer, she could transmit some of her needs to our hearts by asking us for help!).

Fasting to be protected

FASTING also bears another fruit: protection. What parents do not want to protect their children and their Grandchildren? Nowadays, people have life insurance, home insurance, health insurance; but life insurance has never prevented death, and accident insurance only works once the accident has already occurred (as long as the fine print doesn't say it doesn't cover it). Fasting insurance works even before the "protected event" occurs and prevents the devil from harming the person.

Our Lady teaches that with this help from us, she can keep Satan away from us. (*"Dear children, today I also ask you to pray and fast. You know, dear children, that with your help I can accomplish everything and force Satan to stop seducing you toward evil and force him to leave here. Dear children, Satan is on the lookout for each one of you. Especially in everyday matters, he wants to cause confusion among you. Therefore, dear children, I ask you that each of your days be filled with prayer and complete abandonment to God. Thank you for having answered my call"* (September 4, 1986).

If, as a mother, I have ten children at home and I know there's a Satanist outside trying to torture, rape, and kill them, I'll need to warn them. If, on the other hand, I say, "Relax and go for a walk in the woods," then I'm being complicit in the murder of my children! We can't hide from our children the fact that spiritual warfare exists. God isn't the only protagonist; there's also an enemy who lives (yes, let's say it) in hell. Because hell also exists. Jesus didn't come to die on the cross for no reason. He came to save us from the Evil One and from hell! Now, it's not a trivial matter that He sent His Mother to Medjugorje for so many years to warn us that NOW is the time for conversion! Because the devil exists, because a sadistic murderer is indeed stalking us, we must rely on Mary's messages for guidance and knowledge. (*Our Blessed Mother tells us: "The devil is trying to overcome you. Do not allow him to. Keep the faith, fast and pray. I will follow in your footsteps"* (November 16, 1981). *"The devil is trying to impose his power on you, but you must remain strong and persevere in your faith. You must pray and fast. I will always be with you"* (November 1981).

There is a reason why Mary tells us: "Dear children, Satan is watching each one of us; he wants to lead us down the path of sin and death." She warns us today about our lives! The suicide rate has never been higher. We can avoid suicide when we protect ourselves with the safety of fasting and prayer.

It is through fasting and prayer that God can ensure our protection. He is not a magician; instead, He invites us to collaborate with Him. Are we not, despite everything, one body with Him? "Pray as much as possible," (*"I would like people to pray with me these days, and the more the better"* (to Ivan, at home, August 14, 1981) says Our Lady. "Fast, persevere in prayer and sacrifice, and I will protect you and answer your prayers."

Our Lady, see how much we need her protection! She tells us: "You know, dear children, that with your help, I can accomplish all things." Imagine what that means! When we pray to Our Lady, do we truly believe that all things are possible? We often behave like people who don't believe that God has the power or is truly capable of helping us. If Mary tells us that with our help, she can do all things, imagine what can be accomplished through the power of God!

After so many years of protection, it's easy to take Our Lady's messages for granted. Her preaching no longer affects us as much. But She continues to warn us not to relax in the way we live her messages. On April 25, 2004, She said: "Dear children! Today, too, I call you to live my messages with even greater strength, humility, and love, so that the Holy Spirit may fill you with his grace and strength. Only in this way can you be witnesses of peace and forgiveness. Thank you for responding to my call."

Fasting to suspend the laws of nature

In every school we have fire extinguishers to put out fires, and in every house we have Aspirin for headaches. Fasting is like a fire extinguisher or an aspirin. We can use it to fight the evil that takes hold of us, our families, our society, and the Church. Our Lady said: "Through fasting and prayer, wars can be stopped, the laws of nature can be suspended" (*"The best fast is on bread and water. Through fasting and prayer, wars can be stopped and the laws of nature suspended. Charity cannot replace fasting. Those who cannot fast can sometimes replace it with prayer, charity, and confession; but everyone, except the sick, must fast"* (July 21, 1982)). We do not pay enough attention to this message! This means that disasters, such as avalanches, earthquakes, and landslides, could be avoided if only someone in the threatened village would fast (*"I have prayed. The punishment has been mitigated. Continual prayers and fasting reduce God's punishment, but it is not possible to completely prevent the development of events. Go through the streets of the city and count those "those who glorify God and those who offend Him. God cannot tolerate this situation any longer"* (November 6, 1982)).

This message also applies to the natural laws of our bodies. I know an American nurse who was trapped in a life filled with sin. She would have gone with any man who crossed her path. Despite being baptized, she had no faith. As a child, she had attended catechism classes, but had forgotten everything. God didn't exist in her life. At the hospital where she worked, there was a doctor who had been to Medjugorje and had undergone a radical conversion. When he returned home, he began to live Our Lady's messages with his heart. He realized that this woman needed his help and decided to fast for her conversion. In her name, he fasted for four years!

One day, plunged into deep despair, she decided to commit suicide. As a nurse, she knew exactly how many pills she had to take to ensure her death. She swallowed the pills and went to bed expecting to die. But in the morning, she woke up perfectly fine. She didn't even notice the negative effects of the pills! It was as if she had drunk milk before going to bed. She was so astonished to be still alive that a thought immediately struck her: "Someone wants me to continue living." She thought, is it God who wants me to live? Then she reflected on God and asked herself, "Why does God want me to live?" He came to the conclusion: "Maybe because He loves me."

She returned to work and felt compelled to tell this story to the doctor. Only then did the doctor realize the effect of her fasting. Through her fast, he allowed God to work the miracle in the nurse's life. Then, he told her about God, since before the incident, she would have rejected anything the doctor had told her about God. However, after this event, her heart was open to hear about God's grace. She understood.

as soon as the doctor's fasting had prevented the natural chemical law of the medicine from acting in his body.

The doctor told her, "Go to Medjugorje." She came to Medjugorje, and Our Lady showed her immense love for her, even appearing to her! She couldn't believe that the Mother of God could appear to such an impure person. The nurse was filled with such great love for Our Lady that she quickly went to confession. She confessed all her sins and from that day on, her life changed completely. Now she is an apostle of the Virgin Mary in America.

She proclaims: "I was born in Medjugorje."

Fasting to heal

WHEN someone in the family is sick, most of the time we worry a lot to find the best doctor, the best medicines, the most notable specialist—in short, we do everything possible to save the life of the sick. Especially when it's our children who are suffering, we are willing to move heaven and earth and spend fortunes to save their lives! But things are much simpler than this. Do we realize that we only need to pray and fast? In many cases, with prayer and fasting, we will obtain miraculous cures for someone who is sick. In response to the question about the sick, Our Lady said: "Have firm faith, pray and fast, and they will be cured. Have confidence and maintain joy. The peace of the Lord be with you. Be patient and pray for their healing. Farewell, my dear angels" (November 26, 1981).

Many pilgrims seek Mary's intercession and ask the visionaries to pray for the sick in their families. In most of the apparitions that take place on the mountain at night, Ivan tells us that Our Lady (who is close to all who are sick in heart and body) prays especially for the sick and for those we carry in our hearts.

A woman who had cancer came to see me. She said, "My problem is that I don't have anyone in my family who is a believer, so no one prays or fasts for me." I told her that we would pray and fast for her family. This is a common problem today that can be easily solved. Visit the sick in these non-believing families and talk to them about the Lord. Announce the Gospel to them and tell them that we will pray and fast for them (*"Believe and pray; I cannot help those who do not pray and sacrifice. The sick would like to be in good health. You must pray and fast for the sick. The more firmly you believe, the more you pray and fast for this intention, the greater will be the grace and favor of God"* (to Mirjana, August 18, 1982). When the visionaries asked the Virgin Mary if she could heal this person or that one, she often reminded us that she, by herself, cannot heal. Only God can do it. The Virgin asks us to pray, and promises to do so with us.

We just have to believe firmly, fast, do penance, and God will help us all (*"Do not ignore the fact that I am the Queen of Peace. If you want practical advice, I am the Mother who has come from the people, I can do nothing without God's help. I also have to pray like you, and that is why I can only tell you: pray, fast, do penance and help the weak"* (August 29, 1982).

Our Lady recommends that, to obtain the health of a sick person, we pray the Creed, and seven times the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Gloria, and that we fast on bread and water (*"To heal the sick person, it is important to pray the following prayer: the Creed and seven times the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Gloria, and fast on bread and water. It is good to lay hands on the sick person and pray. It is good to anoint the sick with blessed oil. Not all priests have the gift of healing; and to receive this gift, the priest must pray with great perseverance and believe firmly."*

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(July 25, 1982). She also gave Jelena a special prayer for the sick, which we can recite from the heart when one of our loved ones is ill (Jelena's *Prayer for a Sick Person, inspired by Our Lady*: "Oh my God, here is this sick person before you.

He has come to ask you for what he desires and considers important to him. You, O my God, penetrate his heart with these words: "What matters is the health of the soul!" Lord, may your will be done in him in all things; if you want him to be healed, may he be healed; but if your will is otherwise, may he continue to carry his cross. I pray also for us, who intercede for him: purify our hearts, so that we may be worthy of transmitting your holy mercy. Protect him and relieve his pain; may your holy will be done in him; may, through him, your holy name be revealed. And help him to carry his cross with courage. Amen.

Sacraments for the sick

Even when no physical healing occurs, the sick person often obtains peace of heart by receiving the Anointing of the Sick. Let us not wait until the patient's death vigil to go to their bedside with a priest carrying their stole and blessed oil. Such a sight could provoke the sick person's fear of an imminent outcome, thus causing an early death! Instead, as soon as someone becomes seriously ill, we should call the priest and begin fasting for that person. The sacrament for the sick is called "Extreme Unction," but this is a misnomer, since the illness does not necessarily have to be "extreme."

False healers

These days, it's very common to turn to "healers," yoga masters, Reiki masters, or massage therapists to relieve the symptoms of an illness. But where do these healers get their abilities? Many receive them from an unknown source. When, for example, someone visits a healer because their left knee hurts, it may improve, but then it's their right knee that starts to hurt. The pain has simply shifted. It has moved to another area, worsening. Then that person returns to the healer, who may again cast spells and formulas to "cure" the second ailment; but then a third ailment will appear, or perhaps even something worse. In other words, people who visit "healers" are never cured. Their problem only moves from their body to their heart, and then from their heart to their soul. A mental illness quickly leads to suicidal temptations, incredible hatred, or deep depression. Why do we find so many young people today who commit suicide when apparently nothing in their lives could have motivated such a thing? Parents, with all good intentions, take their children to "healers" hoping for a miracle, and their children suffer the consequences of this bad "medicine." This bad fruit can manifest itself not only as an illness, but also as a lack of motivation. Suddenly, a husband becomes unbearable for his wife, and every detail is a nuisance: the way he speaks, walks, or eats. A devout person suddenly finds himself unable to pray. People who live with enthusiasm suddenly find life unenjoyable.

The Church and the different religious communities that comprise it have seen many cases

strangers to these healings." She pitches in to shoulder the burden of the "final discount service" of a genuine cure. The Church has found that "healers" often cast spells or utter strange words (sometimes mixed with Christian prayers), use secret formulas, give massages, and may even mention the name of Judas, the traitor. I once asked a fake healer, who had converted and left his job, to share his secrets with me. He told me that his "healing power" came from someone who had received it from someone else, who had received it from someone else.

Following the history of these "powers," we can see that they come from Satan, who grants them to a witch, who then transmits them to others. Make no mistake! Satan claims to heal. The truth is that he imitates Jesus' healings. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that the false prophets of the last days will perform great miracles, even to the point of deceiving the chosen ones. This is reality! Satan doesn't give a gift for nothing. He just deceives us, replacing illness with something worse.

Several times, through visionaries, Our Lady indicated that they should visit doctors, but never healers. Why? She knows what's behind them! I ask all those who think of going to see a healer, please, don't go!!! Even if these healers have a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in their homes, holding a rosary, don't risk your life to be cured at any price. Chances are, not only will your health worsen, but you'll also be left without money!

If you have already visited a false "healer" to help yourself or your children, find a priest and ask Jesus for forgiveness. Also ask the priest to pray that all the ties that darkness may have established with you (or your child) may be broken through the Word and blessing of God. Very often, a good confession is enough to break the devil's chain, because in this way we renounce him and all occult practices. You could also renew your baptismal vows. This is a very effective way to break all the chains with evil, with Satan and his works. The healings obtained through prayer and fasting are real, contrary to the false cures that Satan and his servants offer. The Lord gives us true healing, not only for our body, but also for our heart, our spirit, and our soul. When He does not heal, it is because He has another plan and another blessing for the sick.

Fasting to prepare

FASTING also prepares us to work for God and to fulfill His will. Let us think, for example, in Jesus in the Gospel. Every scene in his life shows us the Father's careful preparation of his Son for the Cross. His baptism by John in the Jordan River marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Instead of immediately serving the people, where did he go? The Spirit led him into the desert, where he remained for forty days fasting and living among wild animals. At the end of this period, Satan tempted Jesus three times, attempting to compromise his obedience to the Father's will. Jesus was prepared through fasting and was able to carry out God's plan with his life.

Our Lady has given each of us a special mission to fast, even priests (*"Priests should visit families, especially those who are no longer practicing and who have forgotten God. Priests should bring the Gospel of Jesus to the people and teach them how to pray. Priests themselves should pray more and also fast. They should give to the poor what they themselves do not need"* (May 30, 1984).

I had the grace of meeting Friar Zdenko, a blessed Franciscan priest who lived on Siroki Brjieg, near Medjugorje. He slept on the floor and fasted regularly. Through his asceticism and infinite love for God, he obtained many favors from the Father. This priest had the gift of healing and could also read people's souls. Despite his modesty, he became immensely popular, ministering to people from all over the former Yugoslavia who came to visit him. If someone had a problem, they only needed his blessing to feel better and, sometimes, healed. He was so loved by everyone that, when he died, thousands of people attended his funeral. One of my Croatian friends from Medjugorje, Ivica Codig, told me the following story about her grandmother, who was a childhood friend of Friar Zdenko:

One day, the Lord spoke to this humble priest and said, "Zdenko, would you agree to fast on bread and water for seven years?" He answered, "Yes." So he fasted for the seven years, and on the last day of the seventh year, the Lord spoke to him again: "Zdenko, would you agree to add an eighth year of fasting?" Again, he said, "Yes." Guess what the date of the last day of those eight years was? June 24, 1981, the date of the first apparition of the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje! I don't think it's necessary to explain further. Who knows how the great works of God are prepared? Only in heaven will we discover these secrets.

Why was this man so special? He prayed and fasted with all his heart, listening to God's needs and working with Him! And look how many lives were saved!

On another occasion, a very sick woman was brought to him, who was drunk every day. Nothing had managed to get her to stop drinking. Friar Zdenko saw her and said, "You mustn't drink. You must promise not to drink anymore." The woman promised, and the priest blessed her in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and she left. The next day, and the next, she didn't drink. But on the third day it was hot, and the temptation grew stronger and stronger. The

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large glass and filled it with wine. Just as she touched her lips to the top of the glass, she saw a finger above the glass and heard Friar Zdenko's voice say, "I told you not to drink any more!" She was so shocked that she dropped the glass on the floor. She was cured of alcoholism for the rest of her life.

Spreading thanks

We too can do much good with our prayer and fasting! Our Mother warns us that peace is especially threatened in these times. She asks us to renew our fasting and prayer, and to realize that much of what will happen depends on our prayers (*"Dear children! Today I invite you to pray for peace. In these times, peace is being threatened in a special way, and I ask you to renew fasting and prayer in your families. Dear children, I wish you to understand the seriousness of the situation and that much of what will happen depends on your prayers, and you are praying little. Dear children, I am with you and I invite you to begin to pray and fast seriously, just as you did in the first days of my arrival. Thank you for having responded to my call"* (July 25, 1991).

By teaching us to fast, Our Mother is giving us the key to grace and to the heart of God. It will not only be necessary to fast for our child, our husband, our wife, or the priest in our parish, but also for our hearts to expand to the dimensions of God's heart. We are urged to fast in order to grow in humility and forgive one another (*"My children, thank you for each of the penances you have performed during these days. Convert and forgive one another, fast and pray: pray, pray!"* (June 24, 1984).

Through fasting and prayer, the Lord strengthens His Divine Presence within us, and the power of His Spirit reaches out to all those in need throughout the world. Fasting is as if we take the hand of people walking in darkness and transmit light and joy to them. This helps them kneel and say: "O Father, I am grateful for the gift of life and the joy of life I have found again." We become God's outstretched hands to non-believers wandering in darkness.

Purgatory

What a great grace it is to fast on bread and water for those who cannot pray for themselves! Those souls who have preceded us in the afterlife and are now in purgatory suffer greatly (*"In purgatory there are different levels; the lowest is close to hell, and the highest gradually approaches heaven. Not only on All Souls' Day do many souls leave purgatory, but also at Christmas, and in even greater numbers. In purgatory there are souls who pray fervently to God, but for whom no one prays on earth. God benefits them with the prayers of others. God allows them to manifest themselves in various ways to their relatives on Earth to remind humanity that purgatory exists and to ask for prayers to draw closer to God, who is just and good. Most people go to purgatory. Quite a few go to hell. And a small number go directly to heaven"* (January 10, 1983). Through Mary we can understand that fasting is a very

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Powerful! Fasting, along with other penances, creates a precious bond between the living and the dead. In 1983, when the Virgin Mary spoke to the visionaries about the souls in purgatory, she said: "These people are awaiting your prayers and penance." After losing a friend or close relative, it's certainly nice to bring them flowers at the cemetery or place their photos on our dressers and remember all the good they did for us. But the reality is that these things are of no use to them. If we want to help free them as soon as possible from the terrible suffering of purgatory, we must fast for them. This will be an act of perfect and unconditional love that will put an end to their agony.

Fasting to fulfill the Plan

We all desire to live intensely the vocation that God gave us when He created us.

We would like everything to be fulfilled before we leave this world. We would like to hear the Lord say: "I am happy! You have allowed me to accomplish everything I had planned for you!"

In 1985, the Blessed Virgin Mary said: "Above all, live the fast, because by fasting you will make me happy and I will achieve the fulfillment of God's plan for Medjugorje" (*"Dear children, I thank you for all your prayers. Thank you for all your penances. I wish to ask you, dear children, to renew the messages I have been giving you. Especially that you live the fast, because by fasting you will give me great joy and I will achieve the fulfillment of God's plan for Medjugorje. Thank you for having responded to my call"* (September 26, 1985). When Our Lady speaks of the "plan of Medjugorje," she is also referring to the plan for each of our lives. Through fasting we allow God to complete the plan he has for us, our families, and our cities.

Now we know that we have the potential to be very powerful, because we can all say "yes" to Jesus. He will never ask us to do something we cannot do. He will never ask a sick person to go play a soccer game. But what a sick person can do is accept their sufferings and offer them to Jesus, uniting them with His. This is very effective. The sinner can say "yes" to conversion to God. His grace will never fail, but He needs our "yes." Through this, He will grant many blessings to the entire world. Only in Heaven will we know that thanks to our fasting, thanks to our "yes" to Our Lady, hundreds and thousands of young people have been protected from suicide, many couples have been protected from divorce, many babies have been protected from abortion. Who knows? We are incapable of understanding how important our "yes" is. Let's just do it now!

When we pray, we expect God to answer our prayers. When the Lord looks upon us, He expects all the seeds He has placed in our hearts to germinate. And this, until we die; we will be like a flower that opens (with the help of His grace) to fill our lives with the potential He has infused within us, the potential to attain holiness. Fasting gives us the means to carry this plan forward to fulfillment and to thank God for His love for us (*"Now it is raining, and you say, 'It is not fitting to go to church in this weather. Why is it raining so much?' Never speak like that. You have not stopped praying that God would send you the rain that enriches the earth. So do not go against God's blessing. Above all, give Him thanks through prayer and fasting"* (February 1, 1984). Do we want God to hear our prayers?

At the beginning of the apparitions, when the visionaries were being investigated and Satan was causing division among the priests, Our Lady's plan was threatened by communist pressure. She needed the prayers and penances of the visionaries to complete even small pieces of the plan she is still revealing today. Our Lady often asks

The visionaries fast for special intentions. In September 1981, for example, he told Vicka and Jacob: "Don't slack off in your prayers. I ask you both to fast for a week on bread and water." And in October, he told them again: "Pray for Father Jozo and fast tomorrow on bread and water." Then you will fast for a week on bread and water. Pray, my angels. Now I will show you Father Jozo." Our Lady allowed them to see Friar Jozo in prison and told them not to worry about him, because everything would be all right. The visionaries asked Our Lady what they should do to avoid disputes among the priests. She replied: "Fast and pray!" (February 1982). In June 1983, the visionaries asked what they should do so that the authorities would not expel the priests from their parish, who worked with such faith and love. She replied: "Pray and fast for this intention. When the time comes, I will tell you what you should do."

In July 1983, when a dispute arose again regarding the apparitions between Bishop Zanic and the parish priest, he said: "Fast two days a week for the bishop's intentions, for he has a great responsibility. If necessary, I will ask you for a third day. Pray every day for the bishop." This message is as necessary today as it was then, and who among us is fasting for the bishop?

Let us thank the Lord for the gift of fasting! Let us begin! Once we begin, we will become witnesses of that power («*I desire to engrave in every heart the sign of love. If you love all kinds of people, then there will be peace within you. If you are at peace with everyone, you will establish the kingdom of love. Pray and fast!* (Jelena, January 18, 1984) Indeed, some of us feel like asking Our Lady: "My dear Gospa, just two days a week? You could have asked us for more!" Let us strive to make the Blessed Virgin happy by fasting for her intentions. On Our Lady's 2000th birthday, August 5, 1984, she said: "I am so happy! Continue, continue. Continue praying and fasting. Continue and make me happy every day." Isn't this the wonderful mission Medjugorje entrusts to us: to make Our Mother happy?

Practical questions

WHY bread?

We are often asked, "What's so special about bread and water? Why not lentils or rice?" The answer is simple: everything is related to the Eucharist, to the Bread of Life. Jesus didn't tell us, "I am the rice of life," but rather, "I am the Bread of Life." This is why we eat bread when we fast. Fasting on bread and water helps us receive the Bread of Life.

What kind of bread?

It may be difficult to fast with store-bought bread due to the preservatives and artificial additives it contains. This bread is usually made with refined flour, which has little nutritional value; therefore, it is preferable to fast with richer bread made with whole-wheat flour. For fasting days, look for a grain, barley, seed, or spelt bread. (For centuries, spelt was very popular in Europe. It is used in a wide range of cereals, pasta, cookies, and pastries. In ancient Rome, it was known as farrum. In Italian, it is farro, in German, dinkel, and in French, epeautre, while in English, the word spelt is used.)

To find spelt recipes in this book, see the Recipes chapter. For more information about spelt, visit the following websites: www.spelt.com and www.purityfoods.com.) something to fill your stomach. Bread is essential for our nutrition.

Our Blessed Mother doesn't want us to go hungry on our fasting days (which are work days). If you'd like to make your own bread, you'll find several recipes at the end of this book.

How much bread?

The Virgin Mary never gave instructions about the quantity of bread. She wants us to be free to decide according to our hearts. She doesn't want us to be empty-stomached, and she knows that on those days we have to work, so she wants us to be nourished.

We shouldn't react by thinking, "On fast days, I'll eat a lot of bread." Rather, we should eat moderately and without fear. Our Lady didn't specify whether the bread could be toasted or not. Some people prefer it toasted. Why not? Furthermore, she didn't specify whether the water should be cold or hot. In this, too, it's up to us to decide according to our hearts (or according to the seasonal weather temperature).

I remember a conversation between Mirjana and an American woman. When the woman heard that we should fast two days a week on bread and water, her eyes widened, and she asked Mirjana, "In the morning, when I wake up, could I have a little coffee with a little sugar, just to wake me up?" Then Mirjana, smiling, replied, "Yes, but do it quickly, before Our Lady gets up!"

The atmosphere of love that surrounds our Blessed Mother is immense. With her, we can feel as at home as children with their mother. This wonderful Mother gives us the strength to increase the love in our hearts and bear more fruit; she gives us the strength to grow in joy, peace, and freedom. When we experience this, then we can receive fasting as a gift from heaven! *She constantly acts as our Mother, warning us, leading us to the Heart of her Son, and taking charge of our cares so that we may be free to fulfill God's will. So she tells us: "Jesus prefers that you turn to him directly, rather than through intermediaries. At the same time, if you want to give yourselves completely to God and if you want me to be your protector, then entrust to me all your intentions, your fasts, and your penances, so that I may dispose of all of these according to God's will" (September 4, 1982).*

How long?

Fast "all day," according to Our Lady. Our Lady didn't specify the time of day; she only said two days a week. In our calendar, the day begins at midnight and ends at midnight. Of course, this can be adjusted according to our work schedule, whether it's at night or on other shifts. In any case, the most important thing is to do it with love. A grandmother who cares for her grandchildren on Wednesdays can change her fast to Thursday (the Blessed Mother won't complain about this). If Wednesday falls on a holiday, such as the Annunciation or Christmas, we shouldn't fast on that day, but we should fast the day before or the following Monday.

On January 22, 1984, the Blessed Virgin Mary told Jelena: "Pray and fast. I permit those who wish to make the sacrifice of fasting to do so a maximum of three times a week, but no more."

When to start?

Through prayer, we will discover in our consciences when Mary wants us to begin fasting. Sometimes it goes in stages. For example, when leading the recitation of the Rosary, she told us: "Do not impose the Rosary on those who have never prayed it. Today, let them say an Our Father with their heart, tomorrow a Hail Mary with their heart, and the day after tomorrow a Gloria with their heart. This also applies to fasting. If we can start fasting on bread and water twice a week, praise God! But we can also do it gradually. It's better to start slowly and stay firm, rather than starting too quickly and then giving up two months later. You could start on Friday at lunchtime, then skip Wednesday lunch, then Friday dinner, and so on, gradually increasing.

Our Blessed Mother tells us: "If you don't have the strength to fast on bread and water, you can give up many other things. It would be good to give up television, since after watching certain programs you are distracted and unable to pray. You can give up alcohol, cigarettes, and other pleasures. You yourselves will know what to do" (December 8, 1981). When we have a bad habit, let us abstain from it on the days of fasting, and little by little the sin will leave us. Our Lady suggests that we renounce sin (In a message

To the prayer group, Our Lady said: "Thank you for your sacrifices during Lent.

First of all, renounce sin. Be a light that enlightens others. Encourage others to pray, fast, and do penance. Give love to others" (February 22, 1998) .

But

she also says that the best way to do this is by fasting on bread and water (At the end of August 1981, the visionaries asked the Blessed Virgin what would be the best way to fast, and she replied: "Fasting on bread and water." In her message of July 21, 1982, she reaffirmed this concept: "The best fast is on bread and water. Through fasting and prayer, wars can be stopped and the laws of nature suspended. Charitable works cannot replace fasting. Those who are not in a condition to fast can sometimes replace it with prayers, charitable works, and confession; but everyone should fast, except the sick.")

Fasting is a grace we shouldn't take for granted. Let us humbly ask for this grace on the eve of the day of fasting. Let me tell you a secret: for seven years, despite living in Medjugorje, I was unable to fast. I had been very sick as a child, and that didn't allow me to change my diet. I was part of the "club of the weak" in our Medjugorje Community of the Beatitudes. Only two of us, out of fifteen of us, ate on the days when the others fasted. I didn't feel at all comfortable with this situation, but no matter how much I asked Our Lady to do something for me, nothing seemed to go right. Then one day I appealed to Her feelings, so that She couldn't resist my request. I said to Her: "My dear Gospa, You call me to travel the world to share Your messages, but You've noticed that I usually gloss over the subject of fasting. "I don't want to be a hypocrite, and since I don't fast, I can't talk much about it, since I have no experience of my own. Therefore, if you want to convince me about fasting, you'll have to grant me this grace! Don't you want your children to understand the importance of fasting? Don't you want to use me for this?" Shortly after, I met a man from Mexico. His conversion in Medjugorje had been so radical that he had created a highly apostolic program on Mexican television.

While we were discussing ways to carry out our apostolate and how to respond to various difficulties, I asked him what he had done when he lacked material support for his work. He replied, "Whatever you need for your apostolate, be it money or health, material things or spiritual favors, whether for yourself or for others, Our Lady will always grant it to you IF you do what She asks." This YES changed my life! Fasting came to me like a flash! Then I challenged my Heavenly Mother and informed her, "Starting tomorrow, I will do whatever You ask of me!" And it was as if the testimony of my Mexican companion helped me obtain that grace. I said to Mary, "Tomorrow I will begin fasting on bread and water. Please give me this grace! You know I'm not very strong, so I ask You to give me a sign: that tomorrow (Friday) I won't feel hungry all day." She granted my wish. I fasted all day and felt fine by night. That's how I received the grace of fasting. Each of us can ask for this grace too!

About the effects

When we fast, we need to drink plenty of water to avoid headaches. It's best keep this in mind: let's not forget to drink!

Some people tell me that after fasting, they have to go to the bathroom frequently for days with diarrhea or vomiting. Others suffer from migraines or general malaise. These symptoms are characteristic of an allergic reaction to the gluten found in some types of flour used to make bread. If you are known to be gluten intolerant, it is recommended that you use any type of gluten-free bread, or try spelt.

Once again, mystics had understood this long before industrially driven scientists. About 800 years ago, Hildegard of Bingen (Saint Hildegard) wrote the following about spelt: Spelt is the best of grains. It is

richer, more nourishing, and gentler than other grains. It produces a strong body and healthy blood in those who nourish themselves with it, and makes a person's spirit lighter and more cheerful. If someone is sick, boil some spelt and mix it with eggs, and that will restore them as an effective ointment.

What about the sick?

Our Lady clearly says that the sick are exempt from fasting, but those who are in good health are called to fast. She invites the sick to offer their sufferings to God or to give up something they enjoy, such as watching television, smoking, drinking, or any other pleasure (*"...Those who cannot fast can sometimes replace fasting with prayer, works of charity, and confession; but everyone except the sick must fast"* (July 21, 1982). The Blessed Virgin says: "I am happier if you renounce sin." It is understandable that the sick are exempt from fasting, but let us not forget that fasting can actually cure a wide variety of illnesses. Of course, medical treatments should not be stopped suddenly, nor should medicine be ruled out at first. You can consult your pharmacist to determine how to incorporate fasting into your diet. One meal a day made of bread is not necessarily bad for your health. I know a man who could not fast because of serious stomach problems. One day, while he was praying, he understood that he had to start fasting, and fasting helped him! cured his stomach problems! Each case is unique and requires sound judgment. People who must take strong medications should exercise extreme caution.

What about the children?

There is no question about whether or not children should fast on bread and water for two days a week.

week. They shouldn't fast! There are other ways for children to do penance during those days, and parents are their best example! When children see their parents fasting, they usually say, "Me too! I want to do penance too!" So they might give up candy, ice cream, their favorite dessert, or they might turn off the TV.

I often talk to children about fasting, starting with penances and giving them some examples. One example might be being careful with their language and using only one swear word instead of ten. I tell them that Our Mother collects in a basket all the penances we do during the day. I tell them to close their eyes and think of a penance they can offer when Our Mother makes her rounds of all the houses at night. Then they close their eyes tightly, concentrate on the prayer... and then say the penances they have chosen to do. It's amazing how willing and generous the children are!

Children have an endless will to love and give! They can teach us generosity! I know parents who have abandoned the idea of divorce thanks to their children's penances and prayers. Let us keep in mind how much they do and how much we demand of them. They are quite smart and understand the efforts required: they can give up sweets, ice cream, or they can finish everything on their plate instead of wasting it. This will help them prepare for fasting on bread and water.

Sometimes they understand so well that they can be quite malicious. One afternoon, my six-year-old nephew, François-Joseph, had a brilliant idea. We were about to sit down at the dinner table when François-Joseph learned that the meal consisted of his least favorite dish. So, after the blessing of the table, he said, "Dad, I want to fast tonight!" But his father replied, "Okay, for tonight's fast, your penance will be to eat everything on your plate!"

What does it mean to “fast with the heart”?

On January 25, 2001, Our Lady said: "Today I ask you to renew prayer and fasting with even greater enthusiasm, until prayer becomes like a song of joy for all."
you".

The important thing is to fast with love. Vicia often tells us that Our Lady asks us to make the firm decision to fast with love for Jesus and in gratitude for his coming here. If we have a headache or nausea, it's because we haven't done so with the firm decision to fast with our hearts.

We have to make the decision from the heart, but we also have to be strong because the whole world will tell us that fasting is absurd, that we shouldn't do it because it's bad for our health. Whatever they can tell us, they will. Therefore, let us decide and remain firm in this decision. When I asked Mirjana about Our Lady's personality, she told me that she is a very sweet woman and at the same time very determined. All of this goes together: being sweet, loving, a good mother, and determined. If we want to be like this, we have to maintain our "yes" out of love. When Our Lady said "yes" to the Archangel Gabriel, in order to reaffirm her "yes," she had to say "no" to other things, such as having a normal relationship with Joseph.

This means that if we fast, we should never look at our neighbor's plate. This is very

Important! If fasting leads us to criticize our neighbors who don't fast, then it's better not to fast! Let us allow each person's conscience to guide them and help them respect the freedom of others. Criticisms of comparison always come from the devil. Our neighbor may not fast for ten years in good health, but looking at their neighbor's plate is none of our business. Let us close our eyes and humbly pray that they will one day begin to fast and receive graces from God, like the workers at the eleventh hour. This is being Christian (*"Dear children! Today too I want to call you to prayer. Little children, be bearers of peace and love in this peaceless world. Through fasting and prayer, bear witness that you belong to me and that you live my messages. Pray and seek! I pray and intercede for you before God that you may be converted; that your life and conduct may always be like this."*). And while we fast, let us maintain the hope that an ever-increasing number of people will want to fast, since we fast to respond to the call that God makes to us through the Blessed Virgin.

The Holy Mother teaches us that it is best to keep our fasting secret, so that others don't find out. We can't fast in secret when we are with our family or if we live in a community, but if we work in an office, no one needs to know that, instead of going to the restaurant on the corner, we eat a piece of bread somewhere. Our Lady constantly recommends humility in fasting. On February 10, 1984, she told the prayer group: "Pray and fast! I desire humility from you; but you can be humble only through prayer and fasting."

The importance of prayer and fasting

"Pray and fast! All you can do for me is pray and fast" (Jelena, November 8, 1983).

"Pray and fast!" (Jelena, November 15, 1983).

"Pray and fast. I would like all members of your group to come on Tuesday, if could. Talk to them about fasting. Fast three days a week

Christians. Thank you for answering my call" (April 25, 1999). by the

bishop. If anyone cannot do it in those days, let them do it when they can" (Jelena, November 16, 1983).

"Pray and fast!" (Jelena, November 24, 1983).

"Pray and fast!" (Jelena, November 25, 1983).

"Prayer and fasting!" (Jelena, November 26, 1983).

"Pray and fast! I would like prayer to be renewed every day in your hearts. Pray more; yes, every day more" (Jelena, December 11, 1983).

"Pray and fast! I don't want to tell you anything else" (Jelena, December 14, 1983).

"Only pray and fast!" (Jelena, December 16, 1983).

"Pray and fast!" (Jelena, December 17, 1983).

"My children, I say to you again: pray and fast" (Jelena, December 21, 1983).

"My children, pray and fast. I want to strengthen you, but only prayer is your strength."

(Jelena, December 30, 1983).

"Pray and fast! I wish that prayer and fasting may flourish in your lives.

hearts" (Jelena, January 17, 1984).

"Pray and fast, because without prayer you can do nothing" (Jelena, January 19, 1984).

"Pray and fast. Don't abandon meditation. At home, meditate for at least half an hour" (January 21, 1984).

"Pray and fast. You have not understood well what it means to pray. I hope you can understand it; I really want to" (Jelena, January 23, 1984).

"Pray and fast. You need strength in your prayers. I hope you can pray with "recollection for a long time and fervently" (Jelena, January 26, 1984).

"Pray and fast! I would like you to purify your hearts. Purify them and open them to me" (Jelena, January 24, 1984).

"I ask you to pray and fast! Pray for peace and humility in your hearts" (prayer group, February 12, 1984).

"Pray and fast! Offer me your hearts: I wish to change them completely, I wish "that they may be pure" (prayer group, February 13, 1984).

"Pray and fast! I want to completely purify your hearts. I want to make you happy" (prayer group, February 14, 1984).

"Pray and fast! I wish to purify and save you. Therefore, help me with your prayers." (February 20, 1984).

"Pray and fast! I expect generosity and prayers from your hearts" (February 21, 1984).

"Pray and fast! I wish to be with you always. I wish to be always in your hearts and for you to be in mine" (February 24, 1984).

"Pray and fast! Know that I love you. I hold you all in my lap" (February 25, 1984).

"Pray and fast! Love everyone on Earth, just as you love yourselves" (February 29, 1984).

"I would like you to continue praying and fasting" (June 11, 1984).

"Pray and fast! When I ask you to pray, don't think you have to pray more, but pray.

"Awaken prayer and faith in your hearts" (Mirjana, March 1, 1984).

"Pray and fast so that during this novena God may fill you with his power" (March 17, 1984).

"There are many men who live in sin. Likewise, there are a few among you who who have offended my heart. Pray and fast for them" (March 21, 1984).

«Pray and fast, so that the Kingdom of God may come among you. Let my Son light with your fire" (March 14, 1984).

«Dear children, at this moment it is especially necessary for you to consecrate yourselves

Machine Translated by Google
to me and my heart. Love, pray and fast" (May 19, 1984).

"If I had known, I would have done the fasting retreat much earlier!"

In my Beatitudes Community in Medjugorje, we can all attest to Brother Jean-Michel's problem with fasting, which I would describe as instinctive. But let's read his story, told in his own words: "There are two days a year that I dreaded: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, because the Church asks us to fast on those days. I

had a very hard time fasting. In my community, I was one of the few who ate a full meal on fasting days. However, not long ago, I signed up for a five-day retreat on 'Fasting and Prayer,' organized by the Franciscans of Medjugorje. I felt it was necessary for various reasons, but I confess I secretly hoped they would tell me the places were already filled.

Unfortunately, there was still room for me.

»As the day of the retreat drew near, my anxiety grew, so much so that when D-Day arrived, I was completely terrified. It would have been enough if someone had told me not to go. I would have gladly performed an act of obedience, but no one comforted me.

I was so panicky that, following the advice of a pilgrim, I went to pray at the tomb of Friar Slavko and begged him to come to my aid: "You started this retreat, help me!"

On the first day of the retreat, I decided to push aside my fears and become aware of the grace of the present moment. I wanted to live every second, every planned event without any reservations. If I had imagined the fast would last five days, I would have collapsed immediately. But this thought never crossed my mind. It was the grace of all graces!

Afterward, I went to Apparition Hill and there I wrote a letter to Our Blessed Mother. I explained all my worries and problems to her and left them all to her so I wouldn't have to think about them anymore during the retreat. I told her I was offering her that week of fasting and prayer for her intentions and, in return, asked her to take care of my problems. To my great surprise, the retreat went wonderfully well and without any difficulties. And when it ended, I was even able to delve deeper into the mysteries of the Rosary, taking advantage of the free time given to us during the retreat for meditation. I also realized that I was able to experience the Mass more intensely. It was as if I had entered each of the rooms of a great castle, as our Franciscan priest had taught us.

«I am also grateful for another unexpected gift I received during the fasting retreat. I had hydrocele, a hereditary condition in which excess water accumulates in the genital area, causing me to need to urinate frequently. This was a considerable inconvenience, since I couldn't drink much before traveling or during activities that lasted a certain amount of time. At the beginning of the retreat, we were advised to chew bread thoroughly until it became liquid, and to drink two or three cups of green tea with each meal. By being so attentive to carefully following all the instructions,

recommendations to avoid headaches, nausea, or other problems, I forgot about the consequences that drinking so much could have on me. During the first day, I drank a total of six cups of green tea and nothing happened. At that time, I paid no attention; it was only the next day that I realized I had only gone to the bathroom twice. Intrigued, I did the same thing again, and everything was normal again. I had to admit that I no longer suffered from hydrocele. When the retreat ended, the first thing I did was have a glass of wine and a cup of coffee. The results were usually dramatic; now, however, everything was normal. Since that first day, I have not suffered from this problem again, and I thank the Lord for this unexpected healing. That's why I say to myself: "If I had known, I would have gone on the fasting retreat much sooner!"

Recipes

BREAD for fasting

Ingredients —

3 cups of white flour —4 cups of

wheat flour

—One freeze-dried yeast cube or three tablespoons of baker's yeast —1/2 glass of warm water

—2 glasses of very hot water

—A beaten egg

—A tablespoon of salt

—Two tablespoons of sugar

—Two tablespoons of olive oil

—A teaspoon of butter

Depending on your preferences, you can add any of the following ingredients to the dough: raisins, fresh apple pieces, almonds, walnuts, rolled oats.

Dissolve the yeast in half a glass of warm water with a little sugar and let it rest for 5 to 10 minutes in a warm place. Mix the flour in a large bowl, then make a well in the center.

When the yeast is ready, add it to the flour. Knead everything into small balls. With the two cups of hot water, combine the butter, oil, salt, sugar, raisins (or apple slices), walnuts, and half a beaten egg, and pour it over the dough. Mix well until it separates well from the bowl (add flour and water, if necessary). Cover and let rest for 10 minutes. Knead the dough to aerate it. Place it in well-oiled baking pans and place it in a hot oven (25°C or 30°C) until it has doubled in size. Then, brush the dough with the remaining beaten egg and add sesame or oat seeds, according to taste.

Bake at 200°C for 35 minutes, until the bread is golden brown and cooked through (to test, insert a knife into the center: if it comes out clean, the bread is done). Servings typically consist of two large portions or three medium portions.

Spelt bread

Ingredients —

1 kg of whole spelt flour —1/2 kg of wheat

flour

—Two teaspoons of salt

—One and a half cubes of freeze-dried yeast

—A teaspoon of sugar —1/2 glass

of hot water

—A handful of peeled sunflower seeds

Mix the flour, salt, and sunflower seeds in a bowl. Dissolve the sugar in the warm milk, add the crumbled yeast, and stir well. Make a well in the center of the mixture, pour in the yeast solution, and cover with more flour; let it rise for 15 minutes. Add plenty of warm water until you have a dough that can be mixed well. Knead until it comes away from the bowl. Let it rest for 30 to 45 minutes. Knead again on a floured surface. Make six portions and place them on a well-oiled baking sheet. Let them rest for another half hour. Then, bake for 45 minutes. One portion is enough for two people; the remaining bread can be stored in the freezer.

This basic recipe can be varied: spelt and wheat flour can be mixed in different proportions, and bread made exclusively with whole-grain spelt flour also turns out very well. Spelt adapts well to recipes that also include other types of flour: just use a little more spelt flour and a little less liquid. Spelt bread crumbles and dries out less than other types. It remains flavorful and has a more aromatic taste. You can add rye grains, rolled oats, sunflower seeds, or spices.

If rye flour is used, an acidulant must be added: natural yeast, sour milk or similar products.

Also good is Indian flatbread: the dough is made with half a kilo of wholemeal spelt flour and half a kilo of wheat flour, spread on a baking tray, and sprinkle with rolled oats, cumin, poppy seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, or pumpkin seeds.

Whole spelt grains: Rinse and soften in water 8 to 12 hours before cooking (optional, just to separate the nutrients and make the grains more digestible). Use three cups of water for every cup of spelt (it will grow roughly three times as much).

Place the spelt and water in a saucepan and boil until reduced; then cover the pan and let it simmer for two hours, until the seeds are tender and have absorbed all the water.

They can be cooked like a porridge or added to homemade muesli or mixes to make yogurt.

bread.

Caution: Green spelt is harvested before it matures, has no aroma, and can be harmful to your health.

Latest messages on fasting

«DEAR children, at this holy moment, filled with the Grace of God and the Love that He sends me I implore you not to have a heart of stone. May fasting and prayer be your instruments to draw closer to Jesus, my Son, and to come to know him. Follow me and follow my shining example; I want to help you, and I am with you. Thank you! (January 2, 2007).

Mirjana added: The expression on Our Lady's face during the apparition was one of pain and sorrow. She spoke to me about things I can't yet speak about. Her expression was especially serious when she highlighted the blessing of the priests and asked us to "pray and fast for the priests."

“Dear children! In a special way, I call upon all of you to pray for my intentions, so that through your prayers, Satan’s plan on this Earth may be halted. This Earth, which is becoming increasingly distant from God, is putting itself in God’s place and destroying all that is beautiful and good in the soul of each one of you. Therefore, children, arm yourselves with prayer and fasting so that you may be aware of how much God loves you and be able to do God’s will. Thank you for having responded to my call!” (October 25, 2008).

“Dear children! Today I invite you to look sincerely and deeply into your hearts. What will you see in them? Where is my Son in them, and the desire to follow me to him? My children, may this time of penance be a time in which you ask yourselves: What does God personally desire of me? What should I do? Pray, fast, have hearts full of mercy. Do not forget your shepherds. Pray that they may not be lost, that they may remain in my Son, so that they may be good shepherds of their flocks” (March 18, 2009).

The author

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By using the expression "The Virgin appears...", the author and publisher of this book do not intend to preempt the Church's judgment regarding the authenticity of the apparitions of Mary in Medjugorje. They are merely expressing their personal opinion or that of witnesses to the events currently taking place in Medjugorje. They declare that they are publishing this book for informational purposes and that they will submit to the Church's discernment as soon as it pronounces.