

The Day of Mary



The children at Garabandal with Mary



Medjugorje, Bosnia

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1968

VISIONS OF VIRGIN REPORTED IN CAIRO

Coptic Bishop Among Those Who Tell of Apparition

By THOMAS F. BRADY
Special to The New York Times

CAIRO, May 4 — Twelve bearded, black-robed clergymen of the Coptic Orthodox Church seated beneath a large photograph of President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the patriarchal palace here, affirmed today their acceptance of reported miraculous appearances of the Virgin Mary in Cairo.

However, the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, Pope Kyrillos VI, did not attend the news conference and his signature was not on a mimeographed document circulated to newsmen. The document, said the reported appearances at the Church of the Virgin in the Zetoun District of Cairo had been witnessed by "thousands of Egyptians and foreigners."

Only the words "papal residence" appeared at the foot of this statement. One clergyman said Pope Kyrillos had signed the original document, but another said that Kyrillos would not like to announce anything until it had been verified. Bishop Athanasius of Beni Suef declared that he saw the apparition last Tuesday from 2:45 A.M. to 5 A.M., accompanied by "strong radiation." Bishop Athanasius spoke in Arabic and English.

The Copts, the ancient indigenous Christians of Egypt, are associated doctrinally with the Christian church of Ethiopia.

A second mimeographed document, headed "Ministry of Religion, Information Department" and beginning with the headline "Virgin Mary Appears Daily" was also distributed at the news conference.

The first report of apparitions came April 2 when, according to press accounts, a Muslim garage keeper awoke a priest of the Church of the Virgin to tell him that there was a woman on the church roof, apparently bent on suicide. Since then the church has been the object of nightly vigils by thousands of Egyptians, with the standard accompaniment of popovers and chick-pea venders, and there have been reported but somewhat contradictory reports of appearances.

One newspaper here published an account of the affair with this comment: "Another Palestinian refugee she could not stand it in Jerusalem after Israeli occupation."

Muslims as well as Christians revere Mary because the Koran affirms the doctrine of the virgin birth and treats Jesus as one of the prophets, a precursor of Mohammed.

Bishop Athanasius said of the reported appearances: "We consider them a good sign, a symbol of God, who sees what the Jews have done in the holy places of Jerusalem. God is not happy. He will help us. What has happened in passing and cannot last forever. God is strengthening the spirit of the people in Egypt and the Arab nations. We are waiting for the victory."

The mimeographed document of "papal residence" concluded with a quotation attributed to the Holy Ghost: "Blessed be my people Egypt."

The Coming of Mary and Our Mutual Transformation of the World

John Kirby



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Exploring and Engaging with the Day of Mary

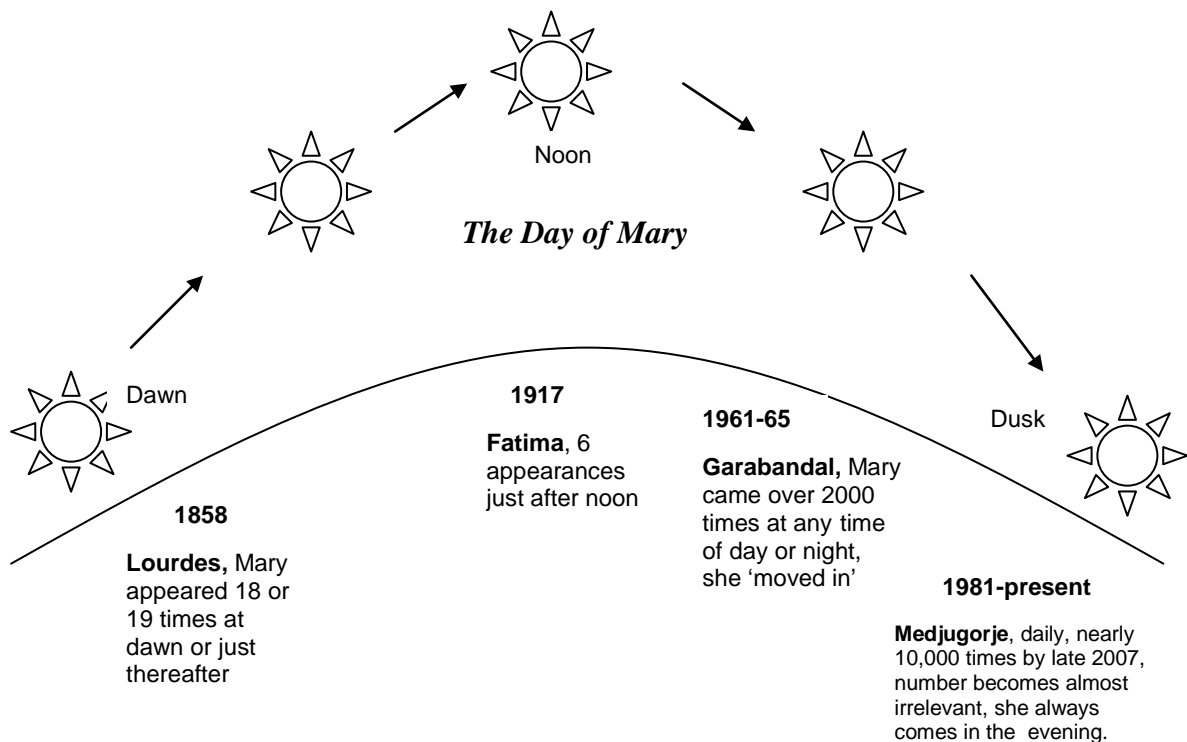
The Presence of Mary and the Transformation of the World

A Brief Chronology of The Day

It is recognized more and more that since around the middle of the 19th century there have been ever increasing appearances of the Virgin Mary, our Divine Mother, in many places around the globe. These have grown in numbers of locations and frequency of visits from a dozen or two appearances at places like Lourdes, France (1858) and Fatima, Portugal (1917) to many hundreds of appearances in the more recent decades in such places as Garabandal, Spain, and San Nicolas, Argentina, and especially in Medjugorje, Bosnia, where her daily appearances have continued since June 1981.

We can agree with those who see this pattern as one of moving from Mary's more traditionally understood appearances in these earlier years to her seemingly 'moving in' in the more recent events such as Garabandal and Medjugorje.

Seeing how these series of events can come to be called the Day of Mary is seen in her pattern of appearances and especially in the times of day that Mary chose and chooses to be at these places. This is laid out simply and graphically in the diagram below:



There have indeed been many other appearances of Mary in this time period, but what we are looking at here are the more well known sites. At these locations we can see how Mary begins the 'day' by appearing to Bernadette at Lourdes in 1858 always at dawn on each of the 18 or 19 times she came. The day continues, and in 1917 Mary came to visit the four children at Fatima at noon or just thereafter, and culminating in the very precise times that Mary comes to the seers in Medjugorje which is at 6.40pm (summer time) each day.

Signs of Mary's call for the uniting of the people of Christianity and Islam

The more time one spends looking at Mary's different appearances the more one can see that everything about her visits is of meaning. This is shown in the titles she gives herself, the exact locations of where she comes, how she looks, what she wears, and in what she says and doesn't say, as well as what we have seen above in the times of day she comes.

In this section we would like to look at her calling for unity amongst the people of different traditions and religions. This is seen in not just what she openly urges but in the subtle non-spoken communication revealed in some of the particular places she has come to appear in. The encouragement, even pleading, for unity amongst the peoples is shown particularly strongly in an unusual series of apparitions and messages Mary gave to a person in Amsterdam over a prolonged period from the end of the 1940s to the early 1960s.

Here in Amsterdam she came under the title of The Lady of All Nations even proclaiming that the date of May 31st would be come known as the Feast of the Lady of All Nations. On this date in 1955 she spoke clearly of her wish for the uniting of people of different nations and cultures: "It is really and truly the Mother, the Lady of all Nations, who is telling you this. ..the Lady begs you now, today, do ask the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that He may protect His people and may restore unity among them. Unity is what His people must achieve, they must be one, and over them, the Lady of all Nations. One Community, nations, I stress these words: One Community! ...Try to understand the reason for my coming on this day. The Lord Jesus Christ has selected this great day (May 31st) for the Lady of all Nations. Her mission is to establish unity among her nations She is sent to make one great Community of her nations. To gather all nations into one Community, that is the task set before the world in the present time, which I have heralded repeatedly. Again and again I have spoken of this time in private. Well, now, this time has come...Above all strive for unity among the nations. That is what the Lady of all Nations has come to tell you today. She will not forget you. You are as yet unable to appreciate my words ...when the time of the Lord Jesus Christ has come, you will see that false prophets, war, discord, dissensions will disappear. Now the time is ushered in. The Lady of all Nations is saying this."

As well as this open invitation to unity, and the uniting through her love that she offers, we can see further signs of this in the choosing of the particular sites for her appearances. By looking at some of these locations more closely perhaps we can follow these clues, which show in these cases her wish for the coming together especially of the peoples of Christianity and Islam.

Fatima: This village in northern Portugal is one of the most well known sites of any Marian apparition in the last one hundred years. The Virgin Mary appeared here to three children for a total of six times, all on the 13th of the month, between May and October 1917, culminating on October 13th with the miraculous 'dance of the sun' as it has come to be known, which was witnessed by approximately 70,000 people. There are at least two things about Fatima which highlight the wish for unification that Mary is expressing in her appearances. Firstly, Fatima was the name of the most favoured daughter of Mohammed, the founder of Islam. The Prophet once said that he regarded his daughter as the highest woman in heaven after the Virgin Mary. Fatima was the youngest daughter of Mohammed and the only one to bear any children. Within two



The Young Seers of Fatima

years of marriage she had born two sons, Hassan and Hussein. Interestingly, all those who claim direct descendancy from the Prophet claim it through the children of Fatima. Further, the origin of the naming of the village seems significant. During the Crusades a knight by the name of Goncalo Hermingues captured the daughter of the powerful Muslim prince Alacer de Sol. She was held for some time and, in due course, Hermingues and the princess, whose name was Fatima, fell in love and Hermingues asked the prince for his daughter's hand in marriage. The Crusader and Fatima were married and she converted to Christianity, at which time she changed here name to Ouranea, from which the nearby town of Ourem gets it's name. Unfortunately, the princess died in her youth, and soon after Hermingues gave his life to God living out his years in a Cistercian abbey. Later, he was sent to a nearby priory and took with him the remains of his wife; the village took, and still bears her original name, Fatima. And it was to this place in 1917 that Mary chose to appear with her pleas for conversion and prayer.

Lourdes: The healing properties of the water at Lourdes have made it the most well known shrine to our Blessed Mother. What is interesting here is again how the place derived its name. The similarities between here and Fatima are remarkable. Overlooking Lourdes is a very large hill called Castle Mirambel, which dominates the area. In the eighth century the Saracens (Muslims) were driven out of the south of France altogether, apart from this one stronghold at Castle Mirambel. Mirat, the Muslim commander of the Saracens, withstood all attempts by Charles Martel to defeat him. Forty years later he was still there. At this time the Emperor Charlemagne arrived, but had no more success than Martel. The siege only ended, it is related, when the Bishop of Le Puy sent Mirat the message: "Brave Prince, would you not



Lourdes

surrender to a sovereign lady, Mary, Queen of Heaven?" It was only at this point that Mirat gave in. After surrendering, and after all the troops had been sent home, Mirat remained behind. He later became a Christian and at that time changed his name to Lorus. Charlemagne graciously appointed him commander of the fort, and the town

was also named after him, Lorus=Lourdes. Again, this is the place where Mary chose to make her famous appearances.

Cairo: One of the most surprising things about the apparitions in Cairo is how little known are the events that took place there. There were nights in 1968 when 250,000 people were gathered around the church in Zeitoun, a suburb of Cairo, almost bringing the city to a standstill. The Virgin Mary would appear outside the church above the domes and roof of the church nightly, sometimes for hours at a time. This continued for many months, then the apparitions became less frequent, eventually ending in 1971. The church is the Coptic Orthodox church of St. Mary, which is situated, according to tradition, close to the road used by the Holy Family when they fled to Egypt. Not surprisingly, this being Cairo, the majority of the witnesses were Muslims.



The visions were officially confirmed by the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, the Egyptian government, the Greek Catholic Church, and the head of the Evangelical Church in Egypt speaking on behalf of all the Protestant Churches. Here in Cairo the visions were not seen only by a few, but by all who came. There was, however, no speech or verbal message from Mary at any time. Francis Johnston in his little booklet on the apparitions in Cairo, writes: "All this time the Virgin continued to maintain a wondrous silence...commentators interpreted this absence of a spoken message as a gesture of motherly tact and tenderness to her children of all faiths. Had she, for example, declared herself to be the Mother of God, the Muslims, who reject Christ's divinity, would probably have turned their backs on the visions and disputed with the Christian onlookers. Or had she identified herself with the Immaculate Conception, the Copts, who believe that Mary was sanctified only at the time of the Annunciation, might have experienced difficulty in fully accepting her. As it was, Our Lady invariably maintained an attitude of prayer, as if promoting everyone present, regardless of their beliefs, to unite in God through prayer." *When Millions Saw Mary*, Augustine Press, 1980.



However, the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, Pope Kyrillos VI, did not attend the news conference and his signature was not on a mimeographed document circulated to newsmen. The document... said the reported appearances at the Church of the Virgin in the Zeitoun District of Cairo had been witnessed by "thousands of Egyptians and foreigners."

This time, of course, was a period of awful conflict between Egypt and Israel, when many nations feared the consequences of the conflict between them in the Six Day War. It isn't surprising then to note that Mary often appeared above the church in Cairo holding an olive branch, an ancient symbol of peace. She was also seen many times to be kneeling in an attitude of prayer, beseeching. Supernatural doves of light were seen to be flying around the domes of the church, another symbol of peace. These doves would appear as birds of light, gliding, and would disappear as suddenly as they appeared.

Underlining the truly ecumenical aspect of Mary's appearance here, Francis Johnston relates elsewhere in his booklet: "News of the apparitions spread like fire across Egypt, generating a wave of intense excitement and attracting immense multitudes of Christians, Jews, Muslims and unbelievers to Zeitoun to see the visions for themselves. Within a few weeks the crowds reached an estimated 250,000 nightly and the resulting traffic congestion threatened to paralyse Cairo. At each appearance of the Virgin a deafening cry would ascend from the tumultuous thousands besieging the floodlit church on all sides. 'We believe in you St. Mary! We witness to you St. Mary!' Great numbers of Muslims who had been kneeling on their prayer mats reciting verses from the Koran in praise of Mary would raise their voices in fervent hymns to her. (It needs to be remembered that Islam fosters a certain devotion to Mary and acknowledges her Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth of Christ). Others would pray in unison with Catholics, Copts and Protestants - the first time in history that Christians and Muslims had prayed together in large numbers."

It is also worth noting that every mosque has a prayer niche dedicated to Mary - which is more than can be said for every Christian church, or even every Catholic church !



Zeitoun, Cairo, 1968

Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina: The first appearance of the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje, was on June 24th, 1981. This is, surely not coincidentally, the feast day of St. John the Baptist. Thirty years ago, J.G. Bennett wrote in the Dramatic Universe: "The pre-eminence of Mohammed came from his perfect submission (Islam) to the Divine Command. We cannot but see here a parallel between Mohammed and Mary, and indeed some have gone so far as to assert their identity, which is to be seen in the role of transmission. Both Mary and Mohammed were channels or vehicles through whom the Divine Operations were made manifest in the world. The same is true of John the Baptist who is so closely linked with Mary in the manifestation of Christ. There are very great differences of degree; but there is a characteristic role that has to be filled in every manifestation. This is one way in which we can recognise the pattern which history is destined to realise."

In this area of what was Yugoslavia the different religions of Roman Catholicism, Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy have existed in almost equal proportions through the centuries. The inter relationship between them, however, has often been one of animosity. In the 1981 national census only 1.2 out of 22 million described themselves as Yugoslavs, the rest preferring to call themselves Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Croats, Serbs etc. The area has always been seen as one dividing east from west, both politically and religiously. Even within the country itself religion and nationality seem to split the country geographically - and therefore Europe itself - into two. Catholics, and republics or countries belonging to the Latin church lie to the west, while Islam and the Orthodox faith lies to the east. The republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina straddles this dividing line, and within this republic lies Medjugorje. The traumas and atrocities performed in the area during the war in the 1990s are still fresh in our minds, but it has been said that perhaps Medjugorje can be the key to peace in this volatile area because the one thing all three religions have in common is a sincere love for the Virgin Mary.

In Medjugorje, as much if not more than anywhere else, Mary speaks of the mutual respect we should have for each other's religions. Mary Craig writes: "In September 1981, some two months after the first apparition, Orthodox and Muslim pilgrims



View of Medjugorje and the church of St James, Bosnia-Herzegovina

began coming to Medjugorje. This would be roughly analogous to Northern Ireland Paisleyites visiting the shrine of Knock. The gaping divide between Serbian Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics was every bit as fraught with danger as that dividing Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Or Christians and Muslims in the Lebanon. The mutual hatred was everywhere the same. So it was almost shocking to devout Catholics when the Madonna was reported as saying: 'You must respect each man's beliefs. No one should despise another for his convictions. God is one and indivisible. It is not God but believers who have caused the dreadful divisions in the world.' To Mirjana, one of the visionaries, she pointed out that devout Catholics

seemed to go out of their way to avoid contact with Orthodox and Muslims; yet nobody who refused to take other believers seriously was worthy of the name of Christian. By way of underlining this difficult message, Our Lady had singled out one of Mirjana's neighbours in Sarajevo (where she was studying), a Muslim woman named Pasha, for special praise, 'She is a true believer, a saintly woman. You should try to be more like her...Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics to my son and myself are all one. You are all my children.' Mary Craig, *Spark from Heaven: Mystery of the Madonna of Medjugorje*, 1988.

When I was in Medjugorje during Easter 1989 the daily apparitions of Mary were taking place in the organ loft at the back of the church. When Mary appeared, and



The children of Garabandal with Mary

the visionaries dropped to their knees, a light would be switched on in the church so that all would know the apparition had begun. The thousands present inside and outside the church who were praying the rosary, then fell into silence. One warm and sunny evening, unable to even get into the church as it was full to overflowing, I stood at one of the open side doors. In the middle of this sacred silence, with Mary present with the children in the church, I became aware of a solitary raised voice coming from across the fields. It was a Muslim singing his evening prayers. It was an exquisite moment.

Also on this theme of Mary's call for unity, I'd like to take something from the autobiography of J.G. Bennett. In 1960 while staying with the Benedictine monks of St. Wandrille in France, and practising with them the spiritual exercise of the latihan he "...received several illuminating experiences in the latihan. Once I heard a voice within me saying: 'Surrender to the Will of God is the foundation of all religion.' Then I became aware of the Presence of Jesus, and saw that He is the Manifestation of the Love of God. The thought entered my mind: 'Then Christianity is the one true religion.' At the same time I found myself intoning the opening chapter of the Qu'ran: El hamd ul Illah Rabb-el-alemeen er Rahman er Rahim: Glory to God the Lord of the two Worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful.' Then the same voice said: 'It is my Will that my Church and Islam should be united,' I said in astonishment: 'Who can accomplish such a task?' and the reply came: 'Mary'. Soon after the latihan ended."¹

"There is only one God, and one faith. Believe firmly." -Virgin Mary, Medjugorje 1981

A Geography of The Day

Having looked at the pattern of the Day of Mary in the timing, sequence and number of various apparitions, and at least a taste of something of the meaning of her visitations in the call for unity, we turn to look at a pattern of the geography of many of these locations. In so doing we are not suggesting that what we have here is one overall pretty pattern of this Day of Mary. Not at all. There is so much more to this than we have even begun to discover, or perhaps are even able to discover, including these geographical connections, that we do not presume to propose some kind of all-embracing comprehensive view. Rather we are taking a brief look at some

¹ J G Bennett, *Witness*, Claymont Communications, 1983, p347. see chapter *The Subud Experience* in same book for more on the exercise of the 'latihan'.

of the meaningful coincidences and developing pictures that can come after over 150 years of what – if we are correct in our proposition – can begin to be seen as the Day of Mary.

The rather extraordinary matter coming to light in the geography of these appearances is how so many of them are on an almost straight line of latitude. If we take the latitudinal line of 43° north within Europe then we find many well known places of religious and spiritual significance on or straddling this line, including several we have already been looking at to do with Mary's recent appearances.

Illustrated below we can see that Garabandal, Lourdes and Medjugorje all lay along this line. The red line marking the 43° line of latitude inserted in the map below is on a slight curve of course as it is laid on to a two dimensional representation of the surface of a sphere. It, therefore, has a curved appearance as do the other lines of latitude already on the map.

But these sites of Marian apparitions are not at all the only places of interest laying along this line. We can also discover here:

- **Santiago de Compostela**, latitude 42°88', in north west Spain which has been a famous place of Christian pilgrimage for a thousand years. Compostela means field of stars, making Santiago de Compostela "St. James in the Field of Stars". Wikipedia has a pre-Christian legend recording, "As the lowest-lying land on that stretch of coast, the city's site took on added significance. Legends supposed of Celtic origin made it the place where the souls of the dead gathered to follow the Sun across the sea. Those unworthy of going to the Land of the Dead haunted Galicia as the Santa Compañía." It is estimated that over 100,000 pilgrims travel there each year.



There are many sites in Italy that run along this line, some of which are:
Monte Argentario, Italy, 42° 40' , is where St Paul of the Cross founded the first monastery of the order he founded, the Passionists, in 1737. It is known that for fifty years he prayed for the conversion of England, and left the devotion as a legacy to his sons.

- **Sienna, Italy**, latitude 43° 17', was the home of St Catherine of Sienna, In 1370 she received a series of visions of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, after which she heard a command to leave her withdrawn life and enter the public life of the world. She began to write letters to men and women in authority, especially begging for peace between the republics and principalities of Italy and for the return of the papacy from Avignon to Rome. She carried on a long correspondence with Pope Gregory XI, also asking him to reform the clergy and the administration of the Papal States. Catherine was considered to be one of the most brilliant theological minds of her day, although she never had any formal education. She didn't learn how to write until the end of her life, but that never stopped her. She dictated her literary masterpieces, sometimes reciting three documents to three secretaries at the same time. Catherine's ways of communicating were always uninhibited in their directness. For example, during the Great Western Schism, in defence of Pope Urban VI, she rebuked three Italian cardinals who were supporting the anti-pope, writing to them, "what made you do this? You are flowers who shed no perfume, but stench that makes the whole world reek." . She asked to be buried at the **Basilica Santa Maria sopra Minerva** (Basilica of St. Mary over Minerva) in Rome, so named because it was built directly on the foundations of a temple to Minerva, the goddess of wisdom.



'Virgin and Child in Majesty' by Duccio di Buoninsegna, Siena Cathedral

Assisi, Italy, 43° 07', Birthplace of St Francis, founder of the Franciscans, and St Clare founder of the Poor Clare's in 1181. St Francis shares with St Catherine the honour of being the joint patron saint of Italy. Like Norcia, Assisi is known for it's joint, concurrent male and female saints. The direction of Francis' life was guided by two events one in Spoleto (Latitude 42° 74') and the other in Assisi. It was at Spoleto that "There God spoke to him again in his sleep: "Who is it better to serve," God asked Francis, "the Lord or the servant?" Francis answered, "The Lord, of course." God responded, "Then why are you obeying the servant and not the Lord?" When Francis asked, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" God told Francis: "Go back home. It will be revealed to you what you must do." <http://www.americancatholic.org/e-News/FriarJack/fj043007.asp#F1> . And it was while at Assisi that Francis in the Church of San Damiano experienced the Icon of Christ Crucified coming alive and saying to him three times, "Francis, Francis, go and repair My house which, as you can see, is falling into ruins." He chose never to be ordained a priest, but in 1209 Francis led his first 11 followers to Rome to seek permission from Pope Innocent III to found a new religious order. At first his attempt



Assisi

to speak with the Pope was refused; but the following night, according to accounts, Innocent saw in a dream the church was crumbling apart and a poor man appearing to hold it up. The next morning, recalling the poor man he had refused the day before, he recognized him as the man he saw in his dream, and decided to change his verdict.

Foligno, Italy 43° 02', birthplace of Blessed Angela of Foligno, 1248. She prayed to St Francis for help who then appeared to her in a dream and offered to help her. She was a mystic, nun and author, having written such renowned works as the "Book of Visions and Instructions". Bl. Angela's high authority as a spiritual teacher may be gathered from the fact that Bollandus, among other testimonials, quotes Maximilian Sandaeus, of the Society of Jesus, who calls her the "Mistress of Theologians", whose whole doctrine has been drawn out of the Book of Life, Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Bl Angela was another who founded a religious order.

Not forgetting **St Rita of Cascia**, 42°43'. Born in 1381, she was originally married with two sons, who died of natural causes at quite an early age. "With her husband and sons gone, Rita wanted to enter the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene at Cascia but was spurned for being a widow; virginity is a requirement for entry into the convent and sisterhood. She persisted several times, though, and was finally given a condition to enter to reconcile her family with her husband's murderers. Rita worked hard to obtain this goal, and after both clans were reconciled when she was 36 years old, Rita was allowed to enter the monastery. It is also said that, while the sisters slept and despite locked doors, Rita was miraculously transported into the convent by her patron saints John the Baptist, St. Augustine, and St. Nicholas of Tolentino. When she was found in the morning and the sisters learned how she had gotten into the convent, the sisters could not turn her away. While she was there, it is said that a thorn detached itself from Christ's crown of thorns and set itself in her forehead - hence the representation of a head wound in her appearance. Rita remained at the monastery until her death in 1457." – wikipedia.

-Norcia, Italy, 42° 84'. Birthplace of St Benedict and his twin sister St Scholastica in 480. Benedict is known as the founder of western monasticism. Also, a Benedictine monastery was founded in 1319 or 1320 as Monte Oliveto (43°20') with reference to the Mount of Olives of Christ's Passion. This is the mother-house of the Olivetans and the monastery later took the name of Monte Oliveto Maggiore ("the greater") to distinguish it from successive foundations.



Monte Oliveto

Its cloisters are famous for the cycle of frescoes illustrating scenes from the legend of St. Benedict begun by Luca Signorelli (1497–1498) and completed by il Sodoma (1502 or 1505).

Tolentino, Italy, 43° 16', St Nicholas of Tolentino, "Had visions of angels reciting 'to Tolentino'; he took this as a sign to move to that city in 1274, where he lived the rest of his life.." and he is, "... Reported to have resurrected over one hundred dead children, including several who had drowned together. Legend says that the devil once beat Nicholas with a stick; the stick was displayed for years in his church. A vegetarian, Nicholas was once served a roasted fowl; he made the sign of the cross over it, and it flew out a window. Nine passengers on ship going down at sea once asked Nicholas' aid; he appeared in the sky, wearing the black Augustinian habit, radiating golden light, holding a lily in his left hand; with his right hand he quelled the storm.!

The Energy of The Day

We can see then that this line of 43° has upon it several of the most well known locations of appearances of Mary, and also, especially in Italy, numerous places where saints have been born, lived, had visions, conversions, witnessed and performed miracles not to mention founding religious orders in nearly all of the cases mentioned above.

It would be tempting to think, looking at these places and their stories, that this is a magical line of beneficence and wonder working, and indeed in many ways it is, but a closer look reveals other events that have taken place also on this line which questions a too simplistic understanding.

For example, the recent history of the Medjugorje area reveals events of a much more tragic nature. The parish of Medjugorje has a total population of around 4,000 and comprises of about 5 small villages or hamlets, one of which is Surmanci. During the 2nd World War the Ustashi, a Croatian fascist group, collected together nearly 600 Serbians promising to unite them with their Serbian neighbours in Belgrade. However, in June 1941, six train cars stopped at Surmanci and marched all the older men, women and children over a cliff to their deaths. They then threw hand-grenades on to the bodies below to ensure none survived.

We have fresher memories of the atrocities committed during the war in Bosnia during the 1990s, but the region has gone a very long time without knowing peace.

"I had come to Yugoslavia because I knew that the past had made the present, and I want to see how the process works. It is plain that it means an immense amount of human pain, arranged in an unbroken continuity appalling to any person cradled in the security of the English or American past. Were I to go down to the market-place, armed with the powers of witchcraft, and take a peasant by the shoulders, and whisper to him, "In your lifetime, have you known peace?" wait for his answer, shake his shoulders and transform him into his father, and ask him the same question, and transform him in turn into his father, I would never hear the word "Yes", if I carried my questioning of the dead back for a thousand years. I would always hear, "No, there was fear, there were our enemies without, our rulers within, there was prison, there was torture, there was violent death."

- Rebecca West, *Black Lamb, Grey Falcon*

'The Balkans is the unconscious of the world...It is here that the repressed memories of history, its traumas and fears and images reside. It is here that the psychodynamics of humanity - the tectonic clash between Rome and Byzantium, West and East, Judeo-Christianity and Islam - is still easily discernible.' – Sam Vaknin, *After the Rain - How the West Lost the East*.

Mirjana Dragicevic is one of the six visionaries at Medjugorje and reported how a female neighbour whose family was connected with those who had been massacred came to her for help at one point. Mirjana relates, "There was another woman who lived in a house and something kept constantly knocking on her window. Later on, this very same woman got an apartment way up on the sixth floor and again something kept tapping on her window. I questioned the Gospa (Virgin Mary) about what it was. She replied that the souls in Purgatory were doing so because she has forgotten to pray for them and they are demanding her prayers." from:

http://www.culturewars.com/CultureWars/Archives/cw_feb98/surmanci.html

In the public messages that Mary gives at Medjugorje we can see not only her understanding of how volatile the energy at work is in this place but also her teaching on how to have this not get out of hand and turn into war and/or atrocities. The war in Bosnia started in 1991, it actually officially began on 25 June 1991, ten years to the day from Mary's first appearance there, but as much as five years earlier she had tried to lead us into not letting it happen:

October 23, 1986 "Dear children! Today again I am calling you to pray. Especially, dear children, do I call you to pray for peace. Without your prayers, dear children, I cannot



help you to fulfil the message which the Lord has given me to give to you. Therefore, dear children, pray, so that in prayer you realize what God is giving you. Thank you for having responded to my call."

The year before the atrocities began, using very strong religious terminology, she again urged us to make the conscious efforts needed to neutralise the aggression that was building up:

October 25, 1990 "Dear children! Today I call you to pray in a special way that you offer up sacrifices and good deeds for peace in the world. Satan is strong and with all his strength, desires to destroy the peace which comes from God. Therefore, dear children, pray in a special way with me for peace. I am with you and I desire to help you with my prayers and I desire to guide you on the path of

peace. I bless you with my motherly blessing. Do not forget to live the messages of peace. Thank you for having responded to my call."

After the war had started she spelt out the way to peace:

April 25, 1992 "Dear children! Today also I invite you to prayer. Only by prayer and fasting can war be stopped. Therefore, my dear little children, pray and by your life give witness that you are mine and that you belong to me, because Satan wishes in these turbulent days 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 should do and which path to take. I invite all those who have said "yes" to me to renew their consecration to my Son Jesus and to His Heart and to me so we can take you more intensely as instruments of peace in this unpeaceful world. Medjugorje is a sign to all of you and a call to pray and

live the days of grace that God is giving you. Therefore, dear children, accept the call to prayer with seriousness. I am with you and your suffering is also mine. Thank you for having responded to my call."

It is clear from the above messages that the management of the energies at work, especially along this line of 43° north, is something that can be, and is meant to be, our responsibility. Where we do not acknowledge, understand or respond consciously and affirmatively to this then trouble and danger are close at hand. We have looked at the events surrounding Medjugorje, but there are many others along this line, mostly in Europe but by no means limited to that area, that show the same forces at work. Some examples:

Carcassonne, France, 43°12'. Many of the towns along this line in Italy are fortified but none compare to Carcassonne in southern France, also on the 43° latitudinal line. Looking at the splendour of these fortified walls in the photograph (left) shows



Carcassonne, France

why this town suffered less from attacks than many other towns along this line. Wikipedia reports: In 1096 Pope Urban II blessed the foundation stones of the new cathedral, a Catholic bastion against the Cathar heretics.

Carcassonne became famous in its role in the

Albigensian Crusades, when the city was a stronghold of Occitan Cathars. In August 1209 the crusading army of Simon de Montfort forced its citizens to surrender. After capturing Raymond-Roger de Trencavel and imprisoning and allowing him to die, Montfort made himself the new viscount. He added to the fortifications. Carcassonne became a border citadel between France and Aragon. Contemporary opinion still considered the fortress impregnable. During the Hundred Years' War, Edward the Black Prince failed to take the city in 1355, although his troops destroyed the Lower Town.

Perugia, Italy 43° 07': "In 216 and 205 BC it assisted Rome in the Second Punic War then in 41-40 BC, when Lucius Antonius took refuge there, it was reduced by Octavian after a long siege, and its senators sent to their death. The city was burnt, with the exception of the temples of Vulcan and Juno— the massive Etruscan terrace-walls, naturally, hardly have suffered at all— and the town, with the territory for a mile round, was allowed to be occupied by whomever chose. On the positive, creative side Raphael, produced five paintings in Perugia

"In the Lombard period Perugia is spoken of as one of the principal cities of Tuscia. In the ninth century, with the consent of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, it passed under the popes; but by the eleventh century its commune was asserting itself, and for many centuries the city continued to maintain an independent life, warring against many of the neighbouring lands and cities— Foligno, Assisi, Spoleto, Todi, Siena, Arezzo," – wikipedia

Again on the creative side three of these towns - Siena, Arezzo, and Forli, all on the 43° line – were places where Dante wrote his Divine Comedy.

Nis, Serbia, 43° 19', birthplace of Constantine the Great. Niš is a possible location of Nysa, a mythical place in Greek mythology where the young god Dionysus was raised. It is home to Serbia's oldest Christian church, dated back to the 4th century in the suburb of Mediana

Wikipedia relates: "Though the emperor Julian strengthened the walls, the very prosperity of Naissus (earlier name for Nis) made it a target and it was destroyed by Attila in 443. Attila the Hun conquers Naissus with battering rams and rolling tower. After the Huns captured the city of Naissus they massacred the inhabitants of the city. Years later river banks outside the city were still covered with human bones as a reminder of the devastation the Huns had inflicted"

"The Skull Tower (Serbian: *Теле Кула*, or *Ćele Kula*) is a monument to 19th century Serbian rebels. It is situated in Niš, on Zoran Đinđić Boulevard, on the old Constantinople road leading to Sofia.

On May 31, 1809 on Čegar Hill a few kilometers northeast of Niš, Serbian insurrectionists suffered their greatest defeat in the First Serbian Uprising against the Ottoman Empire (1804-1813). The insurrectionists' advance towards Niš was stopped here and, when the far stronger Turkish forces attacked, the battle was ended by the Serbian commander Stevan Sinđelić, who sacrificially fired at his gunpowder depot in order to avoid surrendering to the Turks, killing himself, the rest of his men, and the advancing Turks.

After the retreat of the Serbian rebel army, the Turkish commander of Niš, Hurshid Pasha, ordered that the heads of the killed Serbians were to be

mounted on a tower to serve as a warning to any other would-be revolutionaries. In all, 952 skulls were included, with the skull of Sinđelić placed at the top."



Skulls in the wall of the Niš skull tower. Built at the beginning of the 19th century after an uprising, the tower served to scare off those who still thought of rebelling against the Ottoman Empire.

Shumen, Bulgaria 43°16'. "In 811 Shumen was burned by the emperor Nicephorus, and in 1087 it was besieged by Alexius I

In 1388 the sultan Murad I forced it to surrender to the Ottoman Turks. After Władysław Warneńczyk's unsuccessful crusade in 1444, the city was destroyed by the Ottomans and moved to its present location. In the 18th century it was enlarged and fortified. Three times, in 1774, 1810 and 1828, it was unsuccessfully attacked by Russian armies. The Turks consequently gave it the name of Gazi ("Victorious"). In 1854 it was the headquarters of Omar Pasha and the point at which the Turkish army concentrated (See Crimean War)... The religious buildings in the city include the Eastern Orthodox Holy Three Saints Cathedral and Holy Ascension Basilica, as well as the Tombul Mosque, the largest mosque in Bulgaria and one of the largest in the Balkans, serving Shumen and the region's Muslim minority.

Sukhumi, Georgia, former USSR, 43° 00': from Wikipedia: "it was a centre of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict from 1989 to 1993 which damaged much of the city. During

the Abkhaz siege of Sukhumi (1992-1993), the city and its environs suffered almost daily air strikes and artillery shellings, with heavy civilian casualties.[8] On September 27, 1993 the battle for Sukhumi was concluded by a full-scale campaign of the ethnic cleansing against its majority Georgian population (see Sukhumi Massacre in Wikipedia).

Beslan, Chechnya 43° 12': The Beslan school hostage crisis (also referred to as the Beslan school siege or Beslan Massacre) began when a group of armed Chechen separatists and supporters took more than 1,200 schoolchildren and adults hostage on September 1, 2004, at School Number One (SNO) in the town of Beslan, North Ossetia-Alania, (an autonomous republic in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation). On the third day of the standoff, a chaotic gunbattle broke out between the hostage-takers and Russian security forces. Three hundred thirty-four civilians were killed, including 186 children and hundreds more were wounded. Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev took responsibility for the hostage taking. Questions about the government's management of the crisis have also, persisted, including the nature and content of negotiations with the militants, the responsibility for the bloody outcome, and the use of heavy weapons by the government forces. – wikipedia

Outside of mainland Europe it would seem the trend continues along this line, although data is more hard to come by. The line runs through northern USA, and just a brief glance shows us a couple of obvious sites of similar tragedies:

The Battle of Saratoga 43°03' in September and October 1777 this was a decisive American victory resulting in the surrender of an entire British army of 9,000 men invading New York from Canada during the American Revolutionary War. The Battle of Saratoga was actually two battles about 9 miles south of Saratoga, New York, namely the Battle of Freeman's Farm and the Battle of Bemis Heights, as well as the Battle of Bennington, about 15 miles east of Saratoga. The surrender of General John Burgoyne, who was surrounded by much larger American militia forces, took place after his retreat to Saratoga.

The capture of an entire British army secured the northern American states from further attacks out of Canada and prevented New England from being isolated. A major result was that France entered the conflict on behalf of the Americans, thus dramatically improving the Americans' chances in the war.

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Saratoga

Wounded Knee, 43° 14'. Wikipedia describes the Wounded Knee Massacre, "...also known as The Battle at Wounded Knee Creek, was the last major armed conflict between the Dakota Sioux and the United States, subsequently described as a "massacre" by General Nelson A. Miles in a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

"On December 29, 1890, five hundred troops of the U.S. 7th Cavalry, supported by four Hotchkiss guns surrounded an encampment of Miniconjou Sioux (Lakota) and Hunkpapa Sioux (Lakota) with orders to escort them to the railroad for transport to Omaha, Nebraska. The 7th Cavalry did not surprise the Indians: just one day prior, the Sioux had given up their protracted flight from the troops and willingly agreed to turn themselves in at the Pine Ridge Agency in South Dakota. They were the most hardened and the very last of the Sioux to do so. They were met by the 7th Cavalry who intended to use a display of force coupled with firm negotiations to gain compliance from these, the most troublesome bands of the Sioux.

"The commander of the 7th had been ordered to disarm the Lakota before proceeding. During the process of disarmament, a deaf tribesman refused the order to give up his rifle unless he was paid fair value for it. This set off a chain reaction of events that led to a scene of sheer chaos and mayhem with fighting between both sides in all directions.

"By the time it was over, 25 troopers and more than 146 Lakota Sioux lay dead, including men, women, and children. Some of the soldiers are believed to have been the victims of "friendly fire" as the shooting took place at point blank range in chaotic conditions. Around 150 Lakota are believed to have fled the chaos, many of whom may have died from hypothermia."



Wounded Knee before the massacre

It is interesting to note that in many of these tragedies what took place had not

been planned, but unfolded into a form of chaos once at the locations, Wounded Knee, just above, is a good example, but several of the others follow the same pattern.

Responding to the Energy

It should, then, be said at this point that the energy we have been describing that manifests at these places along the line of 43° latitude is in itself a neutral energy. Clearly it is a strong force that is present and active regardless of whether people are aware of it or not. Those who are aware and respond consciously and responsibly have positive outcomes while those who respond negatively whether consciously or unconsciously tend to be swept up by the strength of the forces at work, and can almost be judged to be acting quite unintentionally.

In different parts of the world we can see recent and clear evidence of this madness. We have already looked at the events surrounding Medjugorje in Bosnia, but there has been an almost simultaneous series of appearance of Mary in a place named Kibeho in Rwanda. These prolonged and frequent visits Mary in Kibeho started in the same year as Medjugorje, that is 1981. Again, after 10 to 12 years or so literally complete madness seems to have possessed the people in this part of Rwanda, and for a period of time while this ran itself through – again with virtually no intervention from the western world, the price of having no oil – the atrocities we have become too familiar with took place.

It has been witnessed in both Bosnia and Rwanda that after the madness had burnt itself out, many locals have found they are literally shaking themselves, as if waking up, back into a more normal state, somewhat shocked at what they and others have done, "They were our neighbours for many years before the civil war, but then..." is often heard.

So, it is clear that we do have a choice in how we respond to this increase in energy. This is becoming a more relevant and important issue for more and more of us as this build up in energy spreads now further afield that simply the of 43° north. It has certainly been more focussed and noticeable over the last 150 years along this line, but as the Day of Mary reaches the depths of the evening, as Mary's appearances have been more frequent and in more varied locations throughout the world we begin to see the possibilities – as well as the need to attend to the released energy – increasing for us all.

The Day of Mary has been a 150 year meticulously crafted work of Love. And now the Day is almost complete and the scene has been set, the invitations have been sent out - to us all – and it is for us to enjoy the life offered and help and share with each other the *how* of a radically new life. And it is the *how* that leads us into the next section.

Participating in and Engaging with The Day of Mary

The Day of Mary has unfolded, we are at the dusk. As a result of Mary moving in with us everything is different, more is now possible than we ever dreamed. The day may be drawing to a close but Mary will not be moving away. At tomorrows sunrise she will be very much with us, and we will be with her to the extent we have allow ourselves to be. It is now just up to us to learn the simple ways of being with Mary, ways that so fundamentally transform our feelings, thoughts and actions as to find us living in a completely new world together, together meaning us with Mary and us with each other, the nature of what is between us being Mary.

Earlier we looked mostly at the external aspects of what we are calling The Day of Mary, we looked at the chronology, the signs of her call to unity and something of the geography of Mary's appearances. We ended by looking briefly at one part of the aspects of the energy of The Day which leads us nicely to the most important part of this exploration which is the participation in and engaging with The Day of Mary.

We can begin to see that the nearer we approach the dusk of the Day the more Mary has been leading and encouraging us to learn how to enter the Day in such a way that it becomes possible to enter it more fully and permanently. As we enter more into the *practice* of the Day of Mary the clearer it becomes that this possibility is being offered to us.

We saw that as the Day progressed Mary came to be with us in greater numbers of places and for much longer periods of time. It has even been described in some places as Mary having 'moved in' with us. Not only has she moved in but it can be said that she has brought lots of friends with her(!), but in such a discreet way that they are only with us, that is *for us* they are only individually and consciously with us to the extent that we wish them to be, that we invite them to be, that we learn to live some of their ways and so make them our ways. We learn that that our participation with Mary truly comes about to the degree that it is a **conscious** process.

Although we have seen that there may well be an area, the 43° line of latitude, where a greater intensity of this energy has been localised at a multitude of locations, nevertheless, any person anywhere can participate. It is even tempting to add, '**of course**, any person anywhere can participate'. It would seem from all the evidence presented above that this line has been known, used and chosen as a place of intense activity, at least by Mary, for quite some time. Knowing this and knowing how saints have lived and thrived in places along this same line, we can surely see it must be that we can also consciously tune in with, engage and benefit from these same

places, places which as the Day of Mary moves on radiate their energy further and further afield. The potential of this energy then becomes accessible to many more people and is simultaneously spread further afield by people themselves.

Mary speaks to us, understandably, in ways that are most familiar to us. We have seen something of this in her manner and messages in places like Zeitoun, Egypt and Medjugorje, Bosnia. But as the Day of Mary has progressed we begin to see a more, if you will, non-denominational approach, a more universal, truly catholic, individualised form of speaking and of being with us.

To clarify: any person, anywhere, of any religious belief or none can have the fullness of the day that is on offer. How else could it be? What kind of Mother would not arrange and want it to be so?

We have seen that well known saints such as Benedict, Catherine of Sienna, Francis of Assisi and others whose active lives were spent at locations along the 43° line are those who have truly renewed the church in their day. Mary's recent appearances to us through her localised appearances along this line at such places as Garabandal, Lourdes and currently Medjugorje show that the intention is that what is taking place in our time is meant for us all and not for one or two remarkable individuals or saints. In our time the message is that we all can and are urged to enter into the spirit of this renewal for ourselves.

What we can see from earlier sections of the Day of Mary is that Mary has moved carefully and wholeheartedly very near to us. There is the old saying that if we take one step towards the divine the divine takes a thousand steps towards us. But here we learn that the divine, especially in the form of Mary's coming and appearances and 'moving in', has already taken those thousand steps and incredibly, eagerly awaits our single step in response.

This 'moving in' has changed the conditions between us and the divine, so that a thousand steps are always being taken by the divine. These thousand steps are taken in each moment, renewed in each moment, by the divine. We can discover for ourselves that that, wonderfully, is just the way it is. So in each moment we are being offered the possibility of taking that one step, for which the divine has **already** taken a thousand steps in response!

Just knowing this, in itself, can be the greatest joy!

So how do we respond? What form or forms does our single step take?

We have chosen a subtitle for this piece, 'The Presence of Mary and the Transformation of the World', and we begin now to see that it is not that Mary comes, performs the transformation on behalf of us all so that we find ourselves passively in a new world. Rather, Mary comes and is – and so brings with her – a completely new state of affairs, and in so doing both invites and enables us to learn these new ways and to jointly and consciously help bring about a new world. Our co-operation is essential in this enterprise, the success of the enterprise rests completely on participation. Mary brings both the possibility and every kind of help conceivable and inconceivable to allow this new world to be brought about, but it requires the willing, active and conscious allowing on our part to actualise a new world here.

In other words, we will be the co-creators of a new world. And joy is the beginning, the ground base, the essential entrance to a new world, and the very air of the new

world itself. We know we are in the new world when we are conscious of breathing in joy, of moving within the media of joy. This does not mean that there will be no difficulties but rather that the challenges will be rich meaning and purpose. As we get familiar with this action, this process, we begin to learn that sometimes we get insights from this which are quite genuine and interesting, of far better quality and use than what is usually running through our minds. But the important thing is to remember how this came about, to be distracted by the novelty of the insight is understandable, but to stay with the process that brought the insight brings more insight and even understanding, and that is to do with the conscious allowing we speak of. It is indeed the beginning of true wisdom of which Mary is the queen.

New gateways and entrances to a fuller life have been placed and opened and we are permanently being invited to learn how to step through, encouraged always to learn how to unite the truly spiritual with the material that we already know. It can even be that the material is defined as that which we already know and the spiritual is the experiencing of the ever new.

Even to begin to learn this way is to learn a means of free and constant access to joy, to a peace never before available and to a fullness of life never before so easily reached.

We only have to learn the simple steps of saying 'yes' to all that's on offer, and this is accomplished far more easily with others than alone, at least at the beginning stages.

Then we can play, discover and practice together the straightforward ways available to enter a radically new life, both individually and together.

We can learn and explore together such things as::

- What is now, thanks to Mary, freely accessible in the very air itself, and how to utilise, ie live and work *with* it.
- The simple process of how to allow ourselves to become creative in ways not yet imagined, and this we do in allowing our unique soul designs to emerge through our intimacy with her.
- Coming to know and embrace the the totality of one's true self.
- Creating what your true heart desires, from who you really are – not who we think we would like to be - while simultaneously being an effective agent of change.
- Allow the unfolding of one's true plan in tandem with Mary's plan.
- And we do all this by learning how to go deeper into our own hearts and discovering what lingers there – with Mary.

"The need to open the heart glistens ever brighter in the 'present moment'. Opening the heart is the path to make the rightful turn out of today's unsolvable complexities. The ever present now is The Day of Mary. " – Ben Hitchner, Open Heart Lodge, Southern New Jersey, 2007.