

model of the virtues.' No human mother can limit her task to the generation of a new man. She must extend it to the function of nourishing and educating her offspring. Just so the Blessed Virgin Mary, after participating in the redeeming sacrifice of the Son, and in such an intimate way as to deserve to be proclaimed by him the mother not only of his disciple John but — may we be allowed to affirm it — of mankind which he in some way represents, now continues to fulfil from heaven her maternal function as the cooperator in the birth and development of divine life in the individual souls of redeemed men. This is a most consoling truth which, by the free consent of God the All-Wise, is an integrating part of the mystery of human salvation, therefore it must be held as faith by all Christians." (SM)

5. LEGIONARY DEVOTION THE ROOT OF THE LEGIONARY APOSTOLATE

One of the dearest duties of the Legion shall be to show whole-hearted devotion to the Mother of God. It can only do so through its members, so that each one of these is asked to associate himself with it by serious meditation and zealous practice.

If the devotion is to be in real truth a legionary tribute, it must be an essential part of the Legion — as much an obligation of membership as the weekly meeting or active work: all must participate in it in a perfect unity. This is a point of view with which members cannot be too deeply impressed.

But this unity is something most delicate, for each member in a measure controls it, and can mar it. So on each one devolves a solemn trusteeship in the matter. If there is default; if the legionaries are not "living stones . . . built into a spiritual house" (1 Pet 2:5), then is a vital part of the structure of the Legion defective. In measure as the living stones are found in this way wanting, will the Legion system tend more and more to become a ruin, which will not shelter, and hence with difficulty will retain, its children. Still less will it be the home of high and holy qualities, or a starting-point for heroic endeavour.

But with everyone adequately discharging this item of legionary service the Legion will be found possessed of a

marvellous unity of mind and purpose and action. This unity is so precious in the sight of God that he has vested it with an irresistible power; so that, if for the individual a true devotion to Mary is a special channel of grace, what shall it bring to an organisation which is persevering with one mind in prayer with her (Acts 1:14) who has received all from God, participating in her spirit; and entering fully into the design of God with regard to the distribution of grace! Shall not such an organisation be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) and shall there not be "many wonders and signs." (Acts 2:43)

"The Virgin in the Cenacle, praying in the midst of the apostles and pouring out her heart for them with intensity unspeakable, calls down upon the Church that treasure which will abound in it for ever: the fullness of the Paraclete, the supreme gift of Christ." (JSE)

6. IF MARY WERE BUT KNOWN!

To the priest struggling almost despairingly in a sea of religious neglect, the following words of Father Faber — taken from his preface to St. Louis-Marie de Montfort's "True Devotion to Mary" (an abounding source of inspiration to the Legion) — are commended as a preliminary to his consideration of the possible value to him of the Legion. The argument of Father Faber is that Mary is not half enough known or loved, with sad results for souls:—"Devotion to her is low and thin and poor. It has no faith in itself. Hence it is that Jesus is not loved, that heretics are not converted, that the Church is not exalted; that souls, which might be saints, wither and dwindle; that the sacraments are not rightly frequented, or souls enthusiastically evangelised. Jesus is obscured because Mary is kept in the background. Thousands of souls perish because Mary is withheld from them. It is the miserable unworthy shadow which we call our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that is the cause of all these wants and blights, these evils and omissions and declines. Yet, if we are to believe the revelations of the saints, God is pressing for a greater, a wider, a stronger, quite another devotion to his blessed mother . . . Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it, and the transformations

6

THE DUTY OF LEGIONARIES TOWARDS MARY

1. The honouring of the Legion devotion to Mary by serious meditation and zealous practice is placed on each member as a solemn trusteeship to the Legion. It is to be regarded as an essential part of legionary duty, ranking before any other obligation of membership. (See chapter 5, *The Devotional Outlook of the Legion*, and appendix 5, *Confraternity of Mary Queen of All Hearts*)

The Legion aims to bring Mary to the world as the infallible means of winning the world to Jesus. Manifestly, the legionary without Mary in his heart can play no part in this. He is divorced from the legionary purpose. He is an unarmed soldier, a broken link, or rather as a paralysed arm — attached to the body, it is true — but of what use for work!

The study of every army (and no less that of the Legion) must be to bind the individual soldier to the leader, so that the latter's plan passes smoothly into concerted action. The army acts as one. To this end is all the elaborate machinery of drill and discipline directed. In addition, there is found in the soldiers of all the great armies of history a devotion of a passionate sort for their leader, intensifying their union with him, and rendering easy the sacrifices which the execution of his plan called for. Of this leader it could be said that he was the inspiration and soul of his soldiers, in their hearts, one with them, and so forth. These phrases describe the operation of his influence and in a measure express a truth.

But at best such unity is only an emotional or mechanical one. Not so the relation between the Christian soul and Mary its Mother. To say that Mary is in the soul of the faithful legionary would be to picture a union infinitely less effective than that which actually exists, the nature of which is summed up by the Church in such titles of Our Lady as: "Mother of Divine Grace," "Mediatrice of all Graces." In these titles is expressed a sway of Mary over the life of the soul, so

complete that even the closest of earthly unions — the mother and the babe unborn—is inadequate to describe its intimacy. Other natural processes can help to make real to the mind this place of Mary in the operations of grace. The blood is not distributed except by the heart, the eyes are the necessary link with the world of vision, and the bird—despite the beating of its wings — cannot lift itself without the support of the air. So the soul, according to the divinely established order, cannot without Mary lift itself to God or do God's work.

Not being a creation either of the reason or of the emotions but a Divine arrangement, this dependence on Mary exists even though it is not adverted to. But it can be, and should be, immeasurably strengthened by a deliberate participation in it. In intensity of union with her, who is (as St. Bonaventure says) the dispenser of our Lord's Blood, lie marvels of sanctification and an incredible source of power over the souls of others. Those whom the plain gold of the apostolate could not ransom from the captivity of sin are freed — everyone — when Mary studs that gold with the jewels of the Precious Blood which she has in her gift.

So, beginning with a fervent Consecration, frequently renewed in some phrase embodying it (for instance: "I am all yours, my Queen, my Mother, and all that I have is yours"), this thought of the ever-present influence of Mary in the soul should be reduced to such methodical and vivid practice that the soul may be said to "breathe Mary as the body breathes air." (St. Louis-Marie de Montfort)

In the Holy Mass, Holy Communion, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, and other Devotions, the legionary soul must seek, as it were, to identify itself with Mary, and to meditate on the mysteries of the Redemption through that supremely faithful soul which lived them with the Saviour, and in them played an indispensable part.

And so, imitating her, thanking her tenderly, rejoicing and sorrowing with her, giving her what Dante calls 'the long study and the great love,' bringing some thought of her into every prayer and work and act of the spiritual life, forgetting itself and its own resources to depend on her; the soul of the legionary becomes so filled with the image and thought of her

preference for humble and little-sought tasks, in a readiness to bear contempt and rebuffs, and generally in an attitude towards the manifestations of God's Will which will reflect Mary's own declaration: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." (Lk 1:38)

The necessary union of the legionary with his Queen requires not only the desire for that union, but the capacity for it. A person may determine to be a good soldier, but yet may never possess the qualities which will make him an efficient cog in the military machine. In consequence that man's union with his general is an ineffective one, so that he impedes the working out of the military plan. Similarly, the legionary may aspire to play a great part in the plan of his Queen; yet he may be incapable of receiving what Mary so ardently longs to give. In the case of the ordinary soldier this incapacity would proceed from defects of courage, intelligence, physical fitness, and the like. In the case of the legionary, that incapacity would be caused by the absence of the virtue of humility. The purpose of the Legion is the sanctification of its members and the radiation of that holiness in the world of souls. But there can be no holiness without humility. Moreover, the Legion apostolate operates through Mary. But there can be no union with Mary without some likeness to her, and there can be little likeness to her in default of her special virtue of humility. If union with Mary is the indispensable condition — the root, so to speak, of all legionary action, then the soil on which these roots depend is humility. If that soil is deficient, the legionary life will wither.

It follows that the Legion's battle for souls must begin in the heart of the individual legionary. Each one must wage the battle with himself, determinedly conquering in his heart the spirit of pride and self. This terrible struggle with the root of evil within one, this constant striving after purity of intention, how exhausting it is. It is the battle of a lifetime. Reliance upon one's own efforts will make it the failure of a lifetime; for self winds itself even into the attack on self. Of what use are his own muscles to one struggling in a quicksand? A firm support is necessary.

Legionary, your firm support is Mary. Lean upon her with complete trust. She will not fail you, for she is deeply rooted in that humility which is vital to you. In the faithful practice

of the spirit of dependence upon her will be found a supreme, simple, comprehensive way of humility — what St. Louis-Marie de Montfort terms “a little-known secret of grace, enabling us quickly and with but little effort to empty ourselves of self, fill ourselves with God, and become perfect.”

Consider how this is so. The legionary, in turning towards Mary, must necessarily turn away from self. Mary takes hold of this movement and elevates it; makes of it the supernatural dying to self which fulfils the stern but fruitful law of the Christian life. (Jn 12:24-25) The humble Virgin’s heel crushes the serpent of self, with its many heads:—

(a) of self-exaltation; for if Mary, so rich in perfections as to be called by the Church the Mirror of Justice, endowed with unbounded power in the realm of grace, is nevertheless found on her knees — the humblest handmaid of the Lord! — what must be the legionary place and attitude;

(b) of self-seeking; for, having given himself and all his goods, spiritual and temporal, to Mary to use as she thinks fit, the legionary continues to serve her in the same spirit of complete generosity;

(c) of self-sufficiency; for the habit of leaning on Mary inevitably produces distrust of one’s own unaided powers;

(d) of self-conceit; for the sense of partnership with Mary brings realisation of one’s own inadequacy. What has the legionary contributed to that partnership but painful weaknesses!

(e) of self-love; for what is there to love! The legionary, absorbed in love and admiration of his Queen, is little inclined to turn from her to contemplate himself;

(f) of self-satisfaction; for in this alliance higher standards must prevail. The legionary models himself upon Mary and aspires to her perfect purity of intention;

(g) of self-advancement; thinking with Mary’s thoughts, one studies God alone. There is no room for plans of self or reward;

(h) of self-will; completely submitted to Mary, the legionary distrusts the promptings of his own inclinations and in all things listens intently for the whisperings of grace.

In the legionary, who is truly forgetful of self, there will be no impediment to the maternal influences of Mary. She will

develop in him energies and sacrifices beyond nature, and make of him a good soldier of Christ (2 Tim 2:3), fit for the arduous service to which that profession calls him.

“God delights to work on nothing; from that deep foundation it is that he raises the creations of his power. We should be full of zeal for God’s glory, and at the same time convinced of our incapacity to promote it. Let us sink into the abyss of our worthlessness; let us take shelter under the deep shade of our lowliness; let us tranquilly wait until the Almighty shall see fit to render our active exertions instrumental to his glory. For this purpose he will make use of means quite opposed to those we might naturally expect. Next to Jesus Christ no one ever contributed to the glory of God in the same degree as the Blessed Virgin Mary, and yet the sole object to which her thoughts deliberately tended was her own annihilation. Her humility seemed to set up an obstacle to the designs of God. But it was, on the contrary, that humility precisely which facilitated the accomplishment of his all-merciful views.” (Grou: Interior of Jesus and Mary)

3. REAL DEVOTION TO MARY OBLIGES APOSTLESHIP

Elsewhere in this handbook it has been stressed that we cannot pick and choose in Christ; that we cannot receive the Christ of glory without at the same time bringing into our lives the Christ of pain and persecution; because there is but the one Christ who cannot be divided. We have to take him as he is. If we go to him seeking peace and happiness, we may find that we have nailed ourselves to the cross. The opposites are mixed up and cannot be separated; no pain, no palm; no thorn, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown. We reach out for the one and find that we have got the other with it.

And, of course, the same law applies to Our Blessed Lady. Neither can she be divided up into compartments as between which we may pick and choose what seems to suit us. We cannot join her in her joys without finding that presently our hearts are riven with her sufferings.

If we want, like St. John the beloved disciple, to take her to our own (Jn 19:27), it must be in her completeness. If we are willing to accept only a phase of her being, we may hardly

receive her at all. Obviously devotion to her must attend to and try to reproduce every aspect of her personality and mission. It must not chiefly concern itself with what is not the most important. For instance, it is valuable to regard her as our exquisite model whose virtues we must draw into ourselves. But to do that and to do no more would be a partial and indeed a petty devotion to her. Neither is it enough to pray to her, even though it be in considerable quantity. Nor is it enough to know and rejoice at the innumerable and startling ways in which the Three Divine Persons have encompassed her, and built upon her, and caused her to reflect their own attributes. All these tributes of respect are due to her and must be given to her, but they are no more than parts of the whole. Adequate devotion to her is only achieved by union with her. Union necessarily means community of life with her; and her life does not consist mainly in the claiming of admiration but in the communicating of grace.

Her whole life and destiny have been motherhood, first of Christ and then of men. For that she was prepared and brought into existence by the Holy Trinity after an eternal deliberation (as St. Augustine remarks). On the day of the Annunciation she entered on her wondrous work and ever since she has been the busy mother attending to her household duties. For a while these were contained in Nazareth, but soon the little house became the whole wide world, and her Son expanded into mankind. And so it has continued; all the time her domestic work goes on and nothing in that Nazareth-grown-big can be performed without her. Any caring of the Lord's body is only supplemental to her care; the apostle only adds himself to her maternal occupations; and in that sense Our Lady might declare: "I am Apostleship," almost as she said: "I am the Immaculate Conception."

That motherhood of souls being her essential function and her very life, it follows that without participation in it there can be no real union with her. Therefore, let the position be stated once again: true devotion to Mary must comprise the service of souls. Mary without motherhood and the Christian without apostleship, would be analogous ideas. Both the one and the other would be incomplete, unreal, unsubstantial, false to the Divine intention.

Accordingly, the Legion is not built, as some suppose, upon two principles, that is, Mary and apostleship, but upon the single principle of Mary, which principle embraces apostleship and (rightly understood) the entire Christian life.

Wishful thinking is proverbially an empty process. A mere verbal offering of our services to Mary can be as empty. It is not to be thought that apostolic duties will descend from Heaven on those who content themselves with waiting passively for that to happen. It is rather to be feared that those idle ones will continue in their state of unemployment. The only effective method of offering ourselves as apostles is to undertake apostleship. That step taken, at once Mary embraces our activity and incorporates it in her motherhood.

Moreover, Mary cannot do without that help. But surely this suggestion goes too far? How could the Virgin so powerful be dependent on the aid of persons so weak? But, indeed, such is the case. It is a part of the divine arrangement which requires human co-operation and which does not save man otherwise than through man. It is true that Mary's treasury of grace is superabundant, but she cannot spend from it without our help. If she could use her power according to her heart alone, the world would be converted in the twinkling of an eye. But she has to wait till the human agencies are available to her. Deprived of them, she cannot fulfil her motherhood, and souls starve and die. So, she welcomes eagerly any who will really place themselves at her disposal, and she will utilise them, one and all; not only the holy and the fit, but likewise the infirm and the unfit. So needed are they all that none will be rejected. Even the least can transmit much of the power of Mary; while through those that are better she can put forth her might. Bear in mind how the sunlight streams dazzlingly through a clean window and struggles through a dirty one.

“Are not Jesus and Mary the new Adam and Eve, whom the tree of the Cross brought together in anguish and love for the repairing of the fault committed in Eden by our first parents? Jesus is the source and Mary the channel of the graces which give us spiritual rebirth and aid us to win back our heavenly home.”

“Along with the Lord let us bless her whom he has raised up to be the mother of mercy, our queen, our most loving mother, mediatrix of his graces, dispenser of his treasures. The Son of God makes his mother radiant with the glory, the majesty and the might of his own Kingship. Because she was united to the King of

Millions believe that gospel. In its name, they desert a religion which they think to be inert. And yet the position is not a hopeless one. There is a way of bringing back to Faith those determined millions, and of saving countless other millions. That hope lies in the application of a great principle which rules the world, and which St. John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, has stated thus: "The world belongs to him who loves it most, and who proves that love." People cannot help seeing, and being moved by a real faith which operates through a real heroic love for all men. Convince them that the Church loves them most, and they will return to Faith in spite of everything. They will even lay down their lives for that Faith.

No common love can conquer men thus. Neither will it be accomplished by a mediocre Catholicism which can hardly preserve itself. It can be done by a Catholicism which loves Christ its Lord with all its heart, and then sees him and loves him in all men of whatsoever description. But this supreme charity of Christ must be practised on such a scale that they who look on are driven to admit that it is indeed a characteristic of the Church, and not merely the acts of sublime members of the Church. Therefore, it must be exhibited in the lives of the general body of the laity.

But it seems a hopeless thing to fire the entire household of the Church with this exalted spirit? Yes, the task is herculean! So unending, indeed, are the perspectives of the problem, so infinite the hosts which possess the land, that even the courage of the strongest heart might well fail. But Mary is the heart of the Legion, and that heart is faith and love unutterable. So thinking, the Legion looks out over the world, and all at once excited hope is born: "The world belongs to him who loves it most." Then it turns to its great Queen, as it did at the beginning: "Lead us!"

"The Legion of Mary and its opposing forces, secularism and ir-religion, confront each other. These forces, sustained by constant propaganda through the press, television, and video, have brought abortion, divorce, contraception, drugs and every form of indecency and brutality into the heart of every home. The simplicity and innocence of every new born babe is therefore left open to these devastating influences.

Nothing short of total mobilisation of the Catholic people will avail to resist that indoctrination. For this purpose the Legion of Mary

Particularly, they should think in terms of the brown scapular which is the very livery of Mary. "Some interpret literally the text: 'He who dies wearing this habit will not be lost.' St. Claude de la Colombière would brook no restriction: 'One may lose one's scapular, but one who wears it at the hour of death is saved.' " (Père Raoul Plus)

Likewise, they will promote piety in the homes of the people by encouraging them to have crucifixes and statues, to hang upon their walls religious prints and pictures, to keep holy water in the house, and beads properly blessed for the Indulgences. The home wherein the sacramentals of the Church are despised runs great risk of gradually forsaking her sacraments. Children are especially receptive of external aids to devotion, and in a house which lacks a statue or a holy picture they will find it hard to acquire the true and intimate character of the Faith.

35. VIRGO PRAEDICANDA: THE VIRGIN MUST BE BROUGHT AND TAUGHT TO ALL MEN, FOR SHE IS THEIR MOTHER

A theme dear to Pope Leo XIII was that Mary is the Mother of all people, and that God has implanted the germ of love for her in every heart, even in those who hate her or do not know her. This germ is meant to grow, and like any capacity it can be fostered by giving it proper conditions. Souls must be approached and informed as to the maternal role of Mary.

The Second Vatican Council has proclaimed that universal motherhood of Mary (LG 53, 65), and has declared that she is so much the source and model of apostleship that the Church must depend on her in its efforts to save all people. (LG 65)

Pope Paul VI requires that everywhere, and especially where there are many non-Catholics, the faithful shall be fully instructed in the maternal office of Mary so that they may share that treasure of knowledge. Moreover, he commends to her loving heart the entire human race that she may fulfil her mission of orientating all souls towards Christ. Finally, in order to set in a revealing light her maternal and unifying duty towards all the members of the human family, His Holiness confers on Mary the significant title: "Mother of Unity."

depended on the reaching of people in bulk by means such as the above, the present age of technology should also be one of conversions on a grand scale. But, instead, it is found difficult to keep even the Catholic fold intact.

No! The approach to be really effective must be an individual and intimate one! The media can be made to play an awakening or supporting part in a scheme to bring those "other sheep" to the Good Shepherd, but the centre of that scheme must be the appeal of one person to another person. According to the laws that rule the spiritual world, as Bl. Frederick Ozanam puts it, the attraction of one soul is needed to elevate another. In other words the law of charity must operate; and the gift without the giver is bare. But only too often does the individual Catholic assume an attitude of helplessness. He may think that many outside the Church are too firmly rooted in prejudices and in ignorance to be moved. Admittedly, prejudices are many, traditional, almost inborn, and hardened by education. What resources would the Catholic have to deal with such a situation? He need not fear. He possesses in the doctrine of the Church, however simply explained, a shining sword whose efficacy is best described in Ven. John Henry Newman's noble words: "I have an intense feeling in me as to the power and victoriousness of truth. It has a blessing from God upon it. Satan himself can but retard its ascendancy; he cannot prevent it."

But also he must remember another principle to which he must not prove false: "Truth in combating error never grows angry. Error is never calm in contending with truth" (De Maistre). As has been repeatedly urged in these pages, the approach to those whom it is desired to win must be like to that which the Divine Shepherd would make in such a search. There must be nothing of the controversial, nothing overbearing. Every word must breathe humility, affection, sincerity. And actions as well as words must show forth one essential thing, that they are backed by a genuine belief. Then they will seldom be seriously resented and will never fail to leave a deep impression, which will ripen in a high proportion of cases to conversion.

"We must always remember," said Dr. Williams, former Archbishop of Birmingham, "that religion is caught, not taught. It is a flame set alight from one person to another. It is

spread by love and not in any other way. We take it only from those whom we think friendly to us. Those whom we regard as indifferent or hostile cannot recommend religion to us."

If personal contact is necessary, not many cases can be dealt with by the individual worker. Therefore for many conversions many workers will be required. Legionaries must be multiplied.

As part of any scheme the following should receive attention:—

(a) The work of study should be undertaken, not for the purpose of mere controversy, but to fit oneself to assist the sincere enquirer.

(b) Existing converts should be looked up in order to ensure that they have the support of Catholic friendships, or to bring them, if suitable, into Legion membership. None will be more qualified than they to meet the difficulties of their former brethren.

(c) The following up (from lists supplied by those who specialise in instruction) of those who had embarked on a course of instruction in which they did not persevere. Experience indicates that the default is usually due, not to a loss of the desire to become Catholics, but to accidental circumstances which cause a break in the attendance; shyness or procrastination then prevents resumption.

(d) The opportunities of effective contact with people who are not Catholics are plentiful if legionaries would only act towards them in a natural Christian way. To Catholics who are in perplexity, in grief, or in trouble of any kind, the legionary would counsel prayer or would seek to induce them to read something likely to help them. He would speak to them of God's love and of the motherhood of Mary, thereby comforting them and uplifting them. Similarly effective use could be made of the oft-recurring periods of trial in the lives of people who are not Catholics, but they are not utilised. The topic of religion is taboo. Only worldly sentiments are uttered which do not console, nor show forth faith, nor accomplish anything. But let legionaries avail of those perfect opportunities of approach. At those times, when normal barriers are shaken, the spiritual words would be gratefully received and could be made to develop fruitfully.