

# HOLINESS THROUGH MARY

A Companion to The Handbook of The Legion of Mary

By Francis J. Ripley

Segreteria De Stato Dal Vaticano,  
di Sua Santità 11 January 21, 1950.

Dear Father Ripley,

At the revered command of the Sovereign Pontiff I am to acknowledge receipt of your courteous letter of November 2, 1949, and of your two publications concerning the Legion of Mary — "Terrible as an Army Set in Array" and "The Priest and the Legion of Mary."

The Holy Father would have me convey to you the expression of His cordial appreciation of the spirit of filial loyalty and attachment to the Vicar of Christ which inspired you in placing these volumes at His disposal. As a further token of His paternal benevolence His Holiness lovingly imparts to you His special Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant divine graces and blessings for your efforts to hasten the coming of Christ's Kingdom through Mary.

With sentiments of cordial esteem and regard, I remain, Yours sincerely in Christ,

J. B. MONTINI, Subst.

## PREFACE

(Which it is important to read)

The purpose of this pamphlet is to place before you an ideal. It describes the perfect Legionary life, the summit rather than the pathway to it. You must remember, therefore, if you peruse the pages that follow, that what is depicted there is the ideal, and because it is an ideal it is something that can never be attained.

Nevertheless, it is good for us to think prayerfully about the wonderful things we hope to achieve. By lifting up our minds and hearts to them we help ourselves to overcome the discouragement that so often arises from our tendency to think only of the reality, with all its human failings and shortcomings; we make ourselves holily discontented with what is merely ordinary or haphazard; we derive strength to plod patiently along the narrow path to the summit of perfection; we find ourselves driven forward to do greater things for God and the salvation of souls. The vision splendid, therefore, is placed before you in the hope that you will be goaded on, with the help of grace, to even more enthusiastic efforts to advance along the way of personal sanctification.

It would be a grave mistake to regard this booklet as a boost of the Legion of Mary. Still less ought one to gather from it the impression that membership of the Legion is necessary for all who wish to sanctify themselves or to work for the Church. "The imitation of Mary's humility is both the root and instrument of Legionary action" says the Handbook of the Legion.

It would, therefore, obviously be very wrong for any Legionary to suggest that his organisation is alone capable of doing everything in the Church and of superseding all other organisations except the priesthood.

This booklet is intended primarily for those who are already convinced of the great potentialities of the Legion, and especially for its active members. It places before the latter an ideal to be striven after through observance of the rules contained in their official Handbook. Mere membership of the Legion is not a kind of magical charm capable of generating holiness in the soul; far from it. Sanctity can only be acquired by diligent use of the graces offered by God, combined with great personal effort. Growth in holiness will be proportionate to one's fidelity to the principles of the spiritual life, the practice of which is essential to the attainment of the full spirit of Mary's Legion.

Nor ought it to be gathered that membership of the Legion is an adequate substitute for the Religious Life. We need saints in the world, but the Church is anxious that nothing should impair the growth of vocations to the many different Congregations of Religious, who consecrate themselves to God through the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; but, if experience is any guide, many vocations will follow fidelity to the rule of the Legion of Mary. It is a fact that several hundred Religious are today proud to acknowledge that they owe their vocations to membership of the Legion.

## HOLINESS

### I.—THE CALL TO HOLINESS

THE finest sermon ever preached was delivered by God, in Person, as He sat on the slopes of a mountain just over nineteen hundred years ago. It began like this: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are the patient; they shall inherit the land. Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill." Christ was challenging the world. Speaking to a group of ordinary, illiterate country people He told them that their vocation in life was to aspire after the holiness of God Himself. " You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. . . Lay up treasure for yourselves in heaven . . . Make it your first care to find the kingdom of God and His approval. . . Make your way in by the narrow gate." Little wonder that St. Paul, a few years later, could tell the people of Thessalonica: " What God asks of you is that you should sanctify yourselves."

Christ lived and taught on this earth to sanctify souls-That was the reason why He established His Church. He intended all men to be saints; He desired to make them saints. There is not one kind of Christianity for priests, monks and nuns, and another for people living in the world. To all St. Peter addresses these words: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people God means to have for Himself; it is yours to proclaim the exploits of the God who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." Every Christian, in virtue of the fact that he is a Christian, is bound to seek after holiness. Monks and nuns bind themselves by vows to help them in their quest; but the vows do not make the obligation; they simply reinforce and emphasize it. The destination of the Christian life is perfection for all. In every age of the Church there have been saints in the world as well as in the cloister.

In our own age the call to sanctity is more imperative than ever, if only because our race seems to be drifting further and further from God. . The Blessed Virgin has appeared, notably at Fatima, to appeal for reparation; God has raised up a great Saint like St. Therese of Lisieux to recruit an army of victim souls. The Popes have called upon all members of the Church to seek after integral Catholicism, which necessarily implies the practice of the lay apostolate.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Providence of God should in these times offer sincere souls means to sanctity, specially designed for those who must continue to live in the world. One such means is undoubtedly the Legion of Mary.

The purpose of the pages that follow is not to describe the workings of the Legion, nor to relate its marvellous history. It is to set out in a form suitable for prayerful reading the principal elements of the Legion spirit. Those who wish to enquire into the subject more fully are strongly urged to obtain a copy of the official Handbook of the Legion, to the study of which this small work is intended to be nothing more than a companion. Practically all the material here set out will be found in the Handbook, but it has been gathered together under various headings to facilitate meditation and increase emphasis. A glance at the index of the Handbook reveals many widely scattered references under the headings of, for example, faith, kindness and humility. It is confidently hoped that this attempt to bring together the teaching of the Handbook on so many practical matters will assist Legionaries in their quest for holiness, which is the whole purpose and object of their membership.

### 2—INTRODUCING THE LEGION OF MARY.

Within little more than a quarter of a century since its foundation, the Legion has become one of the largest and most extensive active, lay apostolic movements in the world, operating miracles of grace in all its paths. Through its system of training ordinary lay people seem to find themselves endowed with a unique power to "undertake and carry out great things for God and the salvation of souls," enlightening those who are in the darkness and in the shadow of death, inflaming those who are lukewarm and bringing back to life those who are dead in sin. All who come into close contact with the Legion and really experience it at work, are amazed at the wonders it is able to accomplish. Naturally, they ask: "What is its secret?" The Legion, of course, replies in a word: "Mary." And the implication of that single word is that through its system of training and the spirit of its apostolate, the Legion is forming souls in holiness in such a way that countless of its members succeed in attaining a level of sanctity well above the ordinary.

The actual operation of a Praesidium of the Legion is simplicity itself. A weekly meeting is held. All receive a duty of the apostolate to be carried out before the next meeting. There they report on their work and receive a further

assignment for next week. That is the skeleton; it is filled out with many directives which, although in other organisations they would be mere suggestions, have in the Legion the force of rule. The system of the Legion is, in fact, intensely ordered. Unsystematised zeal and undirected enthusiasm rarely last and never yield great results. Therefore, the Legion offers its members not just a method of doing work for the Church, but a whole way of life, every detail of which is to be scrupulously observed.

### 3—PERFECTION OF MEMBERSHIP

#### (a) Adherence to the System

Perfection of membership in the Legion is judged by one criterion only—exact adherence to the system. That is an ideal that all can attain. Work may be monotonous or distasteful; it may be hard and unsuccessful; but whatever the case, perfection of Legion membership can be attained by simple obedience to the Constitution enshrined in the official Handbook of the movement.

#### (b) The Weekly Meeting

The first obligation of the system is attendance at a weekly meeting. This meeting is so devised that, just as a burning lens collects the rays of the sun, begets the fire and enkindles everything that comes near it, Legionaries who attend find themselves endowed with unique fervour and power. It is like a furnace which consumes the individual weaknesses of the members, giving them in return prudent zeal, directed courage and supernatural capacity for influencing others. It is the very heart from which the blood of life flows to all the Legion's veins and arteries; a supernatural power-house that diffuses light and energy to all its members; a community exercise that imbues all with the spirit of discipline, looking first to their own sanctification, and then far and beyond to the great work of bringing Jesus, through Mary, to the souls of all men.

### 4.—HOLINESS THROUGH A DISCIPLINED APOSTOLATE

#### (a) A School of Sanctity

The doing of any particular work is not the primary aim of the Legion. The movement exists in the first place as a school of sanctity. The first rule of that school is that every meeting shall be attended; and every meeting is characterised especially by its spirit of prayer and devotion. Then the Legion develops the holiness of its members in a definite way, through apostleship. True sanctity must diffuse itself, and in diffusing itself it is bound to develop. The spirit of zeal is best developed by the exercise of zeal. Therefore, each active Legionary is bound by rule to perform each week some active work prescribed for him by the Praesidium as an act of obedience. In prescribing that work, the Praesidium directs itself towards the gravest amongst actual needs; for intense zeal must have a worthy objective.

#### (b) The Apostolic Spirit

Nevertheless, the chief object of the member's apostolate is not the actual work in hand. The aim of the Legion is to make the apostolic spirit enter a man as his master, dominating every thought, word and deed. Thus fired, he finds himself able to influence others in a wonderful way without even undertaking a deliberate apostolate. In every place Legionaries are found they prevent the advance of evil and foster the growth of good. Multiply them, therefore, and soon the whole population can be embraced and raised from the level of a routine practice of Catholicism to that of enthusiastic, militant membership of the Church. The laity will become interested in their religion in a vital way; they will be fired with the idealism of the Saints; they will begin to think in terms of service and sacrifice; they will begin to see and love Christ in all with whom they come in contact. Then His supreme charity will be a characteristic, not merely of the highest in the Church, but of all. That is the ideal. "Impossible!" you say. But think—Is anything impossible to a crusade whose very soul is Mary?

#### (c) Particular Points of Rule

Not only must the Legionary attend the meeting of his Praesidium weekly and give there a report on the work assigned him at the previous meeting; he must also observe all those other smaller rules which are especially calculated to increase the spirit of discipline and obedience. What he hears during the performance of his work duty and at the meeting is Legion property. It comes to him only in his capacity as a Legionary and about it he must preserve inviolable secrecy.

So that work will be undertaken in a business-like way, in order to help him to give an interesting and informative report on his work, to facilitate persevering contact with all cases, to keep a record of work done as a source of encouragement in time of difficulty and to train himself in matters of order, the member has and uses a notebook. Every day he recites Mary's Magnificat, which binds him as a chain to the general body of the Legion. He studies his Handbook. Each year he makes a closed Retreat.

(d) The Setting of the Meeting

Other points of discipline concern the weekly meeting of the Praesidium. This takes place in a setting which is the same all over the world. Whether it be in a clearing in the African Jungle, in a secret basement behind the Iron Curtain, or in the most palatial quarter of Mayfair, the meeting is held around an altar of Our Lady, consisting of her statue (the Immaculate Conception model), flanked by two vases of flowers and two lighted candles. If possible, the Vexillum (Standard) of the Legion is included also. Punctuality is, of course, insisted upon and late arrival or early departure are tolerated only upon the production of adequate reasons. Good lighting, a comfortable temperature and suitable seating accommodation are necessary if the Praesidium is to be an efficient unit in Mary's army. Moreover, the Praesidium must command and be worthy of the respect of its members by showing absolute obedience to the Legion Constitution. It must be a model of steadiness, never, for any cause, omitting its weekly meeting, which should, if possible, be held in the evening, and which may not, without special permission, last longer than ninety minutes.

Each meeting begins with the usual invocation and prayer to the Holy Ghost, the Source of the grace of which Mary is the Channel. Five decades of the Rosary follow immediately, and it is enjoined that they are to be recited with the same dignity and respect as if Mary herself were visibly present in the room. A short spiritual reading is given. Then come the minutes of the previous meeting, which, in their quality and the manner in which they are read, set a headline for the whole meeting. The reports of members are then received, each being addressed to the President in a voice that all can hear without difficulty. Failure to perform work-duty and so provide an adequate report are never taken as a matter of course by the Praesidium. If possible, some explanation is expected for every dereliction of duty.

(e) Reports are Given

The meeting is dependent upon the reports of the members. Each is trained in the manner of furnishing a report that is bright, cheerful, informative and inter-testing. Through hearing the reports, the Praesidium exercises supervision over the work being undertaken and exercises the gentle discipline that overcomes weaknesses and urges the member on towards the accomplishment of great things. The work of each member is the concern of all; and all listen to the reports and comment on them as if they were, for instance, paying a spiritual visit to every person reported as being visited.

(f) The "Allocutio"

Midway in its course, the meeting is interrupted for the recitation of the Catena, the Magnificat, versicle and prayer, that are said by all Legionaries daily. This finished, the Spiritual Director gives a short instruction to the members. It should be an explanation of the rule. He is to be regarded as the novice-master; and this, apart from helpful comments he is able to give during the meeting, is his principal opportunity of training the Legionaries in the spirit of their movement. The Allocutio, as it is called, should never be merely a general talk on the spiritual life or the Gospels; it should always have some relationship to the particular spirituality by which Legionaries are formed. This is, of course, true of the Religious Orders. Novices are trained in the spiritual life according to the spirit of their Institute. General principles are the same everywhere, but they are to be given just the particular adaptation that circumstances demand. The Allocutio does not last more than five or six minutes. Then the reports are completed; work is allocated for the next week; any other business is discussed (for example, reports from the higher Councils of the Legion), and the meeting concludes with a special prayer for faith, and the blessing of the priest.

(g) Discipline

The extraordinarily minutely ordered meetings of the Legion of Mary have proved to be magnificent instruments for the instilling of the spirit of discipline, without which the members will naturally tend to work alone, uncontrolled save by the whim of the moment, and benefiting neither themselves nor the Church. The rule that all visitation is to be done in pairs aids the spirit of obedience that must pervade any army, and most of all, the great spiritual army of Mary.

## 5—THE SPIRIT OF THE LEGION

The Legion Makes Saints.

So much for "the mechanics" of the movement. Let us pass on to consider its real spirit. In doing this we must never allow ourselves to forget that the Legion is an active society that undoubtedly possesses the genius of actually forming its members in its spirit. They are not merely instructed in virtue or just told how to practice it; they are made virtuous through exercise in the hard school of the apostolate.

The Legion exists primarily to sanctify its members. To accomplish this, it has devised a unique scheme of spiritual formation designed to bring its members ever closer to, God through frequent reception of the Sacraments, regular prayer, the practice of all the virtues and, most of all, devotion to Our Lady.

## 6—DEVOTION TO THE EUCHARIST

### (a) Holy Mass

Well aware that no one can take the slightest step towards sanctity without grace, the Legion enjoins on all its members the greatest devotion to the Holy Eucharist, the very source of grace. The Mass is the continuation among men of the sacrifice of Calvary, containing all that Christ offered to God and all that He acquired for men. From Calvary every grace flows; hence the Legionary, desiring to share plenteously in the gifts of Redemption, has fervent and frequent recourse to Holy Mass, which he is particularly enjoined to hear in union with and in the spirit of Mary. Through him Mary will re-enact her prayer on Calvary, the first fruits of which were the earliest converts to the Faith. With Her, he will unite himself to her Son, to be but a single victim, offered to God for the sins of men.

### (b) Holy Communion

At every Mass at which he assists, the Legionary endeavours, if at all possible, to receive Holy Communion, knowing that this partaking, with the Priest, in the flesh of the Infinite Victim, is essential if he wishes to gather the fruit of the Sacrifice in all its fulness. So the Eucharist becomes the very keystone of the Legionary system which has for its main object nothing less than the establishment of the reign of the Eucharist in every heart. The mystical Body of Christ is starving because so few of its members are nourished with the Divine Bread; the Mother of that Body is filled with anguish at the contemplation of her Babe thus suffering in His other self. Legionaries, inspired by Mary's spirit, sharing the anguish of her Immaculate Heart, avail of every avenue of apostolic action to arouse love of the Blessed Sacrament and banish the sin, apathy and ignorance which keep men away from It. They regard each Holy Communion brought about as a gain that cannot be measured according to human standards, and as their unworthy contribution to the growth and extension of the mystical Body.

### (c) The Real Presence

In his apostolate, too, the Legionary shows his love of the Blessed Sacrament by striving constantly to use It to give to those outside the Fold a glimpse of the infinite treasures that are within. Through his own devotion he becomes supernaturally convinced of the full significance of the Real Presence as the continuation of the earthly life of the God-Man, drawing Him in actual fact out of the dim past of history and bringing Him, as He is, whole and entire, in all His physical reality, with all His Divinity, into the sphere of this present life. Thus convinced, he makes every effort to pass on that conviction to those who have it not. He tries to make them realise that through the miracle of the Eucharist they are able to touch Jesus, talk to Him, contemplate Him, and busy themselves about His real self even more truly, more intimately and more closely than could His dear friends at Bethany.

## 7—THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

In the spirit of prayer the Legionary is well-formed indeed. He sees in it, not a task imposed by custom, but a source of power; not a routine formality, but the main support of his work; not a merely personal exercise, but his valuable contribution to the treasury of the Legion and of the Church. His formal prayers he will say, of course, especially the Rosary, "most beautiful and richest in graces." He will try also to say at least part of one of the Offices officially approved by the Church, or the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception. But his greatest aim will be to make his every act a prayer; to erect that supernatural framework without which his active apostolate will never persist for long. By applying to his work the rules of prayer he relieves easy tasks of that dangerous monotony that so often

accompanies them and supports himself when confronted with rebuffs or seeming failure. The Legion, in fact, calls upon its members to provide it with a heart of prayer by which its whole spiritual circulation will be governed. Just as the meetings are saturated by the spirit of prayer, beginning with prayer, interrupted for prayer, ending with prayer, so ought every act that proceeds from them, either directly as an assigned apostolate, or indirectly, as part of the leavening influence of the Legion, be impregnated with the same spirit.

## 8—THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

### (a) Built on Faith

The prayer by which every Legion meeting is concluded is a petition for faith. This fact reflects the truth that the whole system is built upon a deep faith in God and in the love He bears all His children. The Legionary is told that his membership and his purpose of working for souls are both gifts of God, and that success can never come unless God sustains him all the time. He banishes both apathy and anxiety by the thought that the successful outcome of work for souls means more by far to God than it does to him, that God desires infinitely more than he the conversion he is seeking. Even in regard to his own desire for sanctity --how feeble it is when compared to the yearning of the Godhead! Always and everywhere the Legionary is upheld by the conviction born of deep faith that God is with him in his work, and that nothing can be an obstacle to success except want of trust. Therefore, he never labels any apostolic task as hopeless or unpromising or likely to be successful because such an attitude subjects faith to the weaknesses and timidities of mere human reasonings and worldly prudence.

### (b) Faith in Action

Intensity of purpose, unrelaxed effort, unquenchable love, steady discipline, undaunted courage and unflagging perseverance come only from a true spirit of faith. One imbued with it will fight on no matter how great may be the natural difficulties; he will always be on the alert to seize any opportunity of doing good; he will have a heart for the impossible, but he will be ever ready to play the part of a stop-gap; no duty will be too big for him, none too mean. Hence his prayer: "Confer, O Lord, on us who serve beneath the standard of Mary that fulness of faith in Thee and trust in Her to which it is given to conquer the world.

Grant us a lively faith, animated by charity, which will enable us to perform all our actions from the motive of pure love of Thee, and ever to see Thee and serve Thee in our neighbour. A faith, firm and immovable as a rock, through which we shall rest tranquil and steadfast amid the crosses, toils and disappointments of life; a courageous faith which will inspire us to undertake and carry out without hesitation great things for God and the salvation of souls; a faith which will be our Legion's Pillar of Fire—to lead us forth united—to kindle everywhere the fires of Divine Love—to enlighten those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death—to inflame those who are lukewarm—to bring back life to those who are dead in sin; and which will guide our feet in the Way of Peace."

## 9—THE SPIRIT OF HOPE

### (a) Hand in Hand with God

A life of such intense, practical faith is necessarily one of hope and trust, which sustain the Legionary amidst all the obstacles he encounters in sanctifying himself and working for souls. He knows that he has at his disposal nothing less than the infinite might of God and so he strives to co-operate with grace as steadfastly as God permits him. Frequent instruction and meditation on the power of trust unite him with God more closely by convincing him of the worthlessness of worldly things; they render his prayers efficacious; they engender within him holy desires, and they increase his energies, his labours and his sacrifices for souls. If success graces his efforts, he is thankful to God; if he seems to fail, he merely increases his trust and regards his failure as postponed success. The mark of the Cross is for him always a sign of hope. The work of the Lord will always bear the Lord's own mark. It is never done under ideal circumstances nor as one would have chosen or imagined. In fact, when the Legionary sees his work threatened by obstacles that, from the human point of view, seem destined to prevent the achievement of success, so long as the obstacles are not due to neglect on his part, he knows that they are, in reality, the requisites for success, the fuel which feeds his efforts and helps them to attain their purpose. It is ever God's way to perfect his greatest projects with inadequate instruments.

### (b) The Qualities of Trust

The constant practical training in the virtue of hope which the Legionary receives in a well-directed Praesidium forces him to overcome his own timidity and human respect; it gives him a right attitude towards dangers and difficulties; it breeds in him the spirit of enterprise. There is no room for timidity in the apostolate of a man who trusts wholly in God and the might of His grace. What the world calls heroism is for him mere normality, and, if persevered in, it has an electrifying effect upon the accepted standards of a community. As for difficulties and dangers, a little courage, nurtured on supernatural trust, shows that they resemble a forest which, at a distance appears solid and impenetrable, but when once approached is found easy of entry. In fact, the Legionary specialises in difficult work; he is trained for it. His vocation is to penetrate to the utmost depths in the search for the lost sheep; he aims to establish personal contact with every member of the degraded classes; he strives to reach each of the lapsed; he wishes to uplift all of the most wretched and dejected of the population. So great is his trust in God, through Jesus and Mary, that he pursues his search for souls to the bitter end, with far more zeal and earnestness than those who search for the rare and precious things of the earth. No matter how long-drawn-out the battle, how toilsome the labours, how severe the rebuffs, how hardened the cases, how hopeless the prospect, the Legionary keeps on keeping on, bouyed up with unfailing confidence in the omnipotence of grace. He knows that for even the most serious evils there is a remedy, and one only, which God wills him to employ and that is the intense and patient application of the whole religious system of the Catholic Church.

## 10—THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

### (a) The Principal Task

The love of God is the heart of sanctity. Training in the love of God is, therefore, the principal task of the Legion of Mary. Everything in the system is designed to make the flame of divine love burn brighter within the Legionary's soul. In this way his every act is made to converge towards God, the supreme object of his love. In mind and will and heart he is united with God and, purged of self, assimilated to Him. Thus seeking God, he relishes and lives the great truths of his Faith, receiving eventually indomitable strength to overcome every obstacle and to perform the highest, even heroic, acts of virtue. The Holy Spirit comes into his soul with fire and love, making it one with Mary's love and Mary's will to save the world. Then the love aflame there bursts forth from soul to soul pressing on daily towards the final objective, the setting of the whole world alight with the Divine Fire.

In the Legionary the love of God expresses itself particularly in the exercise of the supernatural love of all men for God's sake; in other words, in zeal for souls. His whole life is made one long exercise of zeal, and, therefore, of love; for zeal is simply love in action. Thus he merits all the graces and privileges and power attached to the ceaseless practice of divine charity.

### (b) Seeing Christ in Souls

In working for souls the Legionary is constantly aware that he is working for Christ. The secret of his influence over others is simply his own love of God overflowing upon them. His is no apostolate of mere philanthropy or natural pity for the unfortunate ones of the world. Written on his heart are the words of the Master: "So long as you did it unto one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me." In this light he sees all mankind, even the most repulsive, the thankless, the despised, the ungrateful, the selfish, the stupid, the afflicted, the vicious. To one and all, as to the least of Christ's brethren, he strives to render a princely and reverential service. In each of them he sees neither an equal nor an inferior, but one as superior to himself as is Christ. He approaches each as he would approach Christ Himself, humbly, respectfully, reverently. Never does he deliver a lecture or ask a multitude of questions. He enters the cottage of the poorest in exactly the same spirit as he would enter the palace of the greatest. His one aim is through the exercise of supernatural charity, to sow the seeds of that eventual intimacy that will one day open the floodgates of knowledge and influence.

### (c) Understanding Others

He regards it as the special glory of charity to understand others. When they are deliberately rude to him he submits meekly, remembering that such conduct often springs from the sense of neglect from which most people suffer. They think there is nobody to take them in hand; nobody to accept the confidences they have to offer.

Therefore, he is never critical; he never sits in judgment on those for whom he works; he never sets up his own standards of conduct as those to which all must conform. When some differ from him or oppose him or refuse to receive him, he remembers his obligation to love and banishes the thought that they are necessarily less worthy than he. Even when he comes across lives that are unsightly with sin, he remembers that God alone can see the heart and judge as to the real position. The degree of grace offered to any soul is God's secret, and none will be asked for any return save of that which has been given to him.

(d) Penetrating the Community

Through the apostolate of supernatural charity the Legionary tries to raise the spiritual level of the whole community. His method is that of direct and persevering contact with souls—quiet, unobtrusive, delicate work. He does not indulge in perfervid denunciation of the major abuses and the gross evils; rather he tries to develop slowly but steadily an intense Catholic life and outlook, Catholic principles and Catholic feeling, thus cultivating a spiritual atmosphere in which evil finds it impossible to thrive.

(e) Towards Fellow Legionaries

It is the duty of every Legionary to promote always the spirit of charity within the movement itself.

Mary's entire army must be saturated with love. The only distinctions between members are those which arise from proficiency in the spirit and work of the Legion. The whole idea and spirit of the Legion is one of intense charity and sympathy, which before radiating its warmth outside, must first of all burn brightly and strongly on the domestic hearth of the Legion itself. Each member tries always to regard the shortcomings, real or apparent, of others with kindness. He is a member, not because he is attracted to a particular officer or fellow-member, but because he is anxious to love and serve Jesus through Mary. Real or imagined slights, lack of appreciation of him or his work, disagreements, rebukes — all these he takes in his stride as stepping-stones to selfless service. The basis of all work in common must be self-suppression. People who are otherwise excellent threaten unity unless they are prepared to moderate their own individuality and adapt themselves completely and harmoniously to the system.

(f) Conquering Jealousy.

In the true Legionary soul there is no room for jealousy, petty or otherwise. The flame of charity consumes the feeling of resentment which sometimes comes even to the most unselfish and purest of heart on seeing himself displaced by another or outpaced in virtue or set aside in favour of the young. The contemplation of one's own eclipse is a bitter thing; but if the Legionary feels a secret pang when another is preferred before him, he takes warning that his charity is yet imperfect. He must aim higher. The bitterness, the smouldering jealousy, the latent hate revealed by a feeling of resentment, be it ever so slight, must be transformed wholly into Christ-like love, by which he sees the Master in each of his brethren. When they advance, even at his expense, he is content to say with the Baptist: "He must increase; I must decrease." In this way, Mary is given scope to free the souls of her soldiers from every taint of vanity, thus transforming them into selfless envoys who will go forth to prepare the way before the Lord. As a precursor the Legionary desires to be eclipsed by Him whom he announces. When those around him grow in virtue, he never measures their growth against his own for he knows that the spirit of envy cannot co-exist with true apostleship.

(g) A Test of Charity.

The Legionary finds his charity put to the test especially through his conduct within his own organisation. Even though he may feel no temptation when alone to self-will, pride, passion or unbelief, when he assembles together with others those evil things which have lain dormant tend to burst into flame. The innate debility of human nature shows itself; Christian simplicity and straightforwardness are strangely forgotten. The larger the numbers grow, the more scope there is for criticisms and disagreements. But, in the Legionary, the torch of faith is lighted by the fire of charity. If the flame be strong, the supernatural spirit will always manifest itself and act as a protection of the whole body against the fatal spirit of worldly jealousies and ambitions. Words, attitudes and conduct which are in any way hostile to charity will be completely banished and the spirit of prayer and full Legion devotion will reign triumphant.

(h) Universal Charity.

Towards the pastors of the Church, one and all, the Legionary shows always that unreserved loyalty and exact obedience which spring from genuine charity. In his mission the member of Mary's army aspires to supplement the priestly ministry; as She delighted to be the Handmaid or slave of the Lord, so he aspires to the honour of being the

slave of the ministers of the Lord. By an apostolate of Love the Legionary makes every effort to render fertile all the ground into which the seed of God is cast, that it will bear fruit a hundredfold; he strives to remove all the thorns and briars by applying his charity to worldly minds; he essays to deepen the soil by strengthening religious convictions and encouraging the weak and despairing; he aims at softening the hard ground by the dew of prayer and self-sacrifice. He becomes a link between the shepherd and the flock, rendering easier the work of the pastors by enabling them to be in constant personal touch with all the sheep of the flock, and helping the latter by keeping them always under the warm, benign influence of their pastors. By the exercise of love in its highest form, he, so to speak, multiplies the priest; he casts abroad his zeal, his personality, his every word, representing him everywhere and to everyone.

(i) Towards Other Societies.

The love of the Legionary for the Church shows itself also in his attitude towards other organisations. He desires the good of souls, and to any agency for good he is pledged to render unstinted co-operation and assistance. He is anxious to build up and strengthen every Society that is really worthy of the name of Catholic. He knows that not all can be brought into the ranks of the active members of the Legion; but his love for souls compels him to induce all to enlist themselves in something Catholic that they will be caught firmly in the arms of Mother Church and pressed closely to her life-giving bosom. He yearns to see the day when the apostolate of the laity is really a vital force, a glorious thing, the safeguard of the individual and the mainstay of the Church.

## 11.—HUMILITY.

(a) The Root and Instrument of Action.

If personal holiness, the perfection of charity, is the object and means of membership of the Legion, humility is the root and instrument of its apostolic action. The Legion is an army; it speaks to its members in terms of battles and warfare; it is dedicated to Her who is terrible as an army set in battle array. Legionaries are stimulated to carry out all their work with the seriousness of trained and faithful soldiers. Nevertheless, the warfare in which the Legion is engaged is not of this world; it must be waged according to the tactics of Heaven. Therefore, the whole system of the Legion is designed to implant in hearts lowly and unworldly qualities, the chiefest of which is true humility. Rightly understood, it confers a strange nobility and a unique strength upon those who practise it.

(b) The Key to Grace.

Only from true humility of heart does the Legionary derive the gentle, unassuming manners upon which he relies for the effecting and developing of the personal approach to souls that is such an essential factor in his work. More, in humility he sees a virtue from which all others derive their value. One and all they depend on grace, and grace will not be given to the proud. When virtue is claimed as the result of one's own efforts unaided by grace, it ceases to be virtue. Just as Mary's lowliness brought the Saviour into her womb, so the humility of her Legionaries brings His spirit and His graces into their souls. The holier they are, the more they acknowledge their dependence on God; the more they receive, the greater is their debt to the Almighty. Gradually the system of the Legion drives home even into the heart that is naturally proudest the hard lesson that only one's worthlessness is one's own. Everything else is God's free gift. He gave it freely; He can increase it or diminish it or withdraw it entirely just as He wishes. The recognition of what one really is before God is the essence of true humility. In the Legionary it shows itself in a life that is at all times a perfect reflection of Mary's own declaration: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

Humble and little-sought tasks are preferred; contempt and rebuffs are readily borne and God's holy Will is generously accepted, especially when compliance means rigorous suppression of self.

(c) Union with Mary.

Humility is necessary for that union with Mary upon which the Legion relies for its supernatural efficacy. It is more essential in Mary's soldiers than are courage, intelligence, physical fitness and the like in the soldiers of worldly armies. A man may be determined to be a good soldier, to play a worthy part in the battles in which his country's forces are engaged, and yet, through the absence of necessary qualities be unable to do so. A paralysed man may long to walk, but even the most vehement longings will not give him the capacity he does not physically possess. So it is in the Legion; even the strongest yearnings to play a great part in the battle of Mary against Satan are bound to be

rendered ineffective unless they are rooted in true humility. Without this virtue holiness, the source of all apostolic action, is impossible. Without it, there can be no real likeness to Mary, who was specially blessed by God because of her humility. Union with Mary is the root of all effective Legionary action. The soil on which that root feeds is genuine humility. It is an absolutely essential quality of the Legionary soul.

(d) The Way to Humility.

The Legion is Mary's army, engaged in the battle for souls. The first battle begins in the soul of the Legionary himself, and it is the battle against pride and self. It never ceases, no matter how exhausting it is. To the end of his life, the Legionary strives to conquer the root of evil within himself, ever purifying his intention more and more. Unaided he is quite unable to succeed in even this first battle. So he leans on Mary with complete trust. Faithfully practising dependence on Her he soon learns that the quickest method of emptying himself of self and filling himself with God is through true devotion to Her. That is a supreme, comprehensive and simple way of humility.

(e) Self-conquest.

United with Mary, the Legionary rids himself of self-exaltation. He sees in Her the Mirror of Justice, endowed with unbounded power in the realms of grace; but he finds Her on her knees in prayer, acknowledging that She is but the slave of the Lord. Self-seeking goes too, for having surrendered himself to Mary, how can he take back his gift by seeking his own interests again? Leaning on Mary, he necessarily distrusts his own unaided powers; he knows he must rely completely on the graces that come to him through Her. He is therefore no longer self-sufficient. Knowing his own inadequacy in relation to God, he is freed from self-conceit and self-love. For what is there to love? Better far to be wholly absorbed in love and admiration of his Queen! The perfect purity of intention exemplified in Mary drives from the soul of the Legionary any feelings of smug self-satisfaction and any desire for self-advancement. He works only that God may triumph in souls through Mary. His consciousness of his dependence on grace makes him distrust the prompting of his own inclinations and so rids him of self-will and every other impediment to the maternal influences of Mary. She takes over, developing in him from day to day the supernatural energies and sacrifices She expects from a good soldier of Christ

(f) Letting God Work.

Life in the Legion burns into the very souls of the members the firm conviction that the deep foundation upon which God delights to work is the sense of one's own absolute nothingness in His sight. The Legionary is full of zeal for God's glory, but he knows that he is absolutely incapable of promoting it without the grace that comes through Mary. He sinks into the abyss of his worthlessness; he takes shelter in the deep shade of his lowliness; he waits patiently and peacefully until the Lord sees fit to use his exertions to promote His glory; he believes that even when that time comes, He will make use of means quite different from those nature would lead one to expect.

## 12.—COURAGE AND HEROISM.

(a) Training in Courage.

Nearly all the work of the Legion consists in the approaching of persons with the purpose of bringing them nearer to God. Persistent participation in such an apostolate is magnificent training in moral courage; eventually it attains a degree of perfection that is rightly described as heroism. Jeers, angry words, criticism, looks of amusement, resentment and misunderstanding are harder to bear than the trials of worldly warfare. Even more difficult sometimes is the enemy within one's own heart, the fear that one may be thought to be preaching or making an affectation of holiness.

(b) Human Respect.

Human respect, often called "common prudence," "respect for the opinions of others," and the like, paralyses the powers of action of those who are called to be apostles and reduces work for souls to triviality. Living in the midst of great communities of pagans or non-Catholics or the lapsed, the Faithful make little or no effort to convert them and the graces God offers are returned unused. Aware of this, the Legion of Mary sets itself to a deliberate campaign against the operation of the spirit of human respect in its members. The principal means employed are insistence upon sound and strict discipline and constant inculcation of the fact that human respect in the Legionary is comparable to cowardice in a soldier. Just as the latter must act and fight in spite of his fears, so must the Legionary work for souls in

the teeth of the impulses of human respect. Love, loyalty and discipline, if they are genuine, will certainly result in sacrifice and courage. "What a shame to be the delicate member of a Thorn-crowned Head!"—words of St. Bernard which the Legionary constantly applies to himself.

"If you fought only when you felt ready for the fray, where would be your merit?" asks St. Theresa of Lisieux. "What does it matter even if you have no courage, provided you behave as though you were really brave. If you feel too lazy to pick up a bit of thread, and yet do so for the love of Jesus, you gain more merit than for a much nobler action done on an impulse of fervour. Instead of grieving, be glad that, by allowing you to feel your own weakness, Our Lord is furnishing you with an occasion of saving a greater number of souls."

(c) Prayer and Apostolate.

Courage is shown by the Legionary not only in the performance of his apostolic work, but also in his prayer-life. His devotion to the means of grace appointed by the Church and his fidelity to prayer have a quality of heroism and are models and inspirations to the rest of the Faithful. Only thus will the Legionary be able to attain the degree of courage expected of him in his work for souls.

He is told that in that work there should be no depths he will not penetrate in search of the lost sheep. Natural timidity and fear, false or well-grounded, must be overcome. Every member amongst the most wretched and dejected of the population must not only be visited but known personally and intimately. That is the goal, and Legionary courage must rise to attain it. In fact, the Legionary always remembers that his search for each individual member of the degraded classes may be their only chance of eternal life. How intense, how earnest, how courageous must that search be!

(d) Campaigning Courage.

The Legionary is Mary's soldier and his outlook is always and everywhere that of a campaigner for souls. He is never intimidated or even disconcerted by wordy opposition or physical violence. He thinks and speaks in terms of warfare; he is prepared for stripes and wounds; in meeting and overcoming opposition he tests the solidity of the soldierly professions which so often pass through his mind and cross his lips. It is his vocation to seek out and save the worst of people; he does not complain when he finds them and they oppose him. When he encounters special difficulties and dangers he simply reminds himself that a war is on and that he is engaged in it. In this way he is steeled in his warfare for souls and held to it when others desist. "If souls are really precious and eternal," he says, "any price is worth paying that they may be saved."

(e) Courageous Charity.

The operation of the spirit of fear only too often kills charity in practice or renders it petty and puerile. True charity asserts that every individual, even the very lowest of human beings, holds in relation to us a position which is completely independent of his value or agreeableness to us. Courage is required to render charity so efficacious that in everyone, no matter how naturally repulsive he may be, Christ is seen and really revered and loved. It is easy to love those who are naturally likeable; but Legionary charity is subjected to the acid test of being courageous enough to love each of those whom mere human nature bids one not to love. There is the Legion ideal, the Catholic ideal, a pivot of faith, a crucial point of Christianity.

(f) The Courage that Startles.

Natural philanthropy serves humanity for humanity's sake; but that is not love and it requires no courage. The Legion sets itself to such a devoted and universal attention to the "down-and-out," the hopeless, the impossible, the unlovely, the repulsive elements of the population that those who see it at work are amazed at the courage of such love and recognise in it a confounding of the materialistic systems which offer but a counterfeit of Christian charity. The effect is electrifying; even the irreligious are startled into a new seriousness towards religion; modes of thought are changed and new and better ways of living begin to show themselves.

### 13—PRUDENCE.

(a) True and False Prudence.

Through the strictly disciplined system of the Legion, the member is thoroughly trained in the spirit and practice of prudence. He is warned against a common fallacy of the present day which confounds the Christian virtue of prudence

with that which is merely natural—the prudence of the flesh. " As for prudence," quotes the Legion Handbook from Pius XI, " it must be such as Holy Scripture defines it and does not tire in recalling: the prudence of the sons of God, the prudence of the spirit. It must not be—it is not — the prudence of the flesh -- weak, lazy, stupid, selfish, miserable." The supernatural virtue of prudence inclines us to choose always the best means for attaining our aims, by subordinating them to our ultimate end. Its rule is not mere human reason but reason enlightened, governed and directed by faith and inspired by the maxims of the Gospel.

(b) Prudence in Action.

The exercise of prudence demands in the first place a mature deliberation by which the best means to attain the end in view may be discovered and a wise judgment as to the means likely to be most effectual. Secondly, it requires that the plan adopted be executed without delay, but with foresight, discretion and necessary caution. In the system of the Legion all these are catered for by the reports and discussion at the meetings, by the allocation of work by the Praesidium, by the guidance of the Spiritual Director, by the visitation in pairs and so forth. Nevertheless, the most ardent desire of the Legion is that the Gospel must be preached to every creature. That supreme wish must swallow up every difficulty and overcome every obstacle. The prudence of the Legionary must be such as to help towards the achievement of that great objective; it must safeguard necessary action; never cripple it. The rightful position of prudence in any system is that of brake; but almost always the error is made of supposing it to be the engine itself. Fear of possible indiscretions, for instance, is used as an excuse in the name of prudence for not permitting certain necessary apostolic work to take place. A whole harvest is refused because some ears may be spoiled by clumsy handling. The result is shameful inaction and the loss of countless souls. They who misunderstand prudence in this way profess their belief that the apostolate is a work of grace and must be regulated by the rules of faith; but in practice they ignore the very existence of grace and have little thought of the supernatural helps available.

(c) Difficult Work must be Done.

The Legionary is trained in such a way that his outlook will invariably be apostolic. The apostolic spirit enters his soul and reigns there as master. By a judicious mixture of prudence and courage he sets himself against the spirit of cowardliness which seems to prevail even amongst the good. His training fits him to undertake difficult work and the system reduces the possibilities of harm to the absolute minimum. When it is known that a work is difficult and dangerous, but yet is necessary if certain souls are to be saved, everything possible is done in the interests of safety and the attack goes on with picked material.

Legionaries do not stand by and look on while souls are being plunged into hell.

## 14—PERSEVERANCE.

(a) Perseverance necessary.

One of the reasons why so few of us succeed in attaining the higher reaches of the spiritual life is simply that we do not persevere. Aware of this, the Legion trains all its members in perseverance and determination. They are warned that unless they aim at perfection of membership they cannot hope to persevere. A life-long perseverance in the work of the apostolate is in itself heroic, but it is demanded of the

Legionary, if only because the apostolate is his way to holiness. It would be too much to expect this perseverance to be achieved without the regular performance of acts which are of themselves bordering on heroism. Thus, the stamp of persevering effort characterises every item of the Legion's round of duty. Instability and novelty-seeking, which result inevitably in the breaking down of discipline, are shunned. The only way to achieve anything great and real is through sustained effort, and that, in its turn, arises only from the unconquerable will to win.

(b) Work for Souls is Never Hopeless.

The Legionary never accepts defeat. Nor does he court defeat by classifying items of work as "unpromising," "hopeless," and the like. As far as he is concerned no soul is in a hopeless position. He considers it wrong to abandon priceless souls to their own ways, thus leaving them free to pursue unchecked their reckless course to hell. He is not immediately concerned with results. Whether a harvest springs up at his heels or not, he carries on, impelled by only the highest considerations. He never allows to enter his mind that grain of doubt as to whether his efforts are justified or not. He knows they are, just because souls are worth the infinite price of the Precious Blood of Christ. His is a life

of faith, and he never subjects faith to the approval of human reasonings. He perseveres in spite of the natural timidities, the pettinesses and the worldly prudence which tempt him to present only a casual or half-hearted service to his Queen. For him, intensity of purpose is more important by far than the completion of a definite programme of works. In spite of every difficulty he holds on, absolutely and obstinately determined never to lose heart. Ever constant in his faith and unrelaxing in his efforts, he hopes for success, but his work goes on independently of it. When apparent failure comes, he fights on, undismayed, confident that, fortified by grace, he will eventually wear it down. He has a heart for the impossible, but his spirit is applied in all its fullness to even the smallest task. To each he brings the same golden tenacity of purpose, standing by the Cross until his work is consummated. He has been chosen as Mary's instrument, and, though ever conscious of his utter unworthiness, he will not fail, through any cause in his own power, in the fulfilment of the trust reposed in him, no matter how long-drawn-out the battle, how hard the labours, how great the rebuffs, how hardened the cases, how hopeless the prospect. He knows that there simply does not exist on God's earth the person in whom his faith and trust and perseverance will produce no results. In the sinner Christ is held captive, still being mocked and crucified; the King of heaven is in possession of the enemy. The pursuit of such a soul must be unrelenting, even if the campaign lasts a lifetime, even if the battle is the grimmest ever waged. White-hot faith must burn up everything natural which stands in the way of the salvation of that soul. Therefore, the Legionary never allows himself to be put off by false human reasonings. It is enough for him that God wants that vile disfigured soul so ardently that He has sent His only Son to die for it in fearful torment.

(c) The Ground-work of the Legion.

It is not untrue to say that the knowledge that great sacrifice can be confidently demanded of all its members is the ground-work upon which the Legion system is built. Even the fact of having to attend a weekly meeting, in spite of every difficulty that cannot be classed as the impossible, demands real sacrifice, that is often severe according to the circumstances of individuals. At the meeting the President is bidden "secure from the members the degree of effort and self-sacrifice of which they are capable." He is told to "goad them on to God, Who wants from each one of His creatures the maximum of its capacity."

(d) Suffering Always a Grace.

Those who are nearest to Christ will usually have the biggest share in His Cross. Suffering must have its place in every fruitful life. Often the Legionary feels himself thwarted, crossed, frustrated; but at such times he remembers that he who will not walk with the Man of Sorrows has no part in His mission to souls. Likeness to Christ means complete conformity with Him, on Calvary as well as on Thabor. We cannot pick and choose in Christ. Mary became the Channel of all Graces because She accepted the whole Christ and all the anguish He brought with Him. So it is with the Legionary. He knows that he is useful to God in proportion to his nearness to the Sacred Heart of Christ, from which he can draw deeply of the Precious Blood to bestow it on other souls. Therefore, suffering is always a grace; it bestows healing, it confers power; united with that of Christ, it becomes priceless in its worth. The sense of suffering becomes the sense of Christ's close presence; the sorrows of life, especially those arising from the effort to make God known and loved, are a sign that the Precious Blood is being painfully forced through the chilled veins of the Mystical Body so that each member may receive It to the degree Christ wills for him.

## 15—SACRIFICE.

(a) Following the Crucified.

In our present state of fallen nature it is impossible for us to love God truly and effectively without sacrificing ourselves for Him. That is a basic truth of the spiritual life and the Legion system of training fully recognises its importance. From the outset the member is told to keep ever before him the image of his Crucified Lord, Who devoted to him His last sigh and the last drop of His blood, and to remember that his own service must strive to reflect such utter giving of self. He is bidden to emulate St. Paul who "met with toil and weariness" and was often "sleepless, hungry and thirsty." His work will take him out in the bitter cold and blinding rain; it will bring him to evil places, alive with stinking vermin and repulsive with filth; it will bid him approach those from whom he may expect only sour looks, ridicule, insults, rebuffs, criticism and ingratitude; it will often involve suffering the pangs of failure and taking, on the anxieties of others. There is little glamour in the true Legionary life, but the Legionary soul is trained to count

suffering a joy.

(b) Personal Contact.

The apostolate of personal contact, so essential to the Legion system, frequently involves sacrifice. All men are to be treated as Christ, no matter where they may be encountered. This involves, for example, friendly conversation in public with one who may have been recently visited in jail; shaking hands with the destitute, bedraggled and down-and-out; partaking of a proffered meal in a very dirty home and such like. These are the real tests of the spirit of loving sacrifice and of the existence of that readiness to give oneself entirely, which must lie at the foundation of all really fruitful work for souls. Only trivial things will be accomplished by the person who somewhere erects the barrier: "thus far and no further is self-sacrifice to go."

(e) Suffering for Souls.

"No greater favour can His Majesty bestow on us than to give us a life such as was led by His beloved Son." Such was the belief of St. Teresa. The process of being moulded to the likeness of Christ through suffering is never an intolerable burden. Legionaries soon recognise that, because almost inevitably they are brought into close contact with Calvary in themselves or in others. This bearing of the Cross is in itself even more meritorious than their active works; it may well win more souls than vigils, disciplines or fasts; it enables one to busy himself about the spiritual affairs of the world by offering his sufferings for its myriad needs. Nor is there any doubt that a whole-hearted Legionary will, under the guidance of a prudent but spiritually-minded director, be encouraged to undertake the practice of external mortification to intensify his love, help his prayer, give depth and strength to his sanctity, and obtain greater power with God.

## 16.—OBEDIENCE

(a) The Way to Unity

The whole system of the Legion is based on the giving of unquestioning obedience by each member to ecclesiastical authority, the officers and councils of the movement and the Constitution, enshrined in the official Handbook.

In this army of Mary many souls, representing every stratum of society, are brought together in a great organisation whose very life is to mirror the spirit of Mary to the world. So, each member is bound in a unique way to all the other members; a principle of connection exists from each individual up through all grades of authority in the Legion. The strength of the life of the movement depends on the strength of that connection, which, in its turn, depends on the loyalty of the members.

Loyalty is, so to speak, the cement which binds the members together in their great task. It begins in the individual member, where it shows itself as obedience to the Praesidium to which he belongs. It continues in the Praesidium, which obeys unquestioningly the ordinances of the governing council to which it is immediately subject. It passes on to the Councils, each of which pledges itself to obey the ecclesiastical authorities everywhere and, if there be any, the higher Councils of the Legion as well. When doubts arise, when difficult situations present themselves, when new work is to be undertaken or when novel departures are contemplated recourse is always had to the competent authority for guidance and sanction.

(b) Tests of Obedience

The test of obedience is the readiness to accept situations and decisions that are unpalatable and to accept them cheerfully. That is demanded of Legionaries, and often it amounts to heroism. Prompt and cordial obedience that violates one's natural inclinations is always difficult; it may be a sort of martyrdom. But, unless there is willingness to give it, the member is lacking in an essential element of the Legionary spirit.

(c) The Spirit of Obedience

The Legion is an army. What earthly army ever succeeded without rigorous discipline, heroism and sacrifice? Dare Mary's soldiers offer her less? The soldiers of the world are often called upon to lay down their lives for their cause. That is not often demanded of Mary's soldiers, but they are expected to have at least complete readiness to offer their feelings, their judgment, their independence, their pride, their will, to the wounds of contradiction and the death of a wholehearted submission, when authority demands it. The spirit of obedience is even more important than the letter.

There are everywhere those who will observe the letter of a command, but who, in the very doing of it, tend to promote disunion by their attitude. Some, too, who are perfectly willing to obey commands given at Praesidium meetings, yet fail in obedience through neglect to study their Handbook and so make themselves fully conversant with even the smallest requirements of membership.

(d) The Safeguard Against Indiscretion.

Obedience is the Legion's great safeguard against the committing of indiscretions. Fear of the latter often results in shameful inaction and complete abandonment of work for souls, especially by the laity. It is used as an excuse for non-compliance with the instructions of the Holy See in regard to Catholic Action. But the Legion faces up to the situation in realistic fashion. The work must be done; therefore, let the possibility of indiscretions be guarded against by the imposition of strict discipline and the demand for perfect loyalty, shown in complete obedience. There will, of course, be indiscretions; they are inseparable from zeal and life; but it is far better to make as adequate provision as possible against them and to let the great work go on, than to abandon the work altogether.

## 17.—JOY

(a) "Cause of Our Joy"

Our Lady is the Cause of our Joy. Therefore her army must be permeated by the spirit of joy. That is one reason why the Legion sets out to attract to its ranks bright, generous, and enthusiastic youth. A unit which is not attracting them fails in its purpose. Moreover, just as the mission of Christ was always to give joy, even if through the Cross, so is the mission of the Legion. It wishes to banish from the face of the earth the one thing which can stand between the heart of man and true joy, namely sin. The true knighthood of Mary is always characterised by the sweet charm of spiritual joyousness; the Legionary is happy to serve his Queen and to follow Her, if She should demand, even to Calvary. That spirit he radiates all around him.

(b) Joy in the Legion

There are few happier events in the Catholic world than the three annual functions of the Legion. About the feast of the Immaculate Conception all the members of each Council meet for their general Reunion. After devotions in the Church, they enjoy a musical evening, contributed to exclusively by Legionaries. Interspersed among the musical items are a few very short Legionary talks, which help to diversify the progr, teach all present a little more about the Legion, prevent the boredom which often comes from mere entertainment and render the function really unique and distinctive of the Legion. The object is to make all those present know each other better. Formality is completely absent; every opportunity is afforded for movement and conversation. Thus the spirit of unity and affection is fostered in the Legion family.

In addition to the annual General Reunion — a Curia function — an excursion, pilgrimage or outdoor function is held during the summer, and in September, about the feast of Our Lady's Nativity, the birthday of the Legion, a Praesidium function is arranged, similar to the General Reunion.

(c) Infectious Joy

The life of the Legionary is attuned to the basic note of joy. He tries always to keep himself interiorly and exteriorly in a joyous mood and when he meets his brethren he always sounds the pure key-note of joyousness. When all are united in acting thus, that key-note swells to such full harmony that all present find themselves raised beyond the atmosphere of earth and their meetings possess in unique fashion the spirit of the Saints. From them it radiates to every soul with which the Legion is brought into contact, and thus the spirit of joy encircles the world.

## 18. ENTERPRISE

(a) The Necessity of Enterprise

Enterprise is no less necessary in the life of the soul than in the things of the world. It is greatly to the credit of the Legion that from the beginning the necessity of an enterprising outlook has always been stressed, in the hope that the two words "idealism" and "action" will be captured for the Church and made handmaids of her doctrine. Truth, of which the Church is the custodian, is placed in a very disadvantageous setting when the only routine adopted is a cautious one. The young are forced to look to purely worldly or even irreligious systems for the active idealism for

which generous natures crave; terrible harm is done, for which future generations will pay.

(b) High Road to Sanctity

So the Legion has made an effort to create a higher ideal which constitutes a headline and in so doing is elevating all mankind. Experience has proved that when a call is made to trivial action, many respond but few persevere, but that when the call is to high endeavour, fewer respond but more persevere, and gradually they communicate their spirit to the many. In the course of the years the Legion has witnessed the strange anomaly that multitudes have become holy who had refused to be good.

That this has been so is undoubtedly due largely to insistence upon the spirit of enterprise so that it becomes an essential component of the Legionary's armour and is an ingredient, not only of his active work for souls, but of his spiritual life as well. His way of spirituality is through the apostolate; the apostolate thrives most on enterprising work. Therefore, the undertaking of work of that description is the highroad to Legionary sanctity. The spirit of the Legion demands that every soul be sought out — the good as well as the bad, the careless as well as the fervent—and that each be approached and that not a single one be left on the same level as when found. Certainly the Legionaries often find themselves approaching souls holier by far than themselves, but even they can be brought a good deal nearer to God through the charity of those who are there, not in their own spiritual poverty, but as the representatives of Mary's Legion, "united with their pastors and their Bishops, with the Holy See and with Christ." (Pius XI, 23rd December, 1922). They impart new ideas, suggest new devotions, enliven a routine and edify by the cheerful practice of the apostolic life.

## 19.—KINDNESS AND GENTLENESS

(a) Charity in Practice

Again and again throughout its official Handbook the Legion of Mary reminds its members that they must always show forth the spirit of charity which lives in their souls by the ceaseless practice of kindness and gentleness. Often, especially when dealing with the derelict or abandoned classes, this calls for genuine heroism and an outlook that is completely supernatural. It is easy to be kind on occasions; it is difficult to be always kind; it is heroic to be habitually kind towards those who can truthfully be described as the vile, the malevolent, the naturally hateful, the rejects and blacklisted of other societies and people, and the refuse of cities. Yet kindness is the only way. Insistence upon discipline repels such people; gentleness and warmth of heart alone attract them and eventually win them over. They often fall again but, with continual kindly help, the falls become ever less frequent. This is true especially of those whom even the optimist is quick to term "the hopeless cases" because of their warped minds and apparent insensibility to all the appeals made to them. When kindness and gentleness are exercised in their regard with supreme patience and perseverance, they always return in the end to the friendship of God.

(b) Criticism.

A kindly outlook outlaws the spirit of criticism. The conduct of many of those encountered during a Legionary's active work seems open to criticism, but the Legionary is never the critic. This does not mean that he completely stifles his critical faculty — a procedure which would make him the dupe of every charlatan; but it does mean that he governs that faculty according to the laws of Faith and exercises it only according to the spirit of charity. If he discovers evil, error or defects he never blames, never upbraids, never rebukes, never censures, never condemns; rather, he searches for the good that is always to be found in every character, though it is often half-hidden or ill-expressed. This is itself magnificent training in the practice of charity and is bound to result in rapid progress towards perfection. It demands an attitude of mind that is prepared to love every individual before anything loveable manifests itself and to expect to find beauty before any is visible.

(c) Searching for the Good.

The great artist examining the work of the novice often discovers gleams of beauty amid much that is rough and signs of genius amid lack of technique, so his training enables the Legionary to discover, by the quick intuition of charity, grandeur and nobility of character amid crusted depravity and obvious wickedness. This enables him to banish entirely the note of sternness. Sometimes he feels that a certain person is really deserving of rebuke or that he is totally justified in using the cutting word, but he resists the temptation from the start remembering that the very hardness, the

perversity and the wickedness with which the Legion has brought him face-to-face are only too often the progeny of rough usage. No doubt this was once well-deserved; but did those who administered it pause to remember that the flower that would have opened under the influence of the gentle warmth of softness and compassion closes tightly in the colder air? The way of the Legion is always that of sympathy, gentleness, kindness and understanding. These, which in practice show themselves by the willingness to sit down and listen, to enter wholeheartedly into the case presented, are serenely irresistible and often yield more spiritual harvest in five minutes than is reaped by five years of exhortation and abuse.

(d) Kindness Towards Sinners

Under no circumstances whatsoever does the Legionary depart from the way of gentleness and sweetness, for he knows that to depart from that way will result in harm rather than in good. It is precisely in those cases that seem to call for rebuke that there is greater need for kindness and gentleness. If the Legionary is true to his vocation; if he is really trying to reach the most abandoned souls to bring them back to God, he will certainly come into close contact with those who seem to be even worse than the ordinary great sinners, superlative in their badness, incarnations of selfishness and personifications of treachery, filled with hatred of God and of a nauseating outlook towards religion. In them there appears to be not a spark of grace, not a trace of softness, not a gleam of the spiritual. In, them the Legionary knows that Christ is, so to speak, held captive, mocked and crucified again. Therefore, they must be converted; Christ must be freed. For the Legionary there is only one course open: their hard hearts must be melted by the steady and persistent application of the warm flame of charity, declaring itself as kindness, gentleness, patience and understanding.

(e) An Invariable Law.

The law is absolutely invariable. Whether they are approaching those inside or those outside the Church the way is the same. The centre of the entire scheme is the appeal of one person towards another, the attraction of one soul to elevate another. The prejudice and ignorance, the traditional antipathies hardened by irreligious education, of those outside the Church always yield before an approach made in the spirit of the Good Shepherd. Humility, affection and sincerity which spring from genuine belief succeed when a controversial, overbearing attitude fails. Certainly, they are never resented; on the contrary, they invariably leave a deep impression which often ripens to complete conversion.

## 20.—MARY

(a) The Ideal of the Legion

The ideal after which every Legionary aims is that he be filled to overflowing with the spirit of Mary herself. He aspires after her fathomless humility, her complete obedience, her seraphic sweetness, her ceaseless prayer, her all-embracing mortification, her immaculate purity, her perfect patience, her celestial wisdom, her self-immolating dauntless love of God, and, more than all, her faith. Thus animated, the Legionary is prepared to attempt any and every task, for he knows that in Mary he may and can do all things. When he is tempted to think that a certain spiritual work is impossible, he asks himself with Mary, "How can this be done?" and with Her he repeats that incomparable act of resignation, "Behold the slave of the Lord" and he knows that the task allotted to him can be accomplished by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

(b) The First Obligation

The Legion is built on devotion to Mary. The first obligation of every member, the duty that ranks before any other, is the practising of a devotion to Mary proportionate to the place She occupies in God's plan for the sanctification of the souls of men.

There are still many who try to make Catholic doctrine more acceptable to those outside the Church by keeping Mary in the background. Such conduct may be justified by merely human reasoning; it certainly does not accord with the dictates of a prudence based on God's revelations concerning His Mother. In the light of these, it would be just as sensible to preach Christianity without Christ as Redemption without Mary. For it has been God's Will that no coming or giving or manifestation of Christ should be without Her.

(c) What God Thinks of Mary.

The Legionary is trained to ponder seriously and often the answer to this question: "What does God think of

Mary?" He takes himself in spirit to the very first days of creation and listens to the voice of God Himself addressing the Serpent in Eden: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." That is God's own summary of His plan for redeeming the newly-fallen race of men, and in that divine summary Mary is set apart alone as the co-worker of Salvation.

That first divine foretelling of the Saviour to come is echoed and re-echoed by Prophet after Prophet during all the long years of waiting before the earthly conception of the Messiah. "The Virgin," "The Virgin and the Child," "The Woman," "The Woman and the Child," "The Queen seated at the right hand of the King" — so they go on assuring us again and again that a woman is to be closely associated in the work of our saving. "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son" cries Isaias, "and he shall be called Emmanuel, God with us."

#### (d) The Annunciation

At length the culmination of prophecy arrives. The shadow of things to come gives place to the reality, and the angel of God appears in a humble cottage of Galilee to an unknown maiden. He comes not to command but to propose, for God will not take away the freedom of His children. And His proposal is this —that She, Mary of Nazareth, shall consent to become the very Mother of the Eternal God Himself. "Behold thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High." There is a pause; then a question; then another pause. At length She bows her lovely head as She utters those momentous consenting words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word." At that moment the Word is made Flesh and dwells amongst us.

God thought so much of Mary that He willed to make the redemption of men dependent upon her free consent. If She had not consented then; if, for example, She had said instead, "Lord I am not worthy" the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity would not have taken flesh in Her. How or when we would have been redeemed we do not know, nor is it of any importance that we should know, for our fate was safe in Mary's keeping. To that consent of hers we owe Jesus, His Church, His grace and any hope we have of attaining eternal life. The Redeemer came through Her to the rest of our poor fallen race, and with Him He brought everything that the Faith means. Almost immediately the significance of this truth becomes evident when Mary visits her cousin, Elizabeth. On the approach of Jesus now living within Mary the unborn precursor leaps in his mother's womb. Elizabeth says expressly that this happens as the sound of Mary's greeting reached her ears. John the Baptist is cleansed from original sin, but only because the Saviour comes to him through His Mother. Mary exercises for the first time her unique prerogative as the administrator of the treasury of heaven, the dispenser of all graces.

#### (e) Bethlehem to Calvary

At Bethlehem both Shepherds and Magi find — not Jesus alone but — "Mary with the Child" or "the Child, with His Mother." Later, in the Temple, Jesus and Mary are united in sorrow. He will be "a sign which men will refuse to acknowledge"; her soul will "have a sword to pierce it."

At Nazareth the Hidden Life is spent with Mary and ends on the note of Mary: "His Mother kept in her heart the memory of all this." The Public Life of Jesus begins, is even advanced, through Mary: "There was a wedding-feast at Cana in Galilee; and Jesus' Mother was there." Likewise, the Public Life ends on the note of Mary. "His Mother . . . had taken her stand beside the Cross of Jesus." For the sacrifice of Redemption Mary provided Victim and Priest, Blood and Altar. Moreover in, the words of Pope Benedict XV: "With Christ suffering and dying She, too, suffered almost unto death. For man's salvation She abdicated her rights as mother over her Son. In order to appease Divine Justice, She immolated Him as far as it lay within her power, so that we may justly say that She has, with Christ, redeemed the world."

#### (f) Channel of All Graces

The work of Redemption, begun and consummated dependently on Mary, continues as long as grace is applied to the souls of men. Mary gave us the very Source of grace; She continues now to obtain every grace for us. "Mary" said Pope Benedict XIV, "is, as it were, a celestial stream, by which all heavenly gifts and graces are borne to men." "Nothing whatever of that magnificent treasure of grace which Christ has won for us," continues Leo XIII, "nothing is imparted except through Mary." And, concludes Benedict XV: "The graces of every kind which we have received from the treasures of Redemption are administered by her hands."

"Graces of every kind" — therefore, sanctifying grace, the life of the soul. Hence, supernatural life comes to the soul from God through Mary just as natural life comes to the body from God through natural mothers. Mary is in truth and reality the Mother of the souls of men. We are related to Her in the supernatural order just as actually as we are related to our earthly mothers in the natural order. If it is true that we can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation without God's grace, and that no grace is given except through Mary, it must certainly be true that we can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation apart from Mary.

Pondering all these sublime truths of theology, the Legionary understands that they will benefit him little unless he tries to reduce them to practice in his own spiritual and apostolic life. He knows that his desire to bring Mary to the world as the infallible means of winning the world to Jesus is utterly impossible unless he has Mary in his heart. Without Her he can neither lift himself to God nor do God's work; with Her he becomes capable of attaining to a marvellous degree of sanctity and of possessing unbelievable power over the souls of others.

#### (g) Spiritual Dependence

At the moment of the Annunciation God viewed the whole human race through Mary; She was our representative and as such God became incarnate within Her. But, the spiritual life of a Christian is simply the growth within him of the life and spirit of Christ. Because it is a work of grace, this new "incarnation" does not take place without Mary. She is really the Mother of Christ; She is really the Mother of the Christian. For the daily growth of the Christ-life in the individual soul her consent and her motherly care are just as necessary as they were when He took flesh at Nazareth. Realising this, the Legionary deliberately and whole-heartedly acknowledges Mary's position as his representative at Nazareth and on Calvary. It was through Her that all his actions became the actions of a Christian; therefore, acknowledgement of her position implies that every action of his should bear some impress of gratitude towards Her. An act of consecration once repeated would never be sufficient ratification of the things Mary did on his behalf. Every action is only rendered supernaturally meritorious because of grace bestowed through Mary; therefore every action should contain some expression of the soul's dependence on Her.

#### (h) Breathing Mary.

The Legionary, therefore, desirous of growing in the love of God, consecrates himself fervently to Mary and he frequently renews his consecration in ejaculatory form: "I am all thine, my Queen, my Mother, and all that I have is thine." In this way, he tries to reduce the thought of Mary's ever-present influence in the soul to such methodical and vivid practice that the soul may, to quote St. Louise-Marie de Montfort, be said "to breathe Mary as the body breathes air.", In all the exercises of his devotional life he endeavours to identify himself with Mary and through her to meditate on all the mysteries of Redemption. When he attends Mass or receives Holy Communion, while visiting the Blessed Sacrament or saying the Rosary, during Stations of the Cross or other exercises of piety, he strives after Mary's faith and hope and love; he wishes his sentiments to be her sentiments; his desires to be hers; his words, her words and so on.

In everything he does he attempts to imitate Her; time and time again he thanks Her for all She has done for him; when his soul is uplifted he rejoices with Her; when his spirit is depressed he sorrows with Her. He is never satisfied that he has studied Her sufficiently, never content that in his prayer he has penetrated to the farthest recess of her perfect soul. No prayer or work of the spiritual life is bereft of some little thought of Her: all is done in the spirit of dependence on Her. He is so filled with the idea and the spirit of Mary that complete union exists between his soul and hers. They are, in practice, but one soul. The Legionary strives to lose himself in Mary; his ideal is to share in the greatest possible fashion in all the virtues of her Immaculate Heart and, therefore, in the power of her prayer. He tries to be another Mary, and because of that desire and his sincere efforts to render it effective, She swiftly transforms him into the likeness of her Son. Moreover, in and through the Legionary who has become so replete with her own spirit, Mary mothers souls. Not only does the Legionary see and serve Christ in them, but Mary herself does so with the same matchless love and tender care She bestowed on the actual Body of her Jesus long ago. To be a living copy of Mary — that is the aim and ideal of every Legionary. To strive after that ideal is his first and most sacred obligation to this great modern army of the Mother of God. By being faithful to that first duty he is at least doing his part towards making the whole army capable of bringing Mary to the world that She may first give it light and eventually set it ablaze.

(i) Co-worker with Mary

Because the Legionary works for Mary, the gift of himself and of his work is the choicest he can offer. His work is characterised by unique intensity and spirited zeal, by the utmost skill and holy strategy. He is not a mere instrument of Mary's action; he is a co-worker with Her for the sanctification of the souls for whom her Son gave His life. He gives what he can — his action, his capacity, his powers, all of Himself; Mary gives what She can — her purity, her powers, all of Herself. If the Legionary does his share, Mary never fails him. Knowing this, he is convinced that the fate of any particular task may rightly be said to depend completely on him. Therefore, he brings to it everything he has to give — holiness, intelligence, strength, method, perseverance and every other quality of the truly Legionary apostolate.

(j) Intensity of Effort

The Saints have said continually that one must pray as if all depended on that prayer and nothing on one's own efforts; and then that one must strive as if absolutely everything depended on that striving. The Legion applies the spirit of this to the apostolate. Results will be forthcoming only in so far as work for souls is carried on with boundless faith and intense and methodical effort. Trust in' Mary must never become an excuse for lack of exertion in work for souls. The issue hangs entirely on grace, and grace will be forfeited by one who offers Mary a bargaining, calculating spirit. Such a spirit, often expressed by a phrase such as "How little need I do to acquit myself of this task?", betokens lack of self-surrender and so of capacity for grace. The only sure way to achieve anything great for God, whether in the spiritual life or the apostolate, is the way of limitless exertion. Whether the task be great or small, the Legionary is prepared to throw supreme effort into it. He knows that he is not working for results; as far as he is concerned they do not matter. What is important is that he is Mary's slave, working for Her; what She wishes to do with his efforts does not concern him; he knows everything will be disposed of to the best advantage according to God's Will. Therefore, he gives Mary the best that is in him, even though it seem ever so small. If he does that, he knows that he merits Mary's co-operation. If She sees that a miracle is needed then a miracle will be performed. Even though the Legionary's share may seem utterly insignificant, so long as it is done with a heart full of willing love, Mary will endow that feeble motion with the result of a giant's strength. Not only faith but experience proves that if, when he has done everything possible in the circumstances the Legionary seems yet very far from success, Our Lady will span that distance thus bringing their work together to the perfect ending.

(k) Holy Partnership

No fragment of what is done for Mary is ever wasted. She uses everything to supply the many needs of the mystical Body of her Son. Just as once She cared for the home of Nazareth, using with wisdom and discretion the humble earnings of her Carpenter-Spouse, so does She now care for the myriad needs of the Church of her Son. Her design and purpose embrace all the vast horizons of the souls of men; everything given to Her She applies where it is needed most. On the other hand, if one who should be working with Her falls short in what he might reasonably be expected to give, Mary finds herself frustrated in her desire to bestow graces with motherly largesse. Reliance on Mary can obviously never justify insufficient exertion or slipshod methods. The root principle governing the alliance of the Legionary with his Queen is simply this: the Legionary must give to the utmost of his capacity, only looking to Mary to supplement, to purify, to perfect, to supernaturalise the natural, to enable weak human effort to achieve what is impossible to it. Mary cannot be expected to supply what the Legionary refuses to give; trust in and dependence on Her do not dispense the Legionary from the effort, method, patience and thought which he can and ought to provide.

(1) Limitless Trust.

By God's Will, Mary's power is without limit. Therefore, the Legion's trust in Her is well-nigh infinite. God gave to Mary everything He could; She could not receive more than Himself. By working in complete union with Her, the Legionary puts himself in the very flood-tide of grace, for She is the Channel of every grace merited by her dying Son. Not alone does She communicate all graces to us; She obtains them for- us, too. Everything there is in this world of hope, of grace and of salvation flows to men from Mary. Therefore, to approach God more effectively and win grace more freely, Legionaries strive after perfect union with His Mother.

(m) The War on Sin

Moreover, the battle in which Mary's army is always engaged is the conflict with sin. Mary alone, of all our race, is

perfectly sinless; therefore, those who would conquer sin either in themselves or in others, keep themselves so closely united to the Immaculate Virgin that everywhere and in everything they act as Mary's instruments. The Legionary endeavours to bring it about that through his subjection to Mary She acts in him, with him and by him to such an extent that it is really her apostolate rather than his that is carried on. When such is the case, the Legion is in truth the seed of Mary; between it and sin enmity is complete.

## 21.—THE TRUE DEVOTION

### (a) A Definite System

One of the characteristics of the Legion of Mary is that nothing in its system or its apostolate is left vague and indefinite. Devotion to Our Lady is no exception. From the beginning Legionaries have been encouraged to round off their devotion to Mary and to give it the distinctive character which has been taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort under the titles of "The True Devotion" or the "Slavery of Mary." This is enshrined in his two books, the "Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin" and the "Secret of Mary." Many popular explanations of this devotion are obtainable, and Legionaries are encouraged to use them. (*For example, "The Reign of Jesus through Mary" (Denis-Somers), and "A Handbook of True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin." (Rev. Denis Kelly).*)

St. Louis-Marie's devotion requires that those who practise it place themselves in a condition equal to that of slaves who have surrendered to Jesus, through Mary, from the motive of pure love, everything of their own, retaining nothing, being wholly dependent on Mary and completely at her disposal. They have entered formally into a compact of love with Her by which they have given Her their whole selves, with all their thoughts, deeds and possessions, both spiritual and temporal, past, present and future, without keeping back the smallest part or the slightest little thing.

### (b) Complete Surrender

Just as Christ gave Himself absolutely to Mary, so is the Legionary encouraged to surrender to Her everything — every thought, every movement of his soul, his hidden riches, his inmost self. Everything up to and including his last breath is to be given to Her that She might expend it all for God. Even the earthly slave remains master of his thoughts and inner life; he is free in everything that really counts. Not so Mary's slave. He offers himself to a kind of martyrdom; through love, he sacrifices himself completely to God, and Mary is the altar of the sacrifice.

### (c) A Way of Life

The True Devotion is not merely an act; it is a state, a life. True, it is 'solemnly inaugurated by an act of consecration to Mary, but it consists principally in living afterwards in the spirit of that consecration. Mary must take possession of the whole of one's life; otherwise there is no really Monfortian Devotion. The act of consecration may be made; it may even be repeated and repeated often; but the substance of True Devotion is not there; a tree has been planted, but it has failed to take root.

### (d) Advertence to Mary

This does not mean that Legionaries are expected to do the impossible by keeping their minds ever fixed upon their consecration to Mary. It would be almost as reasonable to suggest that one should always remember the fact that the beating of the heart controls the life of the body. The heart continues to function even though its operations rarely become the definite objects of thought. Similarly with the True Devotion. It works ceaselessly on the life of the soul, even though it is not consciously adverted to. The thought of Mary's complete dominion should be made vivid now and again by deliberate thought and prayer; if that is done, it is sufficient that the fact of one's dependence on Her remains immutably recognised, that it be always at least vaguely before the mind and that it be put into force in a general way in all the circumstances of life.

### (e) Banish Sentiment

It is not necessary that the inauguration or subsequent practice of the True Devotion be accompanied by warmth or consolation. It does not depend on feelings or fervour or any kind of emotional experience. Its foundations are reason, faith and the loving resolve of the will, and these are completely independent of the feelings of the senses.

### (f) A Message from Heaven.

St. Louis-Marie claimed that the devotion he taught is an authentic message from heaven. This has undoubtedly been verified through the graces that have attended the practice of it and the position it has attained in the devotional

life of the Church. In the words of Cardinal Tedeschini on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of St. Louis-Marie in St. Peter's, Rome, "he has constituted himself the herald of the coming of the reign of God through Mary, and the precursor of that longed-for salvation which in the fulness of time the Virgin Mother of God will bring to the world by her Immaculate Heart."

(g) A Way to Holiness

There can be no questioning the fact that the practice of the "True Devotion" deepens the spiritual life, endowing it particularly with purity of intention and unselfishness. These things are of the very essence of the teaching of St. Louis-Marie; one is called upon to practice them incessantly. It is a matter of experience that by such complete surrender and submission to Mary one advances more in a few months than in many years of spiritual effort based more on reliance on self and one's own will.

(h) Guidance and Protection

The true servant of Mary finds himself comforted and strengthened by a strong and certain sense of guidance and protection. She seems to make herself so near and present to him that he is enlightened in his doubts, strengthened in his fears and sustained in his battles. It is this sense of being always directed and safeguarded by Mary that enables the true Legionary to persevere in his quest for souls when so many others who begin apostolic work under other auspices fall by the wayside.

(i) Peace of Soul

It is extremely difficult to think of any way of spirituality more designed to bring with it a certainty that one's life and everything in it are being employed to the best advantage. The Legionary who is faithful to his devotion to Mary has that certainty; he is consequently free from many worries and anxieties and at liberty to pursue untrammelled his own progress towards perfection and his apostolate of charity. By this interior liberty scruples are banished and the heart is filled with burning love and limitless trust. St. Louis himself refers to the case of Mother Agnes de Langeac, a saintly soul of the Dominican Order. She suffered great anguish of mind, until, in response to divine inspiration, she made herself the slave of Jesus and Mary. "When she had done this," says St. Louis, "all her anguish and scruples ceased, and she found herself in a state of great peace, as a result of which she determined to teach the devotion to others."

(j) Supernatural Outlook

One cannot really surrender all to Mary without attaining a supernatural outlook. The constant attempt to live as Mary's slave of love implies a gentle but constant effort to acquire her spirit and her outlook. She, more than any other creature, was accustomed to judge everything from the supernatural point of view; between her and the world enmities were complete. Therefore, the soul surrendered to her and attempting to live always in the spirit of that surrender necessarily finds himself more and more inclined to evaluate all from the standpoint of the supernatural.

(k) Increase in Virtue.

Such spiritual growth implies also increase in faith, courage, wisdom, humility, tenderness and the other virtues which adorned Mary's precious soul. Here are the words of St. Louis-Marie himself: "The Blessed Virgin will share with you that faith which, when She was on earth, was greater than that of all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Saints. . . . The more you gain the benevolence of this august Princess and faithful Virgin, the more will pure faith be evident in your conduct; a pure faith that will make you care little for sensible and extraordinary feelings; a lively faith, animated by charity, enabling you to perform your actions only from the motive of pure love; a faith firm and unshakable as a rock by which you will stand firm and steadfast in the midst of storms and tempests; an active and piercing faith, which, like some mysterious master-key, will give you admittance to the mysteries of Jesus Christ, the last end of man, and to the Heart of God Himself; a courageous faith, by which you will unhesitatingly undertake and carry through great things for God and the salvation of souls. Lastly, a faith which will be your blazing torch, your divine life, your hidden treasure of divine Wisdom, and the all-powerful weapon you will use to enlighten those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death, to inflame those who are lukewarm and need the burning gold of charity, to give life to those who are dead in sin, to move and convert by gentle and convincing word hearts of marble and cedars of Lebanon; and lastly to resist the devil and all enemies of salvation."

(l) Marian Love.

With the despoiling of self and the life of faith comes the grace of pure love which is the very essence of perfection. "The Mother of fair love" says St. Louis-Marie, will fill the heart of her true slave "with the pure love of which She holds the treasury." Through this communication of Mary's love, the soul will be transformed into the image of Mary's Son. St. Louis-Marie's comparison is well known. Mary, he says, is the "mould of God." "He who is cast in this divine mould" he continues, "is soon formed and moulded in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in him; with little cost and in little time he will become God-like, since he is cast in the same mould which formed a God."

(m) All for Jesus

"By this devotion, faithfully observed," says the Saint, "you will give more glory to Jesus Christ in a month than by any other, however difficult, in many years." Such a statement is not made without reason. St. Louis-Marie reminds us that by doing all through Mary, we abandon our own intentions and lose ourselves in those of Mary. So sublime were hers that by a single act She gave more glory to God than, say, St. Laurence by his terrible martyrdom. Nay, "She gave more glory to God than all the angels and saints have given or will give." Moreover, in practising this devotion with its absolute abandonment of self and complete reliance upon Mary, the soul shows a humility most pleasing to the Heart of Jesus, Who "resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Further, when Our Lady deigns to receive from us the gift of ourselves and all we are capable of surrendering to Her, She does so only that, enriched beyond measure by Her touch, She may pass them on to her Son. "There can be no doubt" writes St. Louis-Marie, "that Our Lord is more glorified thereby than if we offered them with our own sinful hands."

(n) Union with Mary

It may even be that some who practise this wholehearted devotion to Mary, as recommended by her Legion, will be favoured with the special grace of union with Her. For, as Fr. Chaminade, the Venerable Founder of the Marianists, has written, "There is a gift of the habitual presence of the Blessed Virgin even as there is a gift of the habitual presence of God—very rare, it is true, but obtainable by great fidelity." Those thus favoured feel that Mary has taken them under her very special care, that She remains almost ceaselessly before their souls, attracting them to Herself as a mother. She goads them on, leads them, directs them and enlightens them in all that concerns the life of the spirit. Graces flow into the soul almost unnoticed; it lives in Mary and is united with Her through love. In Her and through Her God reveals Himself to His child as by a mirror.

(o) The Reward of Surrender

It is quite impossible to describe adequately the graces which flow from the practice of Legionary devotion to Our Blessed Mother. They differ in each individual soul; but Christ Himself gives us some idea of what we may expect in return for such a thoroughgoing surrender of self. "Every man that has forsaken home or brothers, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake," he says, "shall receive his reward a hundredfold, and obtain everlasting life." That being so, what reward may not he expect who surrenders not only his attachment to persons and possessions, but even his whole self as an oblation of love to God through Mary?

(p) Mary Assumes Our Obligations.

The Gospel story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes teaches a salutary lesson. A vast crowd had gathered around Jesus in a lonely place, far from any source from which food could be obtained. As they listened enthralled to His words, they forgot that time was passing and it soon became evident that they were in need of food. On a search being made it transpired that only one individual had any food with him, a boy with a couple of loaves and a few fishes. He was asked to give all he had for the good of the multitude. He might have said that he needed them for himself, or that he had to take them home to his mother, or something of that description. But he did not; he surrendered all the food he possessed, although it was evident that it was an almost useless contribution towards what would be necessary to feed many thousands of hungry people. Yet the result was a miracle. Not only was every person in the crowd well fed, but when the fragments were gathered together they filled twelve large baskets.

Is there any reason to suggest that Jesus will be less generous in rewarding those who give Him themselves and all they have through his holy Mother? As in the Gospel, so it is today. The wants of multitudes of souls are satisfied through the gift of one princely child of Mary. His own needs are more than satisfied, along with those of countless other souls. Moreover, his obligations to pray for certain individuals or intentions are perfectly fulfilled. Not only has

he committed to Mary the assets of his life, he has cast into her mighty, majestic Heart all his liabilities and obligations as well. Everything is to be disposed of according to the Divine Will. If God desires one to pray for the Pope, or the Souls in Purgatory, or the Missions or benefactors or anything else at all, these intentions will be satisfied by Mary. The making of the Consecration does not mean that one's ordinary prayers or actions needs be changed in their form; life's ordinary ways may be followed; usual intentions may still be recommended in prayer; but all is understood to be wholly subject to Mary's good pleasure.

(q) Recommendation — Not Obligation

Every Legionary is given to understand that he has no obligation to practise the "True Devotion" of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. The words of the Handbook are: "It is desirable that the practice of Legionary devotion to Mary should be rounded off and given the distinctive character which has been taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort." Nevertheless, the devotion to Mary that must be practised by every Legionary as his first obligation of membership is of equal quality with that of St. Louis-Marie. Mary must be honoured as the Mother of every soul, as the Channel of every grace. So, at the beginning of his Legionary life each member gives himself to Mary in these pregnant words: "Most Holy Spirit . . . I know that Thou, who has come to regenerate the world in Jesus Christ hast not willed to do so except through Mary; that without her we cannot know or love Thee; that it is by her, and to whom she pleases, when she pleases, and in the quantity and manner she pleases that all Thy gifts and virtues and graces are administered; and I realise that the secret of a perfect Legionary service consists in a complete union with her who is so completely united to Thee . . . I declare my entire dependence on her. She is the mother of my soul. Her heart and mine are one; and from that single heart she speaks again those words of old: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord'; and once again Thou comest by her to do great things. Let Thy power overshadow me, and come into my soul with fire and love, and make it one with Mary's love and Mary's will to save the world; so that I may be pure in her who was made Immaculate by Thee; so that Christ my Lord may likewise grow in me through Thee; so that I with her, His Mother, may bring Him to the world and to the souls who need Him."

(r) The Secret of Success

In fidelity to the spirit of these words lies the secret of success for Mary's Legionaries. They prescribe the path to sanctity, and on personal sanctity everything else depends. Through following that path every member finds himself at one with every other member of a great world-wide army, aspiring after high and holy qualities and pledged to heroic endeavour. This marvellous unity in Mary is so esteemed by God that He endows it with invincible might. In the individual soul true devotion to Mary is certainly a unique channel of grace; when it is practised on a large scale by all the members of a mighty organisation it brings to the modern world the spirit of the first Pentecost. "All these, with one mind, give themselves up to prayer, together with Mary, the mother of Jesus," who has received all possible graces from God; they aspire to share her spirit and thereby enter as fully as possible into His designs with regard to the distribution of grace. Thus is the whole army "filled with the Holy Ghost" and "many are the wonders and signs performed." (cf. Acts: I, 14; II, 4, 43).

## 22.—ACTION

(a) The Spirit of the Legion

From all that has been written in this paper it will be seen that the spirit of the Legion of Mary is nothing less than the spirit of Mary herself. Devotion to Her epitomises, so to speak, all the elements of devotional life which together constitute authentic Legionary holiness. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist, prayer, faith, hope, charity, humility, courage, prudence, perseverance, sacrifice, obedience, joy, enterprise, kindness —all these find their consummation and perfection when they are toiled for and practised in the spirit of Mary. Nevertheless, the Legion itself, when asked to define its own spirit, replied in another way. "The spirit of the Legion is the spirit of action" stated the official Legion magazine. "Whatever qualities may be found in the Legion, they must find expression in action. The outpouring of them all is through the mouthpiece of action. Action is, as it were, the setting in which all other characteristics of the Legion shine forth like jewels. It is the setting which holds them together in proper pattern and brings them into service. In other words, it is action which makes the Legion of Mary. . . That dominant note must be accentuated. Legionary action must be intense and heroic."

(b) The Example of Christ

Love in action is a good definition of zeal for souls; Marian love in action is a perfect definition of the spirit of the Legion. Our Lord prepared for the conversion of the world by gathering around Him a group of chosen souls whom He trained Himself and filled with His own spirit. The Apostles carried on the work of the Master in the same way. The strangers from Rome who heard the preaching of the Apostles on the first Pentecost day may well have been the first to bring the news of Jesus to Rome, thereby planting the seeds of the Church which SS. Peter and Paul were soon to establish there officially. In the words of Pope Pius XI: "What would the Twelve have done, lost in the immensity of the world, if they had not gathered around them men and women, the old and the young, saying: 'We carry with us the treasure of heaven. Help us to scatter it abroad.'"

(c) Bringing the Priest to the People

Every priest naturally turns to the example of Our Lord and His Apostles to seek a pattern of work for the salvation of souls. He necessarily, therefore, agrees with Pope Pius X that "what is most necessary at the present time is to have in each parish a group of laymen at the same time virtuous, enlightened, determined and really apostolic." And that is the essential idea of the Legionary apostolate — to bring the Priest to the People at least in influence and understanding, to work in inseparable union with the Priest, under his captaincy, with perfect identity of interest, supplementing his efforts and widening his place in the lives of men. Consequently, the Legionary should strive to reflect in his own life the pastoral virtues of the Priesthood and chief amongst these is zeal for souls.

(d) Zeal for Souls

St. John Eudes tells us that "the first and most important obligation of the priest is to work for the salvation of souls. For that purpose Christ established the priesthood in the Church." He goes on to prove that the salvation of souls is the great work of God, the end and purpose of all the works of the power, wisdom and goodness of God; that it is the great work of Jesus Christ, Who loved and preferred souls to anything else, even His' own life; that it is the great work of the Mother of God who was made all that She is that She might be worthy to co-operate with her divine Son in man's redemption and who was and is ready to undergo every torment of earth to save even a single soul; that it is the great work of the Church, of the Angels and Saints, of the Apostles. "It is the work of works," says St. John, "surpassing all others in time or eternity." (The Priest, pp. 131 ff.).

(e) Marian Love in Action.

What a privilege it is for the Legionary to be called by Mary to practise, in a manner proportionate to the circumstances and obligations of the lay state, the vocational virtue of the priesthood! How absolutely correct it is to state that the spirit developed in the soul of each Legionary must "find expression in action"! It is through the disciplined practice of Marian love in action that the Legionary is led towards the pinnacle of perfection. The Legion is sanctified and sanctifying Marian action: Fidelity to its rule necessarily brings with it growth in virtue; the exercise of zeal inevitably results in an increase of zeal. In the Legion that means the love of souls in, with and through Mary, and love is the essence of perfection. If this spirit grows in any soul it will surely be given him to share in the greatest work of Her who was so absolutely full of love that She was considered worthy to give to the world Him who is Love itself. More than anything else, the world of our day needs Christ. Events are proving that as of old, Mary is waiting to give Him to the world, and that She is pleased to use her faithful Legionaries as her unworthy instruments in the accomplishment of this, the greatest desire of her Immaculate Heart.

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