

THE LEGION OF MARY

A WORK OF GOD FOR OUR DAY

By

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THE age in which we live is characterized by several currents of Grace which, like a ground swell, rise up through the whole Church. They are due to the action of the Holy Ghost, Who works in souls, and are the completion of the ever-present mystery of Pentecost. Today, two currents dominate the life of the Church: the Marian current and the apostolic current.

The Marian Current.

To say that we live in a Marian age is almost commonplace, so repeatedly has evidence of the fact been afforded us. The glorification of the Blessed Virgin, starting from the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, which the Marian Year commemorated, and swelling to the apotheosis of the Assumption, which we have just honoured, compels the attention of Catholics to that Marian mediation, whose forms theology may discuss, but whose warm and captivating reality can no longer be questioned. The Reverend Father Doncoeur said once, referring to the youth of the time: "This generation, nourished on dogma and the Eucharist, will do great things, but it has still to discover the Blessed Virgin." The discovery is taking place under our eyes.

The Apostolic Current.

Together with that reawakening of the Marian Spirit, our day is experiencing another renewal. Under the action of the same Spirit, this generation is rediscovering the apostolic sense inherent in our Baptism and perfected by Confirmation. We are developing a keener consciousness of the responsibility that binds us to our brothers. We are feeling anew the urgent claim of the apostolate, not on the priest and his immediate co-workers alone, but on all the faithful.

Can it be that the Holy Ghost, Who inspires at once the rediscovery of Mary and the revival of the apostolic spirit, has established no link between these spiritual currents, and that His action follows two merely parallel, or even dissimilar, courses? Should we not rather conclude that these Marian and apostolic Graces move together towards one point and that the hour has come to accept and to unite what, in the sight of God, belongs to the same mystery of love: Marian piety and the duty of apostolic action?

We believe that it is so indeed, and, from this meeting of two streams, we may understand the apostolic significance of Marian piety or if it is preferred, the Marian significance of the apostolate. It is easily seen how profitable that blending is, both for piety and practice.

United in the Legion.

Once we have understood the theological unity joining the apostolate and devotion to Mary, we have grasped what it is that constitutes the greatness of the Legion of Mary, which expresses admirably the union of the apostolic movement and the Marian movement. That is why it is one of God's choice blessings for our time.

We have but to look at the Vexillum of the Legion of Mary, to see expressed as a symbol this unity that we have noted.

The Legion of Mary, an organization springing from devotion to Our Lady, is shown to us as a profoundly supernatural work by its entire dependence on the Holy Ghost, in and through Mary, Union with Mary is the key to its success and the mystery of its fruitfulness.

The best Legionary is not the one who is most eloquent, best educated, most highly gifted, but simply the one who is most closely united to Mary, who, in this way, shares best her spiritual motherhood. Going to men by Mary and in Mary he acquires over them the power that a mother exerts over her children. Hence the universal appeal of the Legion, which calls upon all men, even the poorest. I am more and more forcibly struck by the marvellous power of the Legion of Mary to discover apostles everywhere; in every order and every rank of society, and to set them to work. The secret of this success lies in the Marian union which links each member to his Queen. It is for this reason that the Legion constantly reiterates the need to nourish our spiritual life, that we may be instruments of God. As each new group is founded its first step is to seek for prayers, that is to enrol auxiliaries and adjutorians, who will co-operate by the spiritual power of prayer, with the work of the active members. Again at the meeting itself, this spirit of prayer shines out from the start. The statue of the Blessed Virgin standing there shows plainly that it is she who is in command and invites all to go on their knees. The whole meeting is steeped in prayer, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. That half-way prayer was a wonderful discovery, human nature so easily asserts itself wherever men are gathered together. And when they rise to say the Catena, it is as though a breath of fresh air enters, and the supernatural puts its mark afresh on the gathering.

And that is not all: besides days of recollection and retreats, the Legionaries wrap their apostolic visits in an atmosphere of prayer, knowing that where there are two or three gathered together in the name of the Lord, there is He in the midst of them.

All this disposes souls for the stirrings and inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and makes them ready to receive the promised Grace at the moment when it is needed; that they may say the word that is called for, the word that touches hardened hearts and wins spiritual victories.

The Legion of Mary owes its strength to the supernatural spirit which animates and envelops it. And it is from that spirit that the Legion draws the courage for great enterprises in the service of our brothers.

Spiritual Transformation.

Since the day when the editor of a Communist newspaper was converted and obtained leave from the Cardinal of Malines to launch the organization in my country, almost seven hundred praesidia have come into being and are flourishing. For anyone who knows what each group stands for, in hidden, persevering self-sacrifice, this result is a notable one. The fruits of the work are there to show that God's hand is in it.

Since the Legion was introduced into my country, many graces have passed through its hands. But the principal fruit has been the spiritual transformation of the Legionaries themselves. Thus once again are Our Lord's words verified: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." He, who gives, receives; it is by spreading one's faith that one makes it live. The Legion of Mary has given us a practical illustration of that promise of Our Lord.

Three Tributes

"The Legion of Mary is a power for good wherever it is in operation. My desire for it to be extended to every parish arises principally from this that the Holy Father wishes that in every parish there should be the exercise of Catholic Action, and there is no more appropriate means of Catholic Action being exercised in individual parishes than by the establishment of the Legion of Mary."

—Cardinal Gilroy, 28th October, 1955.

"The Holy Father himself has approved and blessed your organization and encouraged its officers. I personally tell you that I value very much your efforts. I pray and hope that your members will grow in the Christian virtues and persevere in the apostolate and that very many of your fellow Catholics will come into your ranks to help you to cope with the immense tasks that lie before you."

—Archbishop Carboni, 25th Feb., 1955.

"I am always glad to do anything I can for the Legion of Mary. It is doing a great deal for the diocese of Melbourne, for the whole of Australia and practically for the whole Christian world. It is the greatest spiritual work started in recent times."

—Archbishop Mannix, 29th April, 1958.

Journey of a Thousand Leagues

by John Murray

(From Capuchin Annual, 1956-57)

THE ancient Chinese proverb says: "A journey of a thousand leagues begins with a single step," and there is an appropriateness in beginning the story of the Legion of Mary with a Chinese proverb.

That first step, so pregnant with destiny, was taken when, in a day in September, 1921,—a historic year in Ireland—two young women spoke simply, but with great fervour, the wish of their heart: "Could we not have a society for visiting the women in the South Dublin Union?" They got their wish. The step was taken which was to carry the name and the activity of the Legion of Mary from Myra House to the farthest corner of the earth— finally, to become a symbol of hope and courage, on the one hand, and of hatred and fear on the other, in the vast recesses of ancient Cathay—now Communist China.

The Legion took root from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. It was at a monthly meeting of men and women held at Myra House that the above-mentioned question was asked. The proceedings at the meeting were somewhat similar to a Legion meeting. A variety of activities were reviewed, including the business of a branch of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society, the Rosary was recited, and the meeting closed with the recitation of the Angelus, when the bell of the church opposite rang out. Afterwards the custom developed of having an informal talk on some subject of a religious nature—followed by a cup of tea. On this occasion, Mr. Matt Murray, now caretaker of Myra House, had been describing his visitation, as a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to the patients in the South Dublin Union, now known as St. Kevin's Hospital. The ladies present were deeply moved and immediately sensed the need for a similar work in the visitation of the women's wards of the vast institution. And so, volunteering their services and agreeing to recruit others, they fixed a meeting date, which happened to be 7 September, 1921. The first group of Legionaries assembled on that Wednesday evening to serve under the banner of that Queen whose birthday was being inaugurated that evening in the Church's First Vespers. On the table around which they assembled, one of the first arrivals had set up an altar, holding a statue of Our Lady of Grace (as in the Miraculous Medal), flanked by two vases of flowers and two candlesticks with lighted candles—all on a white cloth. This simple devotional setting, spontaneously arranged by an early comer, became the official setting for all future meetings of the Legion.

Assembled around that table were fifteen girls, mostly in the late teens or early twenties, a priest, the late Father Michael Toher, and a layman, Mr. Frank Duff. The girl who arranged that first Legion altar later became a religious in the Little Sisters of the Assumption, serving in London, New York and Montreal. The writer had the pleasure of meeting her in New York, in 1936, when she was serving the poor in the downtown East Side of Manhattan. She died in Montreal in 1943, on the anniversary of the foundation of the Legion. God rest her soul !

At that first meeting, the members began with the invocation and prayer to the Holy Ghost before reciting the Rosary. Then they discussed their proposed work for the "least of Christ's brethren" in the wards of the South Dublin Union. Father Toher, then a curate of Saint Nicholas of Myra, Francis Street, Dublin, and, thirty years later, its Parish Priest, gave the first Allocutio, or address, outlining for the members the doctrine of Mystical Body of Christ. In visiting the poor suffering, and sometimes degraded patients in that huge institution they must always see and serve Christ in each person visited and do so in the Spirit of Mary serving her divine Son in the home of Nazareth. The only one among that first group who was not young, Mrs. Elizabeth Kirwan, a New Zealander by birth, was selected as president of the group, and later, when a curia, the precursor of the Concilium, was formed, she became its first president. Work was assigned to the members, each pair to visit a number of patients and report back at the next meeting. In their work, emphasis was placed on charity, perseverance and patience, and the urgent need of prayer for their work. They went out on their first visits, regarding themselves as the humble instruments of Our Lady in her mothering of souls. In speaking to the patients, they offered them a warm, human sympathy, listened attentively to their tales of sorrow, neglect and real or imagined grievances. They offered to write letters for them, to seek out relatives and friends and do other little services. Then, having demonstrated a practical sympathy, they offered advice and inspiration, showing them how they might make their sufferings golden talismans in winning for others the grace of conversion, and requesting them to undertake the regular recitation of the Rosary. Thus, among the patients and

among their own relatives, friends and fellow-workers they recruited a large number of spiritual supporters, who soon formed the Legion's auxiliary membership.

The organization was known as the Association of Our Lady of Mercy, during the first four years of its life. Later, in November, 1925, the name "Legion of Mary" was adopted. In December, 1930, the title praesidium was introduced and at the same time the term Concilium, marking the final "Latinisation" of the nomenclature of the organization.

Trinity of Events.

Undoubtedly, as the Legion gladly acknowledges, its early formation was influenced by the ready-made model of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. From it was adopted the weekly meeting, with its definite ritual of prayer, the weekly work-assignment, the individual report by each member, the work in pairs, the secret-bag collection and officerships—a spiritual director, president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer—for each branch. In addition, there was a spirit and tradition of solid and persevering performance of active work; basically the visitation of persons or families, either in their homes or in institutions. All of these have been carried over to the Legion and enshrined in its rules and constitutions. The monthly meeting at Myra House, referred to above, preceded the foundation of the Legion by several years and developed out of the Saint Patrick's conference of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. Hence, the deep intangible roots of the Legion might be said to stretch back into the foundation in Myra House of Saint Patrick's Conference in 1917. Accepting this thesis one sees a remarkable trinity of events in that fateful year, Our Lady's appearance at Fatima, the Russian Revolution and the "conception" of the Legion of Mary.

This coincidence at first sight may appear to be forced but, when examined, the thesis appears quite tenable. The nucleus of the Legion in its personnel was that little group attending the monthly Pioneer Council meeting in Myra House. It was in these informal "talks" after the gathering that the spirit which characterised the Legion from its first meeting was formed. In a consecutive number of these talks, Mr. Frank Duff had outlined to his listeners the True Devotion to Our Lady, as taught by Saint Louis Marie de Montfort in his Treatise. Those who established the Legion and guided the new movement from the first moment were those who had heard those spiritual talks each month at Myra House. If one seeks to trace the lineage of the organization back beyond its first formal meeting, it is through these informal meetings at Myra House, dating back to 1917, that it must be done. Here, indeed, in the trinity of events in 1917, we may be seeing the warp and the woof of one of God's plans. Is it not consoling to think that as soon as a great evil takes shape, God, foreseeing its menace to souls, bring into existence through His Holy Mother the forces that are destined, in the divine plan, to combat and defeat Satan's forces?

The Legion and Communism.

Incidentally, there is a strange and striking similarity in the methods and titles used by the Legion of Mary and International Communism. Each adopted the nomenclature of the legio or Legion of ancient Rome. The Legion of Mary uses praesidium as the name for the unit of organization, the branch. The Communists use the same term—who has not read the reports of meetings of the "Supreme Praesidium of the Soviets?" Also, the prayer-leaflet of the Legion, which every member uses, is called the Tessera. Only recently, was it learned, from our envoy in Italy, that the Communist Party membership card is also styled the Tessera. Another interesting point: the colour of the Communists is Red; again; the Legion's colour is Red—the colour of the Holy Spirit and of Imperial Rome.

And now to return to our history. The Legion slowly grew and spread, sinking deep roots in its home-soil before venturing afield. When less than a year old, its first hostel, the fruit of heroic work, was founded, and Santa Maria Hostel opened its doors in Harcourt Street to its first residents, girls won from the life of the streets. In 1927, another hostel, the Morning Star, for homeless and destitute men was opened. That year also the first branch outside Dublin was formed in Waterford. In 1928 the Legion took wings overseas and a branch was erected in Glasgow, Scotland. Then, in 1929, The Reverend Mother Woodlock of the Sacred Heart Convent in Hammersmith, London, was instrumental in establishing the first branch in England. From England to India, a journey of a thousand leagues, was the next step and an English lady, whose husband was sheriff of Madras, brought with her, on returning to that city after a prolonged visit to England, a statue and other equipment for a Legion praesidium. Despite objections, urging the intense heat and racial barriers, she persevered, and in 1931 the first branch came to India, within a stone's throw

of the empty tomb of the Apostle Saint Thomas in the Cathedral at Mylapore, a suburb of Madras. Today, the Legion is in practically every diocese of India, with a senatus at Madras and another at Bombay. It has recently entered Goa, where there are three curiae and where the patriarch is most enthusiastic in his support of the Legion. The Legion is also working successfully in Pakistan, with curiae at Karachi, Lahore and other centres, In Burma, there is a senatus at Rangoon, and a flourishing group in Mandalay. The Irish Columban Fathers promote the Legion in the prefecture of Bhamo, where, in a junior praesidium, young boys cycled distances of twenty and forty miles over bad roads, to give catechetical instruction in pagan villages. One group of young girls, in six months visited thirty families and gave instruction to the members. They prepared twelve people for Baptism.

Australia.

In the year 1931, the Legion began in the United States. A group of miners of various European nationalities formed a praesidium in the State of New Mexico. The following year, priests and prelates from the four corners of the globe came to Dublin for the Eucharistic Congress. Many were introduced to the Legion during their stay and brought it back with them to their own dioceses. Among these were Archbishop Glennon (later Cardinal) of Saint Louis, Archbishop Cantwell of Los Angeles, Mar Ivanios of Trivandrum, South India. An interested lay pilgrim to the Congress, Mrs. Gavan Duffy of Melbourne, brought the Legion back with her to Australia and was delighted to find that a Melbourne priest, the Reverend Father Bakker, had just founded the first branch there.

In 1932, Canada took the Legion.

That year also Monsignor (now Bishop) Moynagh brought the Legion to Calabar, Africa.

In France, the seeds of the Legion were sown when Mr. Frank Duff and Monsignor O'Brien of Bootle, Liverpool, visited Paris and, on the centenary of the apparition of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, had an interview with the late Cardinal Verdier. They found him very receptive and he promised his full permission for the Legion. When they adverted to the striking coincidence of their visit with the centenary of the apparition, he merely smiled and held out to them his episcopal ring, which had carved on it in raised ivory, a replica of the Miraculous Medal. Today the Legion is in most of the dioceses of France.

The Envoys.

It was in 1934 that the first Legion envoy left our shores for New York. As a result of the reading of an article by Alice Curtayne in *Commonweal*, a San Francisco businessman, Mr. Oliver, a very successful man, and a great Catholic layman, wanted the Legion established in San Francisco and all over the U.S.A. He asked for "a field worker" offering to pay all the expenses of whoever volunteered. Miss Mary Duffy was the first envoy and her successful work led Mr. Oliver to repeat his offer, asking for two more volunteers. Thus, two years later, three envoys were at work in the United States and Canada.

Shortly afterwards, in 1936, Edel Quinn, after spending two years in Newcastle Sanatorium, volunteered to become an envoy. At first, on account of her health, she was put off but then it was felt that South Africa would be an ideal climate for her. She was eventually sent to Kenya—the Switzerland of East Africa. But her heroic soul would not respect human barriers of limitations and soon she was found trekking across the jungles of missionary Africa, in an ancient Ford, with a Mohammedan driver as a companion. Her life story has been told in a "best seller" by Monsignor Leon J. Suenens, Auxiliary Bishop of Malines, and has been published in several languages, including Chinese. During the past two decades, the Central Council, the Concilium, of the Legion has sent out almost thirty envoys to the four corners of the earth. Some of these have devoted three years of their life to this full-time voluntary service while others have spent ten or twelve years in distant lands founding and building up the Legion. In Europe today, there are seven envoys operating in a territory extending from Scandanavia to Greece. In Asia, envoys work in India and Pakistan, in Indonesia, in Japan, and a new envoy, Miss Joan Lynch, will be labouring in Thailand and Southern Vietnam by the time these lines are in print. South America was the last field reached by the envoyship of the Legion, the first envoy arriving there in 1947, in the person of Miss Joaquina Lucas, a native of the Philippines and one of the foundation-members of the Legion in Manila.

Today, there are five envoys of the Legion in Latin America, from Mexico to the Argentine, and everywhere remarkable results are being achieved. In Africa, there are at present, Miss Anne O'Connor, in the Belgian Congo, Miss Eileen Sheehy in French West Africa, and Mr. P. Stenson who works in West Africa and South Africa.

Australia has never received the benefit of a full-time Legion envoy but its growth was not impeded on that account. Now, the land "down under" has itself provided full time extension workers in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Five Thousand Praesidia.

Special mention must be made of the Philippines in view of the remarkable success and growth of the Legion in those islands and because of the fact that they have given to the Legion two envoys, Miss Lucas, in Brazil, and Miss Pacita Santos in Spain. Founded by a Spanish Vincentian Father, The Reverend Manual A. Garcia, C.M. now senatus spiritual director, just a year before Pearl Harbour, the infant organization was quickly cut off from the Legion headquarters and for several years—until the liberation in 1945—no news reached the outside world. At the time of the invasion, there was a curia with twelve praesidia attached. On liberation, it was found that there was a comitium, three senior curiae and a junior, and over one hundred praesidia in the archdiocese of Manila. Today there are over 5,000 praesidia and a host of curiae The late Archbishop O'Dogherty of Manila who has seen the picture in the Philippines changed by the advent of the Legion "from hopeless to hopeful", stated: "I can now dream dreams and can say to myself 'this is the only Catholic nation in the Orient, why should it not convert the Orient?' "

We began with a quotation of a Chinese proverb and now the journey of a thousand items may be said to have brought the Legion into the depths of ancient China. The story of the Legion's birth and growth in China and of its historic and miraculous resistance to the Communist Goliath has been related by Father Aedan McGrath, who was the chosen instrument of the Holy Father's representative for the spreading of the Legion throughout the vast regions of missionary China. How well he accomplished that mission, his long imprisonment for his Legion activities testifies, and also the fact that the Legion was declared Public Enemy No. 1 of the Communist regime in China. But long after this generation has passed away and Communism has joined the sinister battalions of bygone tyrannies, which threatened to destroy the Church, the glorious Legion martyrs of China will be remembered and invoked and their names enshrined forever in the annals of the Legion.

Each day brings fresh news of the Legion's growth and its penetration into new areas. Each year sees new countries added to the long list. The question is sometimes asked "What about the future?" Well, in this atomic age it is hard to forecast the future. But some wise and detached observers have seen in this twentieth century army of the Virgin Most Powerful the working out of a divine Master-Plan. Millions of the little humble people of the world are oppressed and without hope or guidance. In the statue of Our Lady of Grace, used in every Legion of Mary meeting, Our Lady is depicted as pouring out graces, received from the Holy Spirit, on the needy souls of the world, through the instrumentality of her Legionaries—while her heel crushes the serpent, symbolical of the devil and his co-workers in our world. Is it presumptuous to see in the Legion of Mary a marshalling of the laity, into a vast Marian army, carrying on Mary's spiritual warfare throughout this modern world and assured of victory in and through her ?

The Future of the Legion

By Frank Duff

(From Capuchin Annual, 1956-57)

I THINK that now it can be said that the Legion of Mary has arrived. The process has taken over thirty years. Those who have performed some of our pilgrimages on the Atlantic seaboard, which entail an all-night vigil, have had the experience. sometimes remarkable, of witnessing the sunrise.. After the night come the signs of dawn slowly accomplishing itself. Then in a rush the daylight—and soon the whole firmament is ablaze! After a fashion, so it has been with the Legion. In its first year it gained four branches, and in five years it counted only nine. It took six years to gain a second diocese; seven to gain a second country, eight to gain the first men's praesidium; and ten for the first branch in the New World. That was the dawning; and even then the sun seemed painfully slow in coming. Indeed,

Legionary growing has always been deliberate. almost mathematical. An apparent rapidity has been realized by the operation of the geometric ratio. The Legion has not presented the feature of a mushroom growth.

Three Stages of Growth.

We may perhaps distinguish three stages. At the end of the first, the Legion had implanted itself in the world in a modest, symbolic way. The blessing of the reigning Pope, Pius XI, belonged to this phase, and represented an astonishing circumstance, considering that the organization was still in the nursery. Also marking the emergence of the Legion from the first period of infancy was the International Eucharistic Congress of 1932, held in Dublin. That Congress might be styled the Epiphany of the Legion, for it provided a sort of manifestation. Looking at it from now, one finds it hard to withhold from it the adjective "supernatural." The Legion for the purposes of its hostels had got hold of a little city of ruined buildings. These are now in a large part renovated. Then they were not. It was decided to hold a reception for the visiting Legionaries, and the buildings were furnished up. Amazing result! That reception caught the popular imagination as nothing else of the kind did Three thousand people flocked to it, including almost every visiting prelate and dignitary. Epiphany!

The second stage was one of steady growing which set the Legion in most of the countries. It terminated in the events of China, and China marked for the Legion that sunrise which I have referred to. It had entered into a new phase. It was no longer tolerantly regarded as a growing, and possibly promising, Society, perhaps a little too much given to "devotion"! It had "arrived." It had withstood the worst that could be given to it. It had produced members whose stature, according to the person best placed to judge, was that of the early Christians. It had helped to save the Church. That new orientation has been summed up by another great Church figure: "ten years ago the name resounding in religious circles was one of menace, that of Stalin. Today it is the name of the Legion; it has brought hope into the air." Actually that personage went on to say that he hoped that the growth of the Legion was not too fast and at the expense of quality.

So now that the Legion appears to be at the beginning of a new phase of life and possibility, it would be well to take stock of that latter misgiving. Growth at the price of quality would not be gain but loss, for it is not on the size but on the spirit that all depends.

Too Rapid?

Already I have shown how slowly was the rooting of the Legion accomplished, and how steady the uprise of branches. But has later success brought excessive speed—and mushroom quality? I comment on this. The only area in the world to which we ourselves were inclined to ascribe the idea of mushroom growing was—China! Father Aedan McGrath speaks of a letter which he received from the Concilium deprecating the rate of growth there as something to which it was not accustomed. Father McGrath's reply was that the rate was dictated by the circumstances and that nothing could be done about it. You will note that this was the very area which has had the opportunity of demonstrating ultra-solidity—and more.

Another comment. What seems to be the fastest growing Legion area is the Philippines. Roughly, a new praesidium is born there every day. Is this too fast? I reply by pointing out that it represents an increase of only ten per cent. per annum. Secondly, Mr. Douglas Hyde has declared that the unspectacular work of the Legion in the Philippines has effected the greatest piece of spiritual building that he knows of. Those two facts would suggest that the Legion in the Philippines is not growing too fast; has not lost quality; is still growing steadily at a mathematical rate; and presumably will continue its "building operations."

Another statistic. The Legion is today in about one thousand dioceses. Each week that number is increased by a couple. This would represent a ten per cent. annual increase. Again that appearance of steadiness, of the mathematical, of a plan dictated from above!

Looking at the place where the system is at its oldest, and where its growth is the largest, and where one might accordingly expect to find some little diminution of spirit, I note that there the quality is at its highest, not merely by comparison with other areas, but by comparison with itself: that is, quality has ascended or has not lowered as time

has gone on. These things represent startling endorsement of the contention of the Legion Handbook that if the system be properly worked, the feature will be manifest of interest increasing with time, and quality with quantity.

Dangerous?

Just another doubt to settle. It has been said: "The Legion of Mary is becoming a very powerful affair. God grant it will not repeat history, i.e., the case of another such organization going off the tracks."

The special feature of the Legion is its spiritual character— which tends to unity. Loyalty and obedience are inculcated and generated. These things point the opposite way to "going off" But there is also a practical consideration. The Legion is not a purely centralized organization. It contains the central principle, but also a strongly developed local one. The members, the works, the administration are local, built into the local ecclesiastical system and controlled by it. The central principle concerns itself with the observance of rule, maintenance of spirit, stimulation of standards, recommendation of works and methods, and similar things.

If a local section went radically and incurably wrong, the central principle would suppress it. If the central principle went radically wrong, the local systems under ecclesiastical impulse, would repudiate it. It is impossible, therefore, to visualize the central principle going off into incorrectness and drawing all sections with it.

Also it has been said: "Why a central principle at all?" or "Why so assertive a central principle? The genius of Catholic Action demands a total local control."

Balance of Control.

There are two points here. Firstly, it is not correct to say that Catholic Action implies a total local control, for that would mean that no standard or international society could be recognized as part of the Catholic Action of a diocese, whereas it has been the insistence of the Holy See that worthy external organizations should be incorporated into the local Catholic Action systems. Secondly, the sundering of that central principle in the case of the Legion would mean the speedy destruction of the Legion in all save name, even though the idea and determination in each local section was to retain the Legion as it is with that exception of the central principle. Why? You have but to sit at the central point and you would see. Above, the central principle has been referred to as "assertive." It is much less assertive than the local principle. The latter, deprived of its necessary counterpoise, would go clean off balance. It is the peculiarity of each locality to claim that it is unique and that it has to be specially catered for; that its people cannot be got to do this or will only do that; they won't have this "exaggerated" devotion to Our Lady; and apart from that, it is absurd to say so many prayers at an active-work meeting; weekly meetings are too frequent; people are too busy or otherwise unable to do two hours work each week; and so on indefinitely.

You see! Without a strong central control, that disintegrating tendency would wreck the common rule of the Legion just as the frost—or dynamite—rends the rocks. So I repeat: the Legion would soon survive only as a name. Local bodies bearing the name would continue. Let us hope that they would do good. But the history of such local associations is not encouraging. Surely no one would be found saying of them that theirs was a name of hope in the world today—having exorcized the fatal name of Stalin.

The Mobilizing of the Legion.

So, having got that much out of our system, let us resume at the point where we branched off: the conclusion of what we might call the mobilising of the Legion, and the opening of its newest phase. After a multitude of preliminary engagements, the battle-line has formed and encircles the globe. We are now able to glimpse what is at stake and to measure the immensity of the conflict.

In each sector we have before us a different foe or problem. There they are in their unending arrays, comprising numbers that make us dizzy. We must not allow the mind alone to measure those hosts, for loss of courage would be the sequel. We have to remind ourselves that the Lord is with us and saith to us: "It is I, be not afraid."

Let us survey the prospect: (a) Protestantism, in regard to which we seem to hold a special commission, inasmuch as we are the first large society to grapple with it and make extensive inroads; (b) Orthodoxy, to deal with which we have been equipped with special permissions—only little used so far; (c) Mohammedanism, which we face in so

many places but only to the point of the initial skirmishes and scattered conversions; (d) Hinduism and (e) Buddhism, from which we are already making many conversions, and from which are heard cries of distress and demands for "non-aggression pacts;" (f) Materialism and its great sub-problems: lapsing, prostitution, dereliction—on which the Legion has from the first been busily engaged; (g) finally, Communism.

May I single out Communism for particular mention? It presents itself as the special foe of religion, and it is, so to speak, the natural adversary of the Legion. There is a strange parallel in the two histories. The roots of each lay in 1917; the birth of each in 1921. There is a similarity in names, type, methods; even the official colour of the two is the same! For some time there was a preliminary facing up to each other; then suddenly, unexpectedly, there was the fierce clash between them. I have not to tell you that it was in China. It has been a Legionary glory. Who won? Mao-tse-Tung and his lieutenants would no doubt say they did. They hold the reins of power; they are able to kill, imprison, enslave, and have done so unsparingly. Then why are they afraid of the Legion, as they are in a strange way? It is as if they realize in their hearts that they have not won at all; as if they know their own weak spot and sense the fact that the Legionary sword points straight at it!

The Greater Force Prevails

What could that weak spot, that Achilles heel, be? Communist domination depends on general non-resistance produced by fear. A few control the multitude by sheer determination. But this is a feature which can work both ways. Another few can match the Communist few. Every multitude is inert, a ready prey for any group that can be called a force. Look at the immense liner about to commence its voyage. It does not initiate its movement by its own engines; a little tug takes it in tow. Despite the skurry of the tug, there is no motion for a while; then the ship begins to crawl to open water, where its own power takes over. Every multitude has its little tug, which eventually controls it. If there were more than one tug pulling in different directions, finally it would be the greater force which would tell.

Pitted against Communism, the Legion is the more powerful because of its supernatural character. A first-class Legion against a first class Communism will easily prevail. Even a second-class Legion will prevail against a first-class Communism, if we presume our inferiority to consist in technique and not in determination and faith. But what we may call a third-rate Legion will not prevail against Communism, because that category must be held to point to lack of faith and earnestness.

But also, the Legion can fail in spite of itself. I mean that an element can be missing which is necessary and which the Legion cannot itself fully supply. That element is mobilization. It is not enough to look benignly at the Legion struggling to recruit and mobilize. It must be helped to assert itself—as Communism is helped where it is in the ascendant. Sometimes a Catholic community stands on the side-lines and watches the Legion carry on its warfare, as if the latter was something apart from itself; and its neutrality can even shade unpleasantly.

At the moment in many places Communism is in that ascendancy, and it menaces the whole world. Where it does not hold power, it looks like seizing it. It imposes its absolute will. It strikes at the ardent few who do not yield, and it fills the remainder with terror so that no one will resist—or at least none but he possessed of the martyr spirit. The Legionary has given some proof that he is in that classification. But there is the Achilles heel of Communism: those who resist. But it must be a resistance unto death, so that the dying hero inspires others who crowd into the breach—and then others in ever-increasing numbers. The struggle of the early Church must be re-enacted. Then Pagan Rome thought itself to be victorious. Like Chinese Communism it could persecute, and it drove Christianity out of sight. But Christianity did not surrender and was destined to convert the empire.

In China, the Legion has held out indomitably. It has succeeded to the extent that Communism has given up killing, because martyrs must not be made. It is a policy to kill a few, because ordinarily that terrifies and produces the acquiescence of the many. But it is not policy to go on making martyrs, for soon enough the whole people possess the martyr-spirit, and then the tyranny will be deposed.

Fantastic?

Is it fantastic to put the Legion in that setting,—a supreme hope of the Church, an army in battle-array against the hostile forces of the world? Perhaps it looks fantastic. But remember: thirty years ago it would have been absurd to

forecast the growth and the accomplishment which have actually been realized. There has to be a proportion between the past and the future. Unless there is the startling phenomenon of suddenly suspended animation, there has to be more growth, far bigger enterprises, immensely greater achievement. The building which has been done thus far is but a foundation; a Providential preparation for something infinitely greater.

In the unfolding of the Legion—from the beginning, when it took nine months to produce the second branch, to the present day when one is not audacious in measuring up that opposing battle-array which encircles the world—we seem to be witnessing a display of Mary's motherhood. She is, according to the Popes, the Mother of all men. She reaches out yearningly to them through an agency attuned to her, and she operates her maternal miracles. She works in those united to her, and then through them. The Legion is exhibiting this process. Its membership is not of the select order. It is just common, human material, typical and weak. Yet before our eyes in that material the very characteristics of Mary herself declare themselves, including her strength, her love of souls, her instinct of conquest. So notable is this and the actuality of conquest achieved, that it constitutes an obvious spiritual manifestation. But it is one that is at the disposal of the whole world by virtue of the fact already stressed, namely that the Legionaries are typical, human material. Therefore, the material for its ranks is abundant and lies everywhere. What has been done in one place can be done in all, provided the will to mobilize that force exists.

Reaching Out to every Soul

This is part of an address given by Mr. Frank Duff in New York, during his visit to the U.S.A. on the occasion of his reception of the Annual Marianist Award, 1956 from the University of Dayton, Ohio.

In the Handbook, there are a few phrases which I would venture to commend to your close attention.

One phrase is a quotation from a great writer, and it is something to this effect: "Everyone, if he would survive, must pour himself into another soul." Another phrase, also a quotation, is: "We will be called upon to give an account of every soul in the whole world." A statement like that could easily be taken by us as representing a sort of poetic exaggeration. How could we be held accountable for souls that we know nothing about and will never touch? Another phrase is a heading to one of the sections of the Handbook, and perhaps it is the most important of all. It is the little heading: "Seek out and talk to every soul." Seek out and talk to every soul! Why? Chiefly because Our Lord's command to the Church is to reach out to every creature and as units of the Church we must play our part in realising His command.

I suggest that no Catholic should be accounted safe unless you have some evidence that real faith reigns in his heart, and you should not take things for granted. You should not assume the existence of an efficient working faith until you have reason to believe that it is there.

But how are you to find out what is in their hearts? This transports me back to my initial quotations. We must get in touch with every person. We must talk to people about themselves. We must induce them to discuss religion, and this applies to those outside the Church as well as to those inside, and of course the plight of those outside is much more grievous than the plight of those inside.

That programme means personal contact, the contact of one soul with another. That is why I stressed that little heading: "Seek out and talk to every soul." Talking is the main idea, and it is the thing which we dodge most. We will do everything except go and talk to people about religion. I honestly believe that mass contact—contact with people in bulk— is only useful if the primary contact, the personal contact, is there as well. In relation to that personal contact, the mass contact (such as realized through the press, the radio, etc.), is secondary.

The spirit of Faith and union with Mary.

Suppose we set ourselves to such a project; that we resolve to go out to reach people and to try to give them a little of our own conviction, there are certain requirements which we must fulfil if we want to be used by God with effectiveness. Obviously we must have FAITH. That is the basic Christian requirement. Faith itself must not be a vague thing. It is easy to say: I believe in God and the catholic Church, while hardly knowing what the Catholic Church stands for. We must have a modest understanding of Christian Doctrine, and we must, as part of that, have Our Lady. When I say "have her" I mean "properly understand her." We must understand her not merely in her role of

obtaining favours, because that is the least part of her function. We must understand her as Mother of Divine Grace, as Mother of our Souls, as Mediatrix of all Graces. In other words, Catholics who want to accomplish anything should understand Our Lady in the manner that all of you do. Your action is spurred by that idea of Our Lady and rendered confident and strong by it, not merely in the psychological sense but in the fact that fullness of appreciation of her has opened you fully to her maternal influence. She is able to establish a union with you, and that union is a comprehensive union. It is not merely that she bestows graces upon you, but that she acts through you. In other words, she is your Mother and she pours life into you—the life which is her Son. Then she does not merely fill you, but she reaches out through you. Through those who offer themselves to her she exercises her maternal function towards all men.

That is important when we begin to think in terms of that programme which contemplates the whole world, which aspires to get in touch with every member of the human race and to pour the great treasure of faith into that person's heart. You won't do it—you can't even attempt to do it—you won't even think of it—unless you are in union with Our Lady.

In the second place that Faith of yours must contain the notion of the Mystical Body. The Mystical Body is rudimentary in every sense of the word. It was taught to the primitive Christians as basic. Read the Epistles of St. Paul, and you see the extent to which that doctrine was fundamental. The analogous image used by Our Lord Himself was that of the Mystical Vine, which was the same idea again; the branches and the trunk, the members and the head—all one, living it is true out of the virtue of the trunk in one case, the head in the other case, but truly united to the source of life, and meant to be the carriers of that life.

Christ Acts Through His Body.

In plain language the Church may be said to be Christ and to carry on the life of Christ. He is in the Church as life inhabits the body, not as people live in a house. The members of the Church are His members, really part of Him, His means of expression, His instruments.

The Mystical Body began when the Second Divine Person came among us. To live our life He took flesh in the Virgin's womb and was born as a baby; and the body that He took on was God's instrument. The Second Divine Person carried out His mission through it, and although that Person Jesus Christ, was God, He conformed to the limitations of that body.

He ate and He slept. He conveyed His thoughts by speaking, and if He was addressing a crowd of people He would have to raise His voice. As a Babe He was carried and He was put to bed. His life was saved by His Beloved Mother and St. Joseph. In His babyhood, He did not talk because it would not be natural for a baby to talk. He was hungry and He was tired. He was grieved and He wept. He went to people; He consoled them; He taught them; He touched them and He healed them. And such was his humanity that in the end people were able to kill and bury Him.

His Life on earth was not something existing for that time alone. It was intended to be followed by a new and bigger life, a more influential life, in a new body. He saved men and added them on to His own body like additional cells on a growing body. A newborn child weighs about seven or eight pounds, but it grows up into an adult of about twenty times or more that weight. In some similar way Our Lord added to His original body all these new cells, the baptized, ourselves. And that new body, which is the Mystical Body, lives like the original one, almost as if Our Lord had continued growing after His death. As a very distinguished Nuncio recently declared to us, we are His mouth, His eyes, His ears, His hands, His feet; and He has no other. We are His means of action. If we give ourselves to Him, He can carry on His mission in our days. That new career of His is more important than His original life on earth (that is, if one could say that anything in the Life of Our Lord is more important than anything else in it!), inasmuch as it was the last for which the first was made. That first living of His on earth was intended for the second living. That first existence of His was confined to His own country. The frontiers of Judea bounded it and we do not hear of His speaking any other language but His native Aramaic. Then came the Resurrection and Pentecost, and the frontiers of Judea were obliterated. Christ in His Mystical Body put His feet upon the pathways of the earth and went out to carry on what He had been doing before, this time speaking in all tongues, going to all people, but carrying on His mission much as he did in His earthly career.

Christ Acts Through Us.

If the Mystical Body lends itself to Him to a reasonable extent (and it can withhold that co-operation just as it can give it), Our Lord is enabled to do the same things that He did of old. He can go about seeking people, helping them in every way and above all teaching them the rules of eternal life. Through us He can act in the fullness of His power. There is no limit in regard to what may happen.

Especially must that Mystical Body, which is the carrier of Christ and His means of expressing Himself, go to those who are outside the Church with the aim of adding them on to it. That approach is, unfortunately not being made. It is an awful idea that we can prevent the Lord from doing all those things that He wants to do to mankind. It is just as if His actual body was sick or injured; He would have been held back. By reason of the general inactivity of Catholics, the position has come that the vast majority of the world's population is not even being approached. Absolutely no approach is being made to Mohammedanism, although in Africa it is growing twice as fast as the Church. The Jews are not being approached. You may say that Protestantism, which nominally possesses three hundred millions, is not being approached. The Buddhists, the Hindus, are hardly being approached and the ordinary pagans are only being approached in a very partial fashion. Whole great populations, the former Catholic nations that have fallen away into unbelief, are not being approached. Legionaries setting about their visitation in those great irreligious areas, report that they have not discovered a home which within the memory of man had been visited on a religious errand. That means that Our Lord is practically debarred from those places by that law of His which we have been considering. I suppose that if we were driven to arithmetic, we would have to say that fifteen hundred million people in the world today are not being approached by Catholics.

Christ Needs Our Action.

To the extent of our poor power, we must try to reverse this position. We must realize our responsibility in the light of the doctrine of the Mystical Body which means that the Lord depends on us. We must be active. We must lend ourselves to the Lord and His Mother in faith and in conscious practice of that doctrine. We must act with the deliberate intention of giving Him to people. We must open our mouths and talk in the belief that He will in His own fashion utilize those poor words of ours as the bearers of His message of salvation. We must help preach the Gospel to every creature, reaching out to every soul.

Legion Terms

THE CONCILIUM is the central governing body of the Legion. it meets at Dublin, Ireland, at 3 p.m. on the third Sunday of each month.

THE SENATUS is the governing body of the Legion for a country or a region.

THE CURIA is the governing body of a district. Where there are several Curiae in a diocese and where one of them is given superintending powers over the others, that one is called a COMITIUM.

THE PRAESIDIUM is the basic unit of organization of the Legion. Its membership might go as high as thirty; but the average would be considerably lower. Each Praesidium has a Spiritual Director, a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Praesidium meets weekly, its procedure being: Prayer to the Holy Ghost and the Rosary; spiritual reading; minutes of previous meeting; report of each member on his work; Catena; Allocutio; treasurer's statement; assignment of work and other business; final prayers, followed by the priest's blessing.

CATENA designates the prayers which are said at the midway point of every Legion meeting, and which form as well a daily duty of each Legionary, active or auxiliary.

THE ALLOCUTIO is the five-minute talk given after the Catena by the Spiritual Director, or in his absence by the President.

TESSERA is the prayer-card of the Legion, the first page of which contains the distinctive Legion picture.

VEXILLUM is the Legion standard which forms part of the little Legion altar at meetings. About one foot high, it is made of metal set in an onyx base.

ACIES is the main annual function of the Legion, held near to the Feast of the Annunciation. The central part of the ceremonial is the procession to a large model of the Vexillum and the repetition there by each Legionary of a formula of consecration to Our Lady.

PRAETORIAN is the member who assumes certain additional devotional duties, namely: daily Mass and Holy Communion, and the daily recitation of all the Legion prayers and some form of Office approved by the Church.

THE AUXILIARY is one who is unable or unwilling to assume the duties of active membership but who engages to recite daily for the intentions of Our Blessed Lady all the prayers of the Tessera.

ADJUTORIAN is the special name given to priests and religious who become Legion Auxiliaries.

The Term "Catholic Action"

Extract from discourse by His Holiness Pope Pius XII to the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, October 5, 1957.

"It seems necessary here to trace, at least in its broad lines, a suggestion which has been communicated to us very recently. It was pointed out that there prevails at the present time a regrettable uneasiness, rather widely spread, which would find its origin in the use of the term "Catholic Action."

"This expression, in fact, is taken by some to be reserved to certain types of organized lay apostolate to which it gives, in the opinion of the public, a sort of monopoly: all the organizations that do not enter into the framework of Catholic Action thus conceived, it is said, seem to have a less authentic character a secondary importance, to be supported in a lesser degree by the Hierarchy and apparently remain on the fringe of the essential apostolic effort of the laity. It would then appear that a particular form of lay apostolate, namely, Catholic Action, triumphs to the detriment of others and that we are witnessing the seizure of the whole by part. Moreover it would seem that the stage would be practically reached when apostolic movements not bearing the label of "Catholic Action" would be condemned and barred from the diocese.

"In order to solve this difficulty two practical reforms are being considered: one a reform of terminology, and the other, its corollary, a reform of structure. First of all it would be necessary to restore to the term "Catholic Action" its generic sense and to apply it only to the whole or organized movements of the lay apostolate recognized as such, nationally or internationally, either by the bishops on the national plane or by the Holy See for movements aiming at having an international status. It would then be sufficient that each movement would be designated by its name and be characterized by its specific form, and not according to the common term. "The structural reform would follow the reform of terminology. All groups would belong to Catholic Action and would preserve their own name and their own autonomy, but they would form together, as Catholic Action, a federal unit. Every Bishop would remain free to accept or reject a movement to entrust it or not entrust it with a mandate, but it would not rest with him to refuse is as not belonging to Catholic Action by its own nature."

The Legion in Australia in 1957

(Statistics and Addresses)

STATE OF VICTORIA AND DIOCESE OF WAGGA. 156 Senior Praesidia, 30 Junior Praesidia.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

160 Senior Praesidia, 72 Junior Praesidia.

QUEENSLAND

70 Senior Praesidia and 53 Junior Praesidia.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

40 Senior Praesidia and 28 Junior Praesidia.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

56 Senior Praesidia and 25 Junior Praesidia.

TASMANIA

11 Senior Praesidia and 3 Junior Praesidia.

NEW GUINEA AND THE SOLOMONS. 180 Senior Praesidia.

NEW CALEDONIA

9 Senior Praesidia and 3 Junior Praesidia.

GILBERT ISLANDS

20 Senior Praesidia.

P.S. Senior Praesidia are those whose members are over 18 years of age; junior praesidia are those whose members are under 18 years.

Prayer that the example of Edel Quinn may become known throughout the Church

Jesus, Model and Source of all holiness, who didst infuse into the soul of Thy servant, Edel Quinn, the spirit of mortification and love of Thy Cross, forgetfulness of self and total abandonment into Thy adorable hands, and didst inflame her heart with a burning zeal for the salvation of souls; grant, if it be Thy will; that the example of her virtues may become known throughout Thy Church for the instruction of all who acknowledge Thee as their true Master and only Saviour and for the encouragement of all those who, in the Legion of Mary, serve the apostolate under the glorious standard of Mary Immaculate.

Imprimatur
✠ D. Mannix
Archiepiscopus Melbournensis
