



52 TALKS



For LECTIONARIES

Imprimatur:

Bishop Felix A. Job

FOREWORD

The Legion of Mary is above all else a spiritual society whose programme is directed in the first place towards the spiritual development of its own members. The principle behind this outlook is that no one can effectively bring the gospel to others unless he himself is earnestly seeking to live ever more and more according to it.

This spiritual development in the individual Legionary is promoted in four ways, namely, by the Legion prayers at the weekly praesidium meeting, by the regular spiritual reading, by the Allocutio or spiritual talk usually given by the Spiritual Director and by the active apostolic work itself.

The Allocutio is the foremost teaching instrument of the Legion since it is here that the doctrinal and devotional basis for the Legion apostolate is given and enthusiasm for that apostolate fostered in the members.

While the giving of the Allocutios is normally the prerogative and duty of the priest spiritual Director, this function frequently falls on the praesidium president when no Spiritual Director is available. In present day circumstances, many praesidia are unable to have a permanent Spiritual Director.

This book of 52 Allocutios has been prepared to help Legion Presidents and others on whom the duty of giving the weekly allocutios may fall. It has been written by a variety of authors all of whom are closely associated with the Legion and it seeks to give a comprehensive review of the doctrinal and devotional basis of the Legion system.

How to use the book: - A Legion President may simply read a chapter as the Allocutio or, having read through the chapter before hand, he may then give the substance of it or a part of it in his own words.

If this is done systematically week after week for the complete 52 weeks, then the Legionaries will have learned very much indeed about the Legion. It will be noticed that each Allocutio is based on a particular section of the Handbook, to which reference is given. If it is arranged that such sections be taken as the spiritual reading then the value of these allocutios will be much enhanced.

The need for a book of this kind has long been felt and much thanks, therefore, must go to Rev. Father F. Daly who organised and edited the writing of the various Allocutios and saw the book through the press. The legion is greatly indebted to him for this valuable work.

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1 HISTORY OF THE LEGION

SPIRITUAL READING- Handbook Chapter 1 - Name and Origin

The history of the Legion of Mary is a very simple one, but one which shows what great things can be done for God by ordinary people.

At 8 p.m. on the 7th September, 1921, seventeen people gathered together in Dublin, the capital of Ireland. They were fifteen women, one lay man and one Priest. They had come together to do some work for the poor. They set up a small altar with a statue of Mary, candles and flowers, and knelt down to pray around it. They asked Mary to help them with what they were going to do.

It was the day before the feast day of the Birthday of Mary, and they decided to work under her leadership. Their first work would be to visit the local hospital-two going to each ward. The next week, they would all come back again to report what they had done.

This was how the Legion started. At first they called themselves the Association of Our Lady of Mercy, and just visited the poor People in Hospital. Then they visited prostitutes and opened a hostel for them where they could live while they were trying to get back to leading a good life. Out of the first 31 girls they contacted, 23 came back to the Church.

Four more groups started and they opened a house for beggars and for people with no homes, where they could go to sleep at night. It was called after Mary-the Morning Star. In 1930, they opened another one for women - and again called it after Mary Regina Coeli (Queen of Heaven).

In 1928 - the Legion of Mary-as it was now called started outside Ireland-in Glasgow in Scotland. In 1929 it spread to England. In 1930, an American Priest going to Dublin heard about the Legion, and when he went back home, he started it in America. In 1931, a Legionary from London went to Madras in India and started the Legion there. In 1932, two visitors to Dublin from Austria heard about the Legion and when they went back home, the Legion was started in Austria.

In 1933. The first Presidium in Africa was formed in the Transvaal. Shortly afterwards, Bishop Moynagh formed the first Presidium in Nigeria-it was in Calabar. The members were all men most of whom were illiterate. In a short while they had made four conversions, brought back 30 lapsed Catholics and got 11 marriages blessed in the Church.

At the present time, the Legion is to be found all over the world and about four new Presidia are being formed each week. Everyday throughout the world the Legion is growing and achieving more and more for Christ. In the Legion there are all kinds of people-farmers and fishermen teachers and traders, labourers and Lawyers; professors and prisoners; soldiers and Semitarians and they do all kinds of work. They work among Catholics and non-Catholics among pagans and atheists, in Schools and Hospitals. They work for the young and the old, the rich and the poor the good and the bad. They reform prostitutes they win back sinners, they convert unbelievers. But whatever they are doing, their aim is to work under Mary's guidance in order to make her Son Jesus known and loved.

Let us work and pray to make the Legion of Mary stronger in our Parish so that we may be worthy to belong to such a great organisation. Tell other people about the Legion try to bring along new numbers, and above all-encourage each other to give our very Best to Mary's Legion.

2 THE HANDBOOK

SPIRITUAL READING-

Handbook Chapter XXVIII - NO. II

Some people adore the Handbook as if it dropped directly from heaven, and were free from error than the Bible itself. Others criticise it, saying that it is old fashioned and out of date. The true position may be somewhere in between these two extreme views. I don't think I would be disloyal to the Legion if I said some part of the Handbook are difficult, some of the ideas are obscure and some of the English is poor. But that does not mean that I agree with those who condemn the Handbook entirely. Far from it. It may have,

Some faults but I believe it is still a wonderful book and if you don't agree it may be because you have not read it often enough-or may be you have not read it at all-not even once! Yes, it is sad that many Legionaries have never read the Handbook sadly still, many Legionaries just have not got a Handbook. What about you? Sorry you have none! The reason? It is too dear? Well 70k is a good deal of money but what will you get these days for it. When you look at it that way you will realise that the Handbook is the best value in the world. So even if you have to beg or borrow the money if you are a true Legionary, you will buy a Handbook.

So, point number one, you have a Handbook - or you are going to get one very soon. Point numbers two - you must read it. But how? From cover to cover? Fine! But you don't have to do it that way. You may get discouraged when you come across difficult passages. But before you start at all, you should get familiar with the contents. By looking at the contents you will see all the wonderful material in the Handbook. Passages telling you how the Legion began. How it is organised and how it works. You will see that the Handbook also contains passages on the Trinity, the Eucharist, the Mystical Body, Devotion to Mary, etc. But don't spend too long looking at the contents. Decide which section you would like to read open the book and go ahead. You will find it interesting, and much easier than you expected. But even if you find a difficult passage don't get discouraged. Every road has some hills, but none of the hills in the Handbook are too difficult, and as you read on you will find it easier. But even if it were much more difficult, it would be worth the effort because, the truth is, you cannot call yourself a true Legionary if you have not tried to understand the Legion system. And you can only find that in the Handbook. By reading the Handbook you will learn all the Legion Rules and Regulations, - but more important than rules is the Legion spirit, and as the Handbook so clearly points out, the Legion spirit is one of loyalty to our fellow Legionaries, love for all men, and an absolute trust in Mary O Mother. All this and more you will find in the Handbook.

So you have a Handbook, or will have one before the Meeting-and take it with you to the meeting. Also before the next meeting read some of the Handbook-better still start today and read a little everyday-even one page. It will only take you about

three minutes to read one page of the Handbook. Is three minutes a day too much? No, not for the Legion-not for Our Lady.

A page a day.
Keeps you in battle array!

3. WHY I JOINED THE LEGION

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter IX-Section 4

In the very early days of the Legion, a legionary brought a friend with her to a Presidium meeting. This new comer knew nothing about the Legion but she sat attentively through the meeting, and after the concluding prayers, she decided to become a Legionary. She is now known to us as Edel Quinn, who is placed before us as a model Legionary and we pray that she will soon be enrolled in the ranks of the Saints as the first Legionary Saint.

What was it that she saw in the Legion that attracted her? What made her decide to direct all her energy and later her life to its promotion?

She has not given us the answers but we can guess what her reasons were. Before joining the "Legion, Edel Quinn did a lot of active work on her own. She visited the sick. She encouraged sinners to go to confession. She consoled people who were in trouble. But she felt that in doing this work-she was completely on her own. But when she was present at her first Presidium meeting, she saw that the Legion was doing the very same work that she had been doing, but I was doing it in an organized way. She realized that by joining the legion, she could do her work more effectively because she would enjoy the companionship and encouragement of the other Legionaries.

Now let each one of us ask ourselves, why did I join the Legion? Some of you may have had reasons similar to Edel Quinn. Of course, you would not be as foolish as to think that you had the holiness or the zeal that she had. But may be in your own small way you were doing some Apostolic work on your own before you joined the Legion. Then some one asked you to a Legion meeting. You came along not knowing what to expect but, like Edel Quinn,

you were glad to see a number of people doing Apostolic work together, under Our Lady's patronage. You were happy to join this little Army of Our Lady because you knew that with them you could do your apostolic work more effectively.

But some of you may have joined for less noble reasons. Rather you may have had no definite reasons at all for joining. You just came to a Presidium meeting because someone asked you. Perhaps at that first meeting, you did not understand everything. May be you were not very impressed by the first meeting you attended. But you decided to come back just because your friend encouraged you. Many weeks, or even months, may have passed before you finally decided to become a Legionary.

But really the important question is not why I joined the Legion, but why I remained in it and why I am a Legionary now. And today, I hope every one of us can say, I am in the Legion because it enables me to take part in the Apostolate in the most effective way possible. I am in the Legion because I know that under our Lady's guidance, and with the support of my fellow Legionaries, I can do "great things for God and for the Salvation of Souls". These words are from the concluding prayer of the Legion. That is a prayer we should meditate on often because it sums up everything the Legion stands for. In it we pray especially for faith in God and trust in Mary. May God grant us these two great virtues because if we have them, we can conquer the world.

4. CHRIST IN US

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter XXXVIII-Section 12

"The whole purpose of the Legion consists in the making of its members holy so that they in turn may bring holiness to the other members of the Mystical Body", so says the Handbook, but most of us are afraid of holiness. We think it is too difficult for us, but it might be easier if we looked at it this way.

When you were baptized Christ came into your soul. He is still with you. He is living in you at this moment. If you remember this, it will have a great effect on your life. It will effect the way you

pray. It will affect the way you behave towards yourself and towards others. It will affect your daily work - and especially your legionary work. In a word, if you remember that Christ is living in you, your whole life will be different.

First of all, it will affect your prayer. Christ is not just someone who lived far away and long ago. He is still alive and he is living in you. So your prayers don't have to be loud and long like the Pharisees. Christ is within you. He will hear you if you only whisper. Indeed you don't even have to whisper. Just to think about Christ is a prayer. So think about him often. Every hour of the day spare a thought for Christ. If you do, you will find that your fears and your worries will disappear. Some people are always afraid of something. They are afraid of evil spirits, or they are afraid that their enemies may use medicine or charms against them. You should have no such fears. You remember when Christ appeared to the Apostles. His first words were, 'It is I, Do not be afraid'. He is saying the same thing to you now. Christ is within you and he is more powerful than any enemy, so you have no reason to fear. If you are in difficulty turn to him. You will find that his yoke is easy and his burden light.

Secondly since Christ is living in you, you will realise that your body is holy and because of this you will never commit an impure action - or commit any kind of sin with your body which would force Christ to leave you. For the same reason you would not commit a sin with another person because Christ is present in other people too. Your words your actions, your whole life will be such that you will never tempt your neighbour to sin or to reject Christ who is living in them.

Thirdly, because Christ is living in you your attitude to your daily work will be different. Christ came to do his Father's will. He never wasted time. He is now living in you and He wants to work through you. If you are lazy and fail to do your work, then you are preventing Christ from doing the work he wants to do. Whether you work in a school or in an office, in a farm or in a factory, the work you do is important because it is not just your work. It is God's work as well. By doing your work well you are allowing Christ, who is within you to continue the work of creation.

All your work is important but obviously your legion work is God's work in a very special way. Christ once walked the roads of

Palestine in order to get to people. He now depends on you to take him to them, and he now depends on your tongue to speak his words. That is why your visitation is so important. When on visitation, sometimes you will be talking to people who do not yet know Christ. Your aim will be to lead them to the waters of Baptism so that Christ may come to live in them too. At other times you will be talking to people who have Christ living in them but who are unaware of it. Your aim will be to make them realise the great treasure that is theirs. But all the time you will remember it is not you who are doing the work. It is Christ who is working through you.

Finally, since you are legionaries, spare a thought for our Lady. For nine months she carried Him in her womb. He is present in you just as surely as He was present in her - though in a different way.

Like her, every one of us can say: 'My soul magnifies the Lord. Because he who is mighty has done great things to me'.

5

LEADING GOOD LIVES

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter VI-Section 7

All human beings have been called to the Christian life. The Christian vocation means that we are called to witness Christ. You, as Legionaries, have been especially called to bring Christ to others.

When Christ ascended into heaven He left to His Apostles the task of evangelizing the world. This same task rests on the shoulders of every member of the Mystical Body.

Christ could, without our assistance have, converted the world, but He preferred to give us the opportunity and the privilege of cooperating with Him in this great work, so those of us who are Legionaries should regard it a great privilege to bring others into God's Kingdom.

To bring others to the knowledge and love of God we preach the Gospel and the good news of our salvation. Anyone who studies the Bible or hears the word of God preached will soon realize what a loving God He is and will want to love Him in return.

But we must always bear in mind that actions speak louder than words. All our preaching and teaching will have very little profit if

we are not living witnesses of what we preach. We must put on the mind of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We must think as He thought; we must act as He acted. To know how Christ acted we must study the Gospels and then try to portray Him in our own lives. In us Christ wants to relive His human life on earth. He wants to manifest Himself to others through us. Through Baptism we were incorporated into Christ. This means that we share His life and love, so we should love others with His love. Many will never meet Christ if they do not meet Him through us. Christ walked the length and breadth of Palestine helping the poor, the sick and the sinners. We too must be ever ready to help the poor. The sick and the sinners. We must be other Christ to those with whom we come in contact. We must be living examples of all the virtues to our brothers in our community. We must be at their service just as Christ was at the service of all those whom He met. We must strive to develop in ourselves the virtues of truth, justice and purity, which are so often absent from life around us.

To acquire this loving personality of Christ we must have frequent meeting with Him in the Blessed Eucharist, the Sacrament of Penance and Holy Mass. Everyone worthy of the name of Legionary should attend Mass and receive Holy Communion every Sunday and if at all possible every day. He should also be faithful to daily prayer, especially to the prayers of the Legion. Our challenge to be other Christ is a tremendous one, but not an impossibility. With Saint Paul we can say, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me."

6 THE LEGION PROMISE

SPIRITUAL READING *Handbook Chapter XI-The Legion Promise*

The Legion promise is a simple, but touching ceremony, which is made by a legionary after three months of satisfactory probation.

The probation period is to the Legion what the novitiate is to the Religious Congregation. It is a time of invitation of trial and of training. At the end of it, the ceremony of the Legion Promise

takes place. Its counterpart in the religious life is the solemn religious profession at the end of the novitiate. But there is a great difference between a solemn profession and the Legion Promise. In solemn profession a Religious (e.g. a Rev. Sister) takes on three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The Legion promise does not include such obligations. The Solemn Profession and the Legion Promise are different in many ways, but they have one thing in common, and that is the dedication of oneself to a great cause. And the cause is the glory of God, personal holiness and the salvation of souls.

Most of you have made your promise already, but that does not mean that it is over and done with. You must constantly renew it. It would be good if you remembered the date you first made your promise and renewed it on that date every year. Or it might be more convenient for you to renew your promise privately whenever new legionaries are making their promise in your presidium. As well as that you should read the promise frequently and meditate on it. Every time you read it, it will become more meaningful to you. If you read it carefully, there are four points you should notice: (1) It is addressed to the Holy Spirit. (2) It emphasises humility (3) it encourages union with Mary. (4) It demands strict observance of legion discipline.

Let us consider these points, more closely. Firstly, the promise is addressed to the Holy Spirit. This comes as a surprise to some who think that it should be addressed to Our Lady. But our salvation began at the announcement when the Holy Spirit came to Our Lady, so we begin our promise by asking Him to come to us.

The second point we note is the emphasis on humility. In the promise we admit that we are completely unworthy to take part in legion apostolate. This is only putting into practice the words of scripture: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5). But if we humble our selves, we know that the Holy Spirit will come to us and sustain us by his power and make us instruments of His mighty purposes.

Thirdly, the promise states that the secret of perfect legionary service is complete union with Mary. This union must be so real

that I can say "she is the mother of my soul. Her heart and mine are one."

The final paragraph of the promise demands the faithful observance of all the legion rules and regulations so that we will all work together as disciplined army.

Today let us examine ourselves briefly on these points to see if we have been faithful to our promise. Do we allow the Holy Spirit to use us for his mighty work of saving the world, or do we prevent him by our laziness and cowardice? Have we the humility that makes us realise that of ourselves we can do nothing, or are we so full of pride that we attribute any success we have to our own goodness? Am I trying to live in union with Mary? Do I place myself completely in her hands or do I only turn to her when I want her to grant me some special favour for myself? Finally, do I faithfully observe all the details of the legion discipline, or have I got careless about many things? (e.g.) Have I got careless about punctually attending the weekly meeting? Am I forgetful of my legion prayers? Do I do my work only in a half-hearted and grudging manner, looking for every possible opportunity to be excused from it?

We can not examine ourselves too often on these points because when we made the legion promise we were full of zeal and generosity. We offered ourselves completely to the Holy Spirit through the hands of our Lady. It would be a pity if we broke the promise which we so generously made on that great day.

7

MARY'S FAITH

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter V, Section 6

Our Handbook tells us that Mary's faith surpassed that of men and of angels. When Gabriel brought her the wonderful news that she was to be the mother of God, she made an act of great faith and humility when she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word". From that moment, which is the first introduction we have to Mary in the New Testament, there was never any evidence of the slightest lack of faith.

When Mary delivered her baby on Christmas night in a cold, Comfortless cave in Bethlehem, she knelt and adored Him. She adored Him because, in spite of the circumstances in which He came into the world as a very ordinary child, she knew in her heart that He was her God. Not long after, when St. Joseph told her that they must run away to Egypt in order to save their child from Herod's hatred, she did not stop to argue and say: "What! This child is God and who dares to harm Him?" No, even though she did not understand why this should happen, she knew it was God's will, so she went immediately.

The years spent in Nazareth were, to all appearances, very ordinary, but Mary, while doing her simple daily work pondered the words of scripture and while taking care of the child Jesus like any other good mother, she quietly continued to adore Him.

At the beginning of the Public Ministry, she was the one who, by her complete faith inspired Him to work his first miracle at the wedding in Cana. She used this opportunity to encourage others to believe in Him also, telling them: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2 verses 5).

When His days of popularity and glory came to an end and He was made to trek along, bearing a heavy wooden cross on His bare shoulders, condemned as any ordinary criminal, all His friends were ashamed and shrunk away. Not so Mary, who walked every step of that road, pitying and loving Him as her son while at the same time strong in her belief - that this was happening to him only because he was God. What gratitude there must have been in His eyes when He looked at her in the brief moment of their meeting, before He was pushed roughly forward again. We all like so much to know that there is someone who really believes in us especially when things are not going well, and Jesus who became like us was no difference in his hour of trial. She stood faithfully at the cross and heard every word He spoke. Jesus did not forget or ignore her fidelity, and asked St. John the beloved disciple, to take care of her after He had gone.

After the ascension, when the Apostles were gathered together in fear and trembling, once again Mary's faith came of the rescue and she gave them courage. We Legionaries would do well to study her lovingly and beg her to be with us always especially when our courage and faith threaten to fail us.

SPIRITUAL READING
Handbook Chapter IV - Section 5

To live in this world we have to be strong. Sooner or later something will hit us—pain, sickness, accident or failure—and when it comes it will rock us, unless we have developed a strong spirit of faith. The whole man stands or falls by his faith. St. John tells us that he who does not believe is condemned already: We Legionaries when on visitation, are bound to meet with sour looks, the sting of insult and rebuff, ridicule and criticism, weariness of body, and spirit pangs from failure and base ingratitude etc., etc.—as we read in ch. 4 of our Handbook. It is in times like these that we must prove ourselves men of faith and perseverance.

God is very pleased when He sees that we have faith in Him and in all He has taught through His Church right from the days of the Apostles Christ, when on earth never failed to reward faith the simple faith of the sick and troubled in mind and body. St. Mark tells us the lovely story of the woman who suffered from hemorrhage for twelve years. She had spent all her money on doctor's fees and medicines without avail. One day she heard about Jesus and the first opportunity she got, she crept close to Him in the crowd and touched His cloak, saying: "If only I can touch the hem of His cloak, I shall be healed". Immediately she was cured. Jesus surprised the crowd by asking who had touched Him. She had done it so quietly nobody noticed. The woman was embarrassed and coming forward cast herself at Jesus' feet telling her story. Great was her joy when, Jesus said: "My daughter your faith has restored you to health, go in peace and be free from your complaint". (Mark 5)

To be men of faith then, it is not necessary to be very intellectual, because the way of faith is not one of reasoning. God, our Father has hidden many things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Faith is one of the greatest free gifts we have received as Christians, and as Legionaries it is the first virtue we must bring to those who have not yet seen the light. If we are to bring it to others, we must have it in abundance in our own lives. Often and often we

must ask for an ever-increasing faith saying: "I believe Lord, help my unbelief". Then when we come across people who have no faith or a wavering type of faith we will gently urge them to turn to the same Lord whom St. Peter turned to saying: "Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life". (John 5)

Let us then today, and everyday, put meaning into these Words: Confiteor, O Lord. On us who serve beneath the standard of Mary, that fullness of faith in thee and trust in her, to which it is given to conquer the world."

9 HOPE

SPIRITUAL READING.

Handbook Chapter XXXIII No 12

The three great virtues are faith, hope and charity. We often talk about Faith and Charity but we are inclined to forget Hope. But clearly Hope is very closely connected to Faith and Charity, because if we believe that God loves us and that He wants us to be happy with Him forever, then obviously we should hope that one day we should gain this happiness with God. Hope then enables us to look beyond the trials and sufferings of this life to the future life of glory.

But hope is not only directed to the future. It also refers to the present, and in this sense, hope is often explained by the words "trust" or "confidence". So hope really means that we have confidence in God at all times. This confidence is based on the belief that God loves us, and because He loves us, we know that he will never do anything harmful to us. When things go wrong, when He may appear to have forgotten us, we must still have confidence in Him, knowing that he is never far away. When He seems to hide Himself, he is only testing our faith and confidence in Him. At such times we must not panic as the Apostles did when Christ was asleep in the boat.

Hope is very important because without it, life has no meaning. People who have lost hope want to die, and some even commit suicide, as Judas did, because they no longer see any reason for living. Judas had betrayed Jesus and he thought his crime was too great to be forgiven. But if he only turned to God and begged for mercy, he

would have been pardoned. If we ever have the misfortune of falling into serious sin, let us not despair, but let us turn to God at once and beg for forgiveness. He is always ready to welcome back a prodigal son.

But as well as keeping hope and confidence in God ourselves, we must inspire others to have confidence in Him too. In doing our legion work we will often meet people who have lost all hope. They may not have confidence either in God or in man. They feel they have failed in life and that nobody is interested in them anymore. They feel alone, without a friend in the world.

Our first duty to such people is to show that we are interested in them. Let us listen to their problems. Very often listening is better than trying to give too much advice. If we listen patiently, we will win their confidence. They will look on us as their friends. We can then gradually explain to them that God is their friend too. That may take a long time but we must have infinite patience with such people. We may have to visit them again and again but it is well worth while. Here, as at all other times, we should ask ourselves what Our Lady would do in such a case. She would have shown great kindness and patience, and would not relax in her efforts until she had got that person to believe that life has a meaning and that this meaning comes only from faith and trust in her son Jesus.

Our Lady is our model in every virtue, she is also a model of hope and trust in God. Many times during her life she had reason to lose hope, for example, when Herod tried to kill her baby son; when Jesus was lost in the temple; when she saw Him dying on the cross. On all these occasions she must have been filled with sorrow, yet never for a moment did she lose confidence in God.

We too will have moments of sadness and disappointment. People will laugh at us, our fellow legionaries may desert us. Nobody may seem to appreciate what we are doing. At such moments we might easily lose confidence, but if we follow the example of our Lady, we will have absolute trust in God. The greater the difficulty the more we should put our trust in God, believing, as scripture says, that to him who loves God all things work together unto good. Other words that we should often repeat are "I place all my trust in you my God, for my hope is in your saving word."

10 THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XL - Section 2

One day, during a discussion on the suffering endured in hell, one man described it as the suffering of being unable to love. There are three great virtues—faith, hope, and charity, and the greatest of these is charity, for it includes the others and it goes on for all eternity for those who enjoy the blessed life of heaven. But unless we love in this life, we will not be able to do so in the next.

Our Handbook devotes chapter 39 to the different aspects of charity, but section 2 sums it all up. "The whole idea and spirit of the Legion is one of intense charity and sympathy which, before spreading its warmth outside, must first of all burn brightly on the domestic hearth of the Legion itself. In other words, charity begins at home, but it doesn't end there. This was St. Paul's prayer for the people to whom he brought the good news: 'May the Lord makes you abound in charity towards one another and towards all men'. At the same time St. Paul warns us against thinking of charity as sentimental love for those for whom we have affection, when he says: 'Bear with one another and forgive one another. If anyone has a complaint against another, even as the Lord has forgiven you, do you also. Rebuke not the aged, lie not to one another, provoke not the young to indignation lest they be discouraged'. St. Peter sums up charity as having a deep respect for the dignity of every human being, whether he is rich or poor or ignorant when he commands us to 'Honour all men'.

We know that each one of us needs the love of our fellow men, our families, our co-workers and the other members of our President. How do we want them to show their love for us? By treating us with respect, being honest and kind in their dealings with us, and by understanding our human failings. If this is what we seek from others, let it be what we render to them. If our charity is to be effective it must be tempered with humility which will make us genuinely regard others as better than ourselves. Everything we have, we have received from God, so we have no reason for pride or vain glory.

Many more things could be said about charity but we can't improve on what has been said by St. Paul:

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not loved, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful, it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away, when I was a child, I spoke like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (I Cor. 13).

II THE PRESENCE OF GOD

SPIRITUAL READING-

Handbook Chapter V-Devotion Outlook

Of the Legion

In the spiritual reading it was pointed out that "the devotional outlook of the Legion is reflected in its prayers". Now the very fact that we pray at all is an Act of Faith in God, a realization that God is over all and must be revered and adored, that we came from God and that therefore He must be thanked for our very life and all that we have and are, that God is the great Judge of all mankind, laying down laws that must be obeyed, yes, in His mercy, quickly forgiving those who sincerely repent of their disobedience to Him; that God, finally, is the loving Father, ever

caring for us His children; to Whom we may turn in every difficulty, knowing that He is ever ready to help us in all our needs.

We may note how, when the disciples asked Our Saviour, "Lord, teach us to pray". He taught them to address God as "Our Father Who art in Heaven". When Our Lord Himself prays we find as the Gospels recount for us, He prays to the Father. In the prayers of the Sacred Liturgy, that is generally, the prayers of the Mass and of the Sacraments, we pray to the Father through Jesus Christ in union with the Holy Spirit. Thus our prayer is directed to the Blessed Trinity, that is to the One True God in Whom there are three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Whenever we make the Sign of the Cross we should recall that we are thereby directing our prayers and actions to the Blessed Trinity. We say: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen". We should always then take care to make the Sign of the Cross deliberately and reverently, and we should not be content merely to make some hurried sign that has no meaning and is indeed nothing but a mockery of the true Christian Sign, the Sign of the Cross.

When the Jews of old were traveling in the desert on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land, God, hidden in a cloud by day and in a flame of fire by night, remained over the Ark of the Covenant so that all the people knew that God was always with them. More intimately, however, than with the Jews of old, God is always with us, in the Church, by our baptism, in the divine life which fills our souls when we are free from mortal sin. That is what Our Lord meant when He said: "The Kingdom of God is within you." Particularly, however, is God's Presence made manifest to us in the Holy Eucharist at Mass, in Holy Communion, in the continued Presence in the Tabernacle. We must remind ourselves frequently throughout the day that God is ever present with us. We can best do so by saying often during the day short prayers of faith, hope, charity, adoration, thanksgiving, and sorrow for sin and petition for what we need.

We should remember, moreover, that as legionaries we have undertaken to bring God's Presence to others. Our object as legionaries is not only to say "Thy kingdom come without lips but to strive to accomplish it also by personal effort. The Handbook tells us that our object is "to advance the reign of Christ." When we re-

call God's presence with us, we must pray that He will assist us to be more and more zealous in this apostolic work which we have undertaken

12 THE CHURCH - THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XX-Vol. I.

I used to visit one of the Hospitals in London regularly. I got to know many of the patients very well, but there is one I specially remember. The poor man had a sore in his arm that was so bad that he had to have his arm amputated. I visited him the day after the operation and I was amazed. When he told me that even though his arm was cut off up near the shoulder, he still imagined that it was there, and he could feel the pain right down his hand to where his fingers used to be. This impressed me very much and it made me remember the words of St. Paul. "The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee."

Your body is made up of many parts, hands, legs, head etc., but it is still one body and all the parts are so united that if you hurt one part you hurt the whole body. St. Paul used this idea to explain the church which he called "The Body of Christ". St. Paul spoke about the Body of Christ more often than any other Apostle and this is not surprising because he learned this lesson on the day of conversion. You know the story well.

Paul was a Jew. He looked on the Christians as heretics. He Set out for Damascus to arrest them but on his way he was knocked down and he heard a voice, "Saul, why do you persecute me?" Paul was frightened and asked: "Who are you Lord?" The reply he heard was: "I am Jesus whom you persecute". Paul was amazed. It just did not make sense. He was on his way to persecute Christians but now he is told, "I am Jesus whom you persecute".

Paul did not understand this but he did not forget it either. In fact he thought about it over and over again, and he came to the conclusion that although Christ has ascended to heaven he was still

present on earth. Christ had taken on a new body, the Church we call this the Mystical Body, to distinguish it from the physical body which Jesus had as he walked the roads of Palestine, and which is now glorified in heaven.

But how can we explain the Mystical Body? It is not so easy but we can try. The most united group of people we can think of is a family. But the Church is a family - God's family. Baptism has made us all children of God. We really are brothers and sisters.

So Legionaries, when you call each other "Brother" and "Sister" you should mean what you say because that is exactly what you are.

But we are more than a family. We are one body. As St. Paul says, we are the Body of Christ. Christ is the head. We are the members. Just as in your own body, your hands and feet are joined to the rest of your body, so we are all united to Christ. This union is so close that Christ could say, "I am Jesus whom you persecute". And again, "because you did it to the least of My brothers you did it to me".

You can see then why Legion work is important. Much of your work as Legionaries is to bring back fallen Catholics to the Church. These Catholics are sick members of the Mystical Body. They are sick with the disease of sin. Their sickness affects us all. It is like the man with the amputated hand. They are cut off but we still feel their pain. Your work as Legionaries is to help them come back to the practice of the faith so that once again they will be healthy members of the Mystical Body.

It is a wonderful privilege to be a member of the Mystical Body and again as Legionaries you have a duty to share this privilege with others - that is why you must work for conversions so that many people may share the blessing of being one with Christ.

13 THE HOLY SPIRIT

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter XXIX Section 2

If we look at the vexillum we see the dove at the top of it. The dove represents things: The Holy Spirit and Peace. The lesson we should draw from this is that the work of the legion is to spread peace, the peace of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As members of the Legion of Mary, we are in a special way dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Mary was always very close to the Holy Spirit. We, her legionaries, must be close to Him too. Above all we must realise that we can do no useful work without His aid.

We can best understand how much we need the Holy Spirit by meditating on how much the Apostles needed Him. Before Pentecost the Apostles lacked understanding and they lacked courage. They did not understand the teaching of Christ and even if they did they would have been afraid to go out and preach it. If the Holy Spirit did not come to them they probably would not have converted even one person. But when the Holy Spirit came, they were completely changed. Now they understood all the things that Christ had to do to them. They went out and preached courageously and the very first day they converted thousands of people. They were no longer afraid. In fact they rejoiced to be found worthy to suffer for Christ.

If the Apostles needed the Holy Spirit we need Him much more. That is why the first prayer at the Legion meeting, is "Come Holy Spirit". In this prayer we ask the Holy Spirit to enkindle in us the fire of His love. Here we are asking Him to put up on fire with the desire to go out and spread the good news as the Apostles did.

Laziness, fear and human respect are the chief obstacles to the work of the apostolate. Some legionaries fail to do the work just because they are lazy. Others are afraid. Occasionally they are afraid that they might be attacked if they go about on visitation, but more often they are simply afraid that other people will laugh at them or mock them. Clearly we need the assistance of the Holy Spirit if we are to overcome these fears. If the Holy Spirit fills us with the fire of His love there will be no room in us for laziness, cowardice or fear.

In the prayer to the Holy Spirit we also ask Him to make us truly wise. Often, when on visitation, we are asked difficult questions. It is at such times we need to be truly wise so that we will know what is the best answer to give. Also in asking the Holy Spirit to make us truly wise, we are asking Him to let us know what is God's will for us at all times. Especially when we have difficult decisions to make. Let us pray: O Holy Spirit constantly so that He may inspire us to do God's will in all things and to seek only God's glory. Too often we work for our own glory, and as you know, such actions have no reward in heaven, because Christ Himself said, "they have already received their reward, we should do our legion work. Indeed all our work, not with a view to get praise and honour for ourselves, but solely to advance Christ's kingdom of justice, love and peace. We can only do this by placing ourselves at the service of Our Lady and the Holy Spirit. It was through Our Lady and the Holy Spirit that Christ took on a human body. It was through Our Lady and the Holy Spirit that Christ took on His Mystical Body, the church. It is through Our Lady and the Holy Spirit that Christ became fully present in your soul, and it is only through Our Lady and the Holy Spirit that you can bring Christ to others.

Most legionaries constantly keep Our Lady in their mind.

Unfortunately many forget the Holy Spirit. It might help if we tried to keep a few lines of the hymn to the Holy Spirit in mind.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator come
from thy bright heavenly throne,
Come, take possession of our souls,
and make them all thy own.

14 OUR LADY'S PLACE IN THE BIBLE

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Appendix 6

I know well that everyone of you has a tender devotion to Mary otherwise you would not be in the Legion at all. But just a simple devotion not enough. The Legionary must try to know as much as possible about Mary, because he is constantly being asked why Catholics honour Our Lady. It may be helpful therefore to state

briefly what the Holy Bible has to say about Mary. It has in fact very many things to say about her.

In the very first book of the Bible (Gen. 3 vs. 15) she is referred to as the woman whose heel will crush the head of the Serpent. About the middle of the Bible (Is. 7 vs. 14) she is referred to as the virgin who will conceive and bring forth a son whose name will be called Immanuel. In the very last book of the Bible (Apoc. 12) she is referred to as the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

These are only indirect reference to her but they are important. The two quotations from the Old Testament show that from the very beginning, Mary had a place in God's plan of sending a Redeemer into the world. And the Gospels show clearly what part she did play in this plan. St. Luke's gospel shows that when the time came for God to send his son as Redeemer it was his will that Mary should FREELY agree to be the mother of the Redeemer. It was difficult for Mary to make this decision. When the Angel came, Mary was surprised and afraid. She questioned the Angel: "How can this be?" It was only when she was told that her son was to be conceived miraculously (i.e. by the power of the Holy Spirit), that she agreed to become the mother of the Saviour. It was then she said: "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to your word". Soon after this, Our Lady went in haste to her cousin Elizabeth who was to become the mother of John the Baptist. That was the occasion when Mary sang her hymn of praise and thanks to God-the Magnificent.

At Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus, and you can imagine her happiness and joy as she showed her baby son to the shepherds who came to adore him. Forty days later Mary presented Jesus in the temple and there she heard Simeon prophesy that her son would be a sign of contradiction and that a sword of sorrow would pierce her own soul also. This gave her a warning that she was to become the mother of sorrows.

As Jesus grew up, He gradually dominated the entire gospel scene. The place given to Mary diminishes but it is interesting to note the times she is present.

She is there as Jesus speaks his first recorded words - (i.e.) in the temple after being lost for three days. And after that He went

down to Nazareth and was subject to Mary and Joseph for eighteen years. She is present at Cana, and it was at her request that He performed his first miracle.

When Jesus was accused of being mad and possessed by the devil, Mary came to see him. We can be sure she followed all the events in his life very closely until at last, she stands by the cross and watches her son slowly bleeding to death. There she heard the words: "Behold thy son", "Behold thy mother".

Finally, the only time she is mentioned by name outside the gospel, the Acts of Apostles tells us that she was with the disciples and Apostles as they waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. So she who gave birth to Christ on the first Christmas night was also present at the birth of the church on the first Pentecost Sunday.

HER PLACE IN THE CHURCH

It is not surprising then that from the very beginning, Christians had a great love for Mary. They realized that in honouring Mary, they were honouring her son, Jesus. This is a very human thing (e.g.) I love and respect my mother. If anyone is kind to my mother, I am pleased, but if someone offended my mother, I would be offended.

The same idea can explain the use of images of Mary. I have a photo of my mother which I like very much. But it is not the photo itself that I love. It is the person it represents that I love. We all do this of course without even thinking. In the same way, the Christians practised devotion to Mary and made images of her without even thinking of all the reasons why they should. So the first Christians were not just told to honour Mary. They did it quite naturally.

Devotion to Our Lady was already widespread before theologians and scripture scholars began to explain clearly what Mary's true position was. The discussion on the true place of Our Lady is still going on. This has led some to believe that Our Lady is no longer important. But this just cannot be, because she is the Mother of Christ and Christ is still alive. The Church is Christ living and working in the world today, and that is why Pope Paul gave Our Lady the title "Mother of the Church".

So Legionaries, you need have no fear. Your devotion to Mary is well founded, and when on visitation, if anyone tells you that by honouring Mary, you are lessening the honour due to Jesus, you can tell them that the very opposite is true. In honouring Mary, you are honouring her son all the more. She only wants us to do his will. That is clear from her last recorded words in the gospel "do whatever he tells you" (John 2Vs. 5). We need not be afraid to say that in honouring Mary, we are simply doing what Our Lady herself said we should do when she prophesied "all generation will call me blessed".

15 ST. JOSEPH

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XII-Section 1

St. Matthew describes St. Joseph as a just man, a man of honour. As such he immediately demands our respect because men of justice and integrity were all too few in those days as they are in our own age. It is no wonder then that he was the one specially chosen to be husband to Mary and foster father to Jesus, the two most precious people who ever lived on this earth. The scriptures mention Joseph only a few times and then only briefly. It is enough, however, to let us know that he always listened attentively to the word of God and obeyed His commands with a quiet determined courage.

He took the child and Mary away to Egypt and brought them back when danger was no more, after Herod's death - each time at the command of God's Angel. He worked hard in his carpenter's shop to keep the family clothed and fed. There were no luxuries in that home in Nazareth, but happiness came to the members from a life of honest labour and earnest prayer. Joseph never ate the bread of idleness. The child Jesus, as He grew up, must have learned from him not only the carpentry trade but devotion to duty, humility and kindness to his fellow men.

In our Legion Handbook we are told that St. Joseph ranks next to Jesus and Mary in the court of Heaven. Death separated

them for a short time only. They now continue to share each other's love and happiness for all eternity. From heaven, St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, looks down on the family of Christians, now so much larger than the church he saw Jesus establish, and he cares for us as he cared for those who depended on him in Nazareth. He who was Mary's protector while on earth would be only too happy to protect the Legionaries, her special band who are so dear to her. Anxious as he is to help us, he can only do so if we ask him, but it is a pity that we are inclined sometimes to forget all about him.

Let us then make a special effort to think more about St.

Joseph. Realising how good he is, we will admire him and want to become like him. If our work is menial, let us thank God for it and, instead of hankering after wealth which rarely brings happiness, let us do the best we can to earn an honest living and use our money to turn our houses into homes. Instead of always going outside for pleasure, let us find it in the simple joys of family life. Finally let us pray to him that when our life's work here is ended, we may have a peaceful death, and with St. Joseph enjoy the blessed company of Jesus and Mary in heaven.

16 ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XII-Section 2

John the Baptist was the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth, who were both advanced in age when he was born. His birth had been foretold to Zachariah who was a priest in the temple. Zachariah was afraid of the Angel who appeared to him while he was burning incense in the temple. The Angel said: "Do not be afraid, Zachariah, for your prayer is heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall call his name John. You will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must drink no wine nor strong drink. Even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit and he will bring back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go before him to turn

the hearts of fathers towards their children and the disobedient back to the wisdom that the virtuous have, preparing for the Lord a people fit for Him.

Zachariah said to the Angel: "How can I be sure of this, I am an old man and my wife is getting on in years." The Angel replied: "I am Gabriel, who stand in God's presence, and I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Listen! Since you have not believed my words, which will come true at their appointed time, you will be silenced and have no power of speech until this has happened. Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zachariah and were surprised that he stayed in the sanctuary so long. When he came out, he could not speak to them and they realised he had received a vision in the sanctuary. But he could only make signs to them and remained dumb.

When his time of service came to an end he returned home. After this Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept to herself. "The Lord has done this for me," she said, "now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered among men.

In the sixth month, the Incarnation took place and the Angel told Mary about Elizabeth. Mary went quickly to Judah. She went into Zachariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greetings, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she said: "Blessed are you, among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured by a visit from the mother of my Lord. For the moment that you greeted me, the child in my womb leaped for joy". Then we hear Mary's beautiful magnificat, the Cantata prayer of the Legionaries. Mary stayed with Elizabeth three months and then went home. Meanwhile the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son - all the neighbours shared her joy.

On the eighth day, when they came to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zachariah after his father but his mother spoke up: "No", she said, "He is to be called John." They argued but finally Zachariah wrote: "His name is John." They were all astonished and from that time Zachariah's speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All the people were filled with awe and said 'what will this child turn out to be? And indeed the Lord was with him. The child grew up and his spirit matured and he lived out in the wilderness

until the day he appeared openly to Israel. Then he went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it was written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah.

"A voice cries in the wilderness. Prepare the way for the Lord. Make his paths straight. Every mountain and hill be laid low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God."

In his Way of living and preaching, John the Baptist was a very austere man. He knew that his duty was to go before the Lord to prepare the way for his coming and then announce him when he arrived. Having done that he was ready to disappear from the scene. "He must increase, must decrease," John wanted no honours for himself. "I am not worthy to tie his sandals."

In our work as Legionaries, we resemble John the Baptist. Like him we prepare the way for the coming of Christ. And we should always remember that it is Christ that we are supposed to announce, and not our own views or opinions. He must increase. We must decrease. We can do our work effectively only if we have some of the humility and the courage of John the Baptist. These are virtues for which we should pray constantly.

17 ST. PETER

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XII-Section 8

Today, I want to talk to you about St. Peter. What kind of man was he? He was a fisherman, big and strong, with long hair and a long beard. His usual dress was a long knee-length gown and over that he usually wore a coat-like garment with many stripes of bright colour. Leather sandals were worn to protect his feet on the rough roads. On his head, he wore a skull cap as well as a turban with a veil hanging down at the back to protect his head from the sun.

When he was dressed out like this he must have been an impressive person. But when he went fishing he rolled up his long gown

Under his belt, or sometimes he removed them altogether and wore only a loin cloth. He went fishing every night. He was a good fisherman but he was very quick to get angry and that often got him into trouble.

One morning, when he came ashore, he was not in a very good mood because he had been out all night and had caught nothing. He was not in a mood for talking to anybody. He would have liked to get home quickly but he could not because there was a large crowd of people at the sea-shore listening to Jesus. The people were so anxious to get near to Jesus that they were pushing him. So Jesus asked Peter for permission to sit on his boat while preaching to the people. Of course, Peter could not refuse.

Then, when Jesus had finished preaching, he asked Peter to row out a little and let down his net. This must have made Peter very angry. No good fisherman went fishing in the morning, especially a morning like this when there were no fish to be found the night before. So he told Jesus plainly: "We have been out all night but we caught nothing." But again Peter could not refuse Jesus, so he said, since you ask it, we will try. At once they caught so many fish that they had to call for help. Peter immediately knew that this was a miracle so he fell at Jesus' feet and said: "Lord depart from me because I am a sinful man." But Jesus replied: "Don't be afraid, from now on you will be a fisher of men."

From that moment, his whole life was changed. Peter had been a master fisherman. He had loved the sea. Now he was to leave it and become an apprentice to Jesus. He would have to travel around with Jesus, listen to His words and learn from Him. The he would be sent out to be a fisher of men.

So Jesus gave Peter a new kind of life. He also gave him a new name. The new name he gave him was Peter. Simon was his name before he was called by Jesus. Simon must have been proud of this new name because the word Peter meant "ROCK". He would show them that he could be solid as a Rock. Jesus had a reason for giving him this name. He wanted him to be the Rock on which he would build his church. Jesus made this very clear. He said, "You are Peter and on this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

But in spite of the fact that Jesus had given Peter this great responsibility, he was far from perfect. He was not well educated, he

was impatient, he made many mistakes. He even denied Jesus. But Jesus did not reject Peter. Jesus had prayed that Peter's faith would not fail and that when he would be converted, he would confirm his brethren. And after the resurrection Jesus confirmed Peter as head of his Church when he said: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep".

The apostles accepted Peter as their leader and once Jesus ascended to Heaven, Peter made the important decisions and acted as spokesman for the Apostles and the Christian community.

Peter spent many years preaching all over Palestine, and then he went to Rome and continued his preaching there until the enemies of Christ captured him. They brought him outside the city to crucify him. Peter asked to be crucified head down because he did not consider himself worthy of dying as his master had died.

We should often think about St. Peter. We have a lot to learn from him. Firstly, if we make mistakes we should be ready like St. Peter to come back and say I am sorry. Secondly, like St. Peter we should have a great desire to make Jesus known and loved by as many people as possible. Thirdly, we should remember that our Holy Father the Pope is the successor of St. Peter as head of the Church. Pope Paul tries to lead all the Catholics of the world. It is even more difficult now than it was at the time of Peter. As Legionaries We should be loyal to all Pope's teaching and we should pray for him constantly that he may be as strong as a Rock in his work.

(THE FEAST OF ST. PETER IS 29th JUNE)

18 ST. PAUL

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter XII-Section 9

St. Paul was once known as Saul. He was a Jew but he was not born in Palestine. He was born in a place called Tarsus. He was well educated, first at Tarsus, and then at Jerusalem because it was intended that he should be a Jewish Priest. But the Jewish people were very wise. They taught their children how to use their hands as well as their heads. So Saul was trained as a tent maker-a trade which he worked at all during his life.

Saul never saw Jesus while he was on earth, and when Christianity began to spread, Saul knew very little about it, except that it was a threat to the Jewish religion and that was enough to make him hate it. The Jewish Priest wanted to put an end to this new religion, so they were glad when Saul came to offer his services in the fight against the Christians. They sent him on a special mission to Damascus to arrest any Christians he found there and bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Saul was on his way to Damascus when suddenly he was knocked down from his horse as a bright light shone around him. He heard a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute me?" Saul answered: "Who are you Lord?" The voice answered: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Saul then asked what he should do and he was instructed to go to Damascus, and there he was baptised and became not only a Christian but an Apostle.

God had chosen him to be an Apostle to the gentile - "Gentile" was the name for all the people of the world who were not Jews. From the time Saul began his mission to the Gentiles he was known as Paul.

Although God had made Paul an Apostle in this way, it still was not easy for him. Even before he set out to preach to the Gentiles, a number of attempts were made by the Jews to kill him, with the result that he had to spend a lot of time in hiding. And when he set out to preach to the Gentiles, life did not become any easier for him. He traveled far and wide to preach about Christ to as many people as possible. He met with all kinds of difficulties. He tells about some of these difficulties himself. He says: "Three times, I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I have been ship-wrecked, a night and a day I have been adrift at sea, on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food in cold and exposure (2Cor. 11 v.23).

But in spite of all these sufferings, he continued his preaching everywhere. In every city and town, he converted small groups to Christ. But he could never stay long with them. He would appoint a leader to take charge of the community and then move off to the next town or village but he would go back on a visit if he got the

Chance. But even if he could not get back, he never forgot his converts. He often wrote letters to encourage them. These letters of St. Paul are found in the bible and we often hear part of them read during Mass. We should listen carefully to these readings- indeed, we should try to make time to read all Paul's letters because they have many important lessons for us.

We can learn much from St. Paul's letters, but we can learn even more from his life (and we can read about his life in the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 9 to 28). Paul's life is a shining example for every Legionary. He was filled with the desire to make Christ known and loved. We have seen how much he suffered. He accepted all this willingly for the sake of the gospel. He preached to the rich and the poor, to the educated and the uneducated, to Jews and to Pagans, to kings, to governors and to slaves. He continued to preach while he was in prison- even when he knew that death was close at hand. Not long before his death, he wrote these words: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

As Legionaries, we should try to imitate this great Saint. We should pray constantly that we may have the desire to preach the gospel and that we may have his courage to do our work as Legionaries no matter what difficulty we meet. If we do, then the time will come when each one of us will be able to say: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

(THE FEAST OF ST. PAUL/JULY 29th/JUNE)

19 THE LEGION PICTURE

*SPIRITUAL READING
Handbook Chapter XIV- Legion Picture*

Look at the Legion Picture. You will find it on the cover of your Handbook or Tessera. If you study it carefully it will help you to understand many things about the Legion.

There, at the top of the picture, we can see the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove above Mary. This reminds us of the first prayer we say at Legion meeting "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of thy love." It also reminds us of the Incarnation when Mary became the mother of Jesus by the

Power of the Holy Spirit: and of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came on Mary on the Apostles in the form of fire.

The Latin words around the edge of the picture look like a chain because the letters are linked together. "Caterina" is the Latin word for chain. Some of the Legion prayers are called "The Caterina" because like a chain they bind Legionaries together. At the beginning of this prayer (the caterina) we say the antiphon: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon; bright as sun; terrible as an army set in battle array". She, of course, is Mary and here we see her at the centre of the picture.

Mary was 'fair as the moon' and 'bright as the Sun', yet she was very humble, realising that everything she had, came from God. So we see her own words of humility "MY SOUL MAGNIFIES THE LORD" written in Latin above her head.

Mary had great humility, she also had great faith. Elizabeth praised her faith - "Blessed are you who have believed" - That is the meaning of the words "BEATA QUAE CREDIDISTI" which are written at the bottom left hand corner of the picture. Mary saved the world by her faith. God foretold the important part she would play in our salvation when he warned the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head." - This is the meaning of the Latin words "inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem semen tuum et semen illius ipse conteret caput tuum" - which you see around the top of the picture.

It was at Calvary, when Mary shared in her son's suffering, that the serpent was finally crushed and it was at that moment that she heard her son say: "Woman behold thy son, son behold thy mother" The Latin for this is "Mulier ecce filius tuus, ecce mater tua". These Latin words complete the chain-border around the picture.

Our Legion is like an army serving "beneath the standard of Mary" (words of the concluding prayers). In the picture we see the faithful Legionaries dressed in white, with the crucifix in their right hands and the rosary in their left. They are led by Mary who is surrounded by a pillar of fire. This pillar of fire represents Mary's faith which led her through the darkness and difficulties of life, just as the pillar of fire once guided the Israelites through the desert. Each one of us should pray to have faith like Mary - a faith which will be our Legion's pillar of fire to lead us forth united and kindle

everywhere the fire of divine love.

We are Mary's children, and we are fighting the forces of evil. In the picture we see how the forces of evil are being defeated and trampled on. But Mary does not wish to defeat anyone. She wishes to save. She is the mother of the Saviour and she wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Every time we look at the Legion picture and every time we say our Legion prayers, let us try to remember that Mary is calling us to cooperate with her in the wonderful work of saving souls.

20

THE LEGION STANDARD

SPIRITUAL READING-

Handbook Chapter XVI-First Paragraph

(N.B.) If there is a similar type of banner or emblem carried into battle in Nigerian tradition this could be mentioned at the beginning of the Allocutio)

The Roman Army had a standard which was carried into battle at the head of their army. At the top of it was an eagle - a scared bird to the Romans. Below this there were some sacred words and figures and a picture of the Roman Emperor. It was a special honour to carry the standard into battle.

The Legion vexillum is our standard. It stands on our altars during our Legion meeting and we hold it in our hand when we make the Legion promise, to remind us that we must be soldiers - of the Queen of Heaven.

Instead of an eagle, we have a dove - a symbol of the Holy Spirit - to remind us that instead of fighting people, we must be holy people, full of God's love.

Beneath the dove is our name "Legion of Mary" and a picture of the Miraculous Medal - which Mary herself asked St. Catherine to have made. Around it are the words we say every day - "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Mary is our Queen and, our leader in our work for God. If we try to be like her, sinless and gentle, God will live in us and work through us.

Beneath the medal is a model of the world. This globe reminds us that we have a mission to the whole world. We need to be reminded of this often because we easily get selfish, thinking only of our own presidium and our own problems. That is why some Legionaries get discouraged. If their Presidium is in a difficult area and if it seems to be achieving little, they may surrender and say 'what is the use.' But this should not happen because, even though their efforts may appear to be achieving little in their own Parish, they may be helping their fellow Legionaries on the other side of the globe. Every Legionary should remember that a good act is never in vain, and this is particularly true of Legion activity. The same is true of our prayers, but instead of trying to think of a lot of different intentions when we pray, we should offer our prayers to Mary. She will direct them to where they are most needed.

But it is not enough to hope that our prayers and good works will somehow do good in distant places. We must be ready to go to the whole world to preach the good news to every creature. To begin, we should ask ourselves have we ever tried to help the Legion outside our parish. Have we ever organised a week-end project, have we ever gone on Persegrination? If we have not, it is about time we started.

The globe at the base of the Legion standard reminds us that the whole world is our mission field. Our work is not completed until every person is brought to Christ.

21 HOLY MASS

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XXX - NO 1

All day long the Mass is being offered somewhere throughout the world, and we can share in it by making an intention like this: "Lord I wish to unite myself to your unceasing sacrifice on the altar". But this spiritual union cannot compare with the physical union we have with Christ when we actually attend Mass and receive Our Divine Lord in communion.

When we are present at Mass, we should feel as if we were present with Mary on Calvary as Christ offers himself to the Father on our behalf. At every Mass, Christ makes atonement to God for our sins. He begs the Father for the graces which we need and He thanks the Father for all his kindness and mercy to us.

Ever since the time of Adam, people have wanted to express their sorrow, their praise and their thanks to God. The way they tried to do this was to offer sacrifices. They used to sacrifice cows, goats, rams, oil, corn, and so on. But they knew that these sacrifices were not worthy of God. We, however, are fortunate to have the Mass in which the perfect sacrifice, Christ Himself, is offered to the Father. He is the pure victim, the holy victim, the spotless victim. When Christ offers himself to the Father, He makes amends for all our faults and He opens for us unlimited treasures of grace. That is why St. Thomas Aquinas, said: "God's generosity has granted to Christians gifts beyond measure."

God's goodness is without limit. For this reason we should not be afraid to ask. If you do not ask for many things, it is a sign that you do not believe in God's generosity, a sign that you do not believe in Christ's own words, "ask and you shall receive". The best time to ask for things is after Communion when Jesus is present in us. But sometimes we are selfish. We think only of ourselves. But Christ came for all men. So let us ask for graces and helps for others too, especially for those we come in contact with during our legion work, (e.g.) for the children we teach, the sick and the old people we visit, the lapsed Catholics we hope to win back to the Church, the non-Catholics we hope to convert. All of these should find a place in our prayers after Communion.

There is no limit to God's generosity. There should be no limit to the requests we make. But it is difficult to remember all these in the short time we have after Communion. For this reason should turn to Our Lady and place all our requests in her hands but this must not be looked on as an excuse for laziness or forgetfulness on our part. We are not trying to take responsibility off our shoulders and put it on hers. Rather we turn to Our Lady so that she will make us more attentive in our prayers and more aware of our obligations. Nevertheless, we know that if our prayers pass through her hands, they will be more profitable. We know to that,

if we try to make our mind one with hers. She will make up for our failings and forgetfulness.

My Mary, our Mother, help us to understand the Eucharist better and obtain for us all our requests.

22 THE HOLY EUCHARIST

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook chapter - No. 2

As has been pointed out in the Spiritual Reading, the Holy Eucharist is the centre and source of grace; therefore, it must be the very key stones of the Legion scheme. The Catholic Church likes to think of the faithful as the community of worshippers about the Eucharist and this also is how the Bishops at the Second Vatican Council considered all Catholics when they were drawing up the new rules for the Sacred Liturgy; that is for the celebration of Mass with the people taking an active part, and for the giving of the Sacraments. It is of the greatest importance then that we know exactly what the Holy Eucharist is, important both for our own spiritual lives and so that we can explain it well to others.

The word 'Eucharist' means 'thanksgiving' and this name is given to it because the Holy Scripture tell us that before instituting this holy sacrament at the Last Supper, Our Saviour 'gave thanks' to God. Why did Jesus 'give thanks' at this time? Well, partly because that was how the Jews commonly prayed, giving thanks to God for all the benefits given to men, but principally because men were being saved from their sins through His sufferings, Death and Resurrection, and His Sufferings, Death and Resurrection were to be made ever present to us through the Holy Eucharist, for that is exactly what the Holy Eucharist is. It is Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen again from the dead for our salvation, and abiding with His Church until the end of time.

We should note very carefully what Jesus said at the Last Supper. He took the bread and He said: "Take, eat this is My Body" and then He took the chalice or cup of wine and said: "Drink, all of you of this; for this is my blood, for the New Testament, shed for many to the remission of sins". You will notice how He links

up the Holy Eucharist with His death and our redemption from sin. In fact the Holy Eucharist is Jesus Who has redeemed us. The bread becomes truly His Body, the wine becomes truly His Blood. Yet it is not a dead body or blood that we see and receive in the Holy Eucharist. It is the living Jesus Who was crucified and risen from the dead and who 'dies now no more'.

The separate consecration of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ which the priest does at Mass, following what was first done at the Last Supper, is to show in a sacramental way the death of the Lord. The Holy Mass is not only the representation to us of the Last Supper. It is also the sacrifice of Christ's life on Calvary and His resurrection from the dead. And this representation, Our Saviour said, must be continually done by us until the Last Day and it is by it that we shall always remember His presence with us in His Holy Church.

The Holy Eucharist is also the source of God's life within us, Jesus said: 'Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you'. Besides considering the Holy Eucharist in the Mass we must also think of it as Holy Communion, the source of our spiritual life; the Body of Christ which sanctifies our souls. Lastly we cannot think of the Holy Eucharist as in any way separate from the Living Jesus Himself. When the priest, after the consecration raises the Holy Sacrament, it is the Living Jesus that we see. When we receive Holy Communion, it is the Living Jesus that comes into our hearts. When we come to visit the Blessed Sacrament in the church during the day, it is the Living Jesus Who came to us in the Holy Eucharist of the Mass, Whom we received in Holy Communion, Who died for us and rose again from the dead, Who is there in the Tabernacle and Whom we adore.

The making holy of its members is the principal purpose of the Legion of Mary. Since, however, the Holy Eucharist is the central source of Christian life, and then it can only be through devotion to the Holy Eucharist that this principal purpose of the Legion can be achieved.

23 FREQUENT COMMUNION

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter XXXIX - No. 5

Frequent we read in the Handbook that the whole purpose of the Legion of Mary is to make its members holy so that they in turn will bring holiness to other members of the Church. There are many ways of attaining holiness, but the best and surest way is through the frequent reception of Holy Communion through which we receive holiness itself.

Through Holy Communion we are drawn into the closest union with Christ and with one another. As Christians and particularly as Legionaries, we are to bring Christ to others. It will be impossible for us to bring the loving personality of Christ to others if we ourselves are not filled with His love and spirit. There is no better way of attaining this spirit than by our union with Him in the Holy Eucharist. We should not be content with monthly or even weekly reception of Holy Communion. We should strive to receive Holy Communion daily if at all possible. At least we should strive to receive Holy Communion every time we assist at Mass.

At the Offertory of the Mass we offer bread and wine to our heavenly Father. At the consecration, this bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Then we offer the perfect gift of Christ to our Father. The Father accepts our gifts and in return gives us His Son as our food in Holy Communion. We need this food as spiritual nourishment.

Suppose you were invited to a wedding feast or a naming ceremony. You enjoyed the company, the talking and the music there, but when the food was served you refused to eat it. How do you think your host would feel? Would he be happy? No, it certainly would be a great insult to him.

The Mass, too, is a banquet to which we are invited by God, to partake of the Bread of life to nourish our souls. When we do not receive Holy Communion it is just like saying, "I don't need your food, Lord." Christ, Himself, said, "Unless you eat My Flesh and drink My Blood you shall not have life in you." Again He said, "I am the Bread of life, he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst." Do we realize that in re-

ceiving Holy Communion we receive the Bread of life, Our Divine Lord. Really and truly present under the appearance of the Host. In that little Host we eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of Christ. Since Christ really lives in us we share His life - hence we too become sons of our loving Father and true brothers in Christ with one another. Thus we should be filled with a great love for one another and an intense desire to serve one another.

The Body of Christ is given to us in Holy Communion in order that we may be formed into that very Body. At Mass we pray that all of us who share in the Body and Blood of Christ may be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit, and that we who are nourished by His Body and Blood may be filled with His Holy Spirit and be come one Body and one spirit with Christ.

As members of the Legion of Mary we should not be content with having devotion - to the Blessed Eucharist ourselves; we should strive to cultivate this devotion in others and get them to realize the wonderful privilege that is ours in being permitted to nourish our souls on the Body and Blood of Christ.

We can well imagine the tender, loving care Mary gave her Son from His birth to His death on the cross. How anxiously she must have attended to His needs and particularly to the food that nourished Him. Now she wishes to feed the Mystical Body of Christ of which she is the Mother. It must make her sad and sorrowful to see so many so-called Catholics, for whom her Son gave His life neglecting to nourish the spirit on the Blessed Eucharist. She looks to us her Legionaries, to bring back those people who are starving for the food of life. We must strive to awaken a love and knowledge of the Blessed Eucharist in those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

The frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist is also a pledge of our eternal salvation as Jesus said: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood shall have life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day." This should be enough to encourage us to receive Holy Communion often.

24 QUEEN AND MOTHER

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter V-No. 4

"I am all time my Queen, my Mother and all that I have is thine."

With these words each one of us renews our consecration to Mary every year. It might be worth while to meditate a little on what these titles "QUEEN" and "MOTHER" mean.

MARY OUR QUEEN:

Pope Pius XII said of her queenship: "The Lord has raised up Mary, our Queen, to be the dispenser of his treasures. The Son of God makes his mother radiant with the majesty and the might of his own kingship. Because she was united to the king in his work of redeeming the human race she remains forever vested with unlimited power in distributing the graces which flow from the redemption. Her empire is vast, like that of her son, so that nothing is outside her sway."

These words should give us great confidence in our lady. She has power to help us. First of all, as Queen she is an object of terror to Satan. As we recite in the Catechism, "She is terrible as an army set in battle array." So when we are tempted by Satan we should turn at once to her.

Secondly, as Legionaries, we are working to spread the reign of her son. She is much more interested in this work than we are. So let us place ourselves in her hands and tell her to use us as she pleases.

MARY OUR MOTHER:

Today, we hear many people, and even, alas! many Catholics say that we pay too much honour to Mary. Surely Our Lord Himself gives us the answer to this objection. Did he not elevate her to the sublime dignity of being his mother? What greater honour could he possibly confer on any of his creatures? Mary is our Mother also. The Vatican Council states:

"From eternity, together with the incarnation of the divine Word the Blessed Virgin was predestined as the Mother of God."

and in the plan of divine providence she live on earth the loving mother of the divine Redeemer, above all others and in a special way His generous associates and the humble handmaid of the Lord. By conceiving and generating Christ, by nourishing Him, by offering Him in the temple to the Father, and by suffering with her son dying on the cross, she through her faith, hope and burning love, cooperated in a completely unparalleled way with the work of our saviour in giving back to souls supernatural life. It is for this reason that she exist in the order of grace as our Mother" (Constitution on the church No. 63)

The council further states that this motherhood of Mary will continue to the end of time and that she will continue to obtain for us gifts of eternal salvation. (cf. *Constitution of the church No. 62*)

In our work as Legionaries in furthering the reign of Christ in individual and in families, let us first introduce them to Mary our mother. The salvation of the world down through the ages can only come through its first source, which is Mary. Mankind was saved at the moment of the incarnation by the Blessed Virgin Mary and this remains true for all time.

Mary became the mother of Christ and our Mother when she consented to the Angel Gabriel's mission and answered: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord", but it was at the foot of the cross that the fullness of that motherhood of men was finally perfected by Christ Himself when He said: "Woman behold thy son". Let us condole ourselves as true children of Mary, trusting in Her to counsel us in our doubts, console us in our troubles and obtain for us the graces needed to grow daily more like her Son, Jesus, who went about doing good.

25 THE SACRED HEART

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter XXXVII - No 3

Among the works of the apostolate undertaken by the Legion, the visitation of people in their homes has always been regarded as the most important work. When we read what the handbook has to say on this work, we find that encouraging devotion to the Sacred

Heart is given a very important place. This should emphasise for us the significance of this devotion and legionaries should consider why devotion to the Sacred Heart is so strongly recommended to them.

When we honour the Sacred Heart we are honouring Christ as Man. We know that by the mystery of the incarnation God became Man. It is easy for us to forget that Christ was truly Man as well as being God. Yet if we do not keep this in mind, we shall overlook one of the essential truths of our religion; we shall also be very limited in our effort to tell others about Christ and in our effort to bring others to Him, Christ was man. He was born, grew up, lived and died as a Man.

In all men, the heart is the means by which we love others. Therefore in Christ, His Heart was the means by which He loved us and this is the foundation of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The story of salvation is a story of love, God's love for us. Man was created as an act of love. When man sinned, his redemption was an act of love, the greatest act of love ever performed. From the moment when the Israelites were chosen as God's people, the love of God was manifest. His covenant with them was: "I shall be your God and you shall be my people". He watched over them, guided them, led them to the promised land, gave them victory over their enemies.

Even when they constantly proved unfaithful to Him, He did not abandon them and was always ready to forgive them.

The coming of His son on earth was the fulfilment of this great covenant of love. Christ went about preaching the gospel of love. All the commandments were summed up in the two great commandments: love God and love your neighbour. He made it very clear that our neighbour was not limited to our family and friends. Everyone was included. We must pray even for our enemies. He told us that what we do to our neighbour we do to him. He gave the final proof of His love for us by His death on the cross: "Greater love has no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends". He loved us even to the death on the cross.

In the early days of the church, the Christians were known because of their love for each other; we are told this in the scriptures. St John in his gospel and in his letters constantly

repeated the same message as he told his followers; love God, love your neighbour.

Down through the ages the Church has continued to preach the same message of love. God is a God of love who has died for all men and who wants all men to be saved. We also know that Christ has appeared to a very great saint, St. Margaret Mary, to tell her of His love for men and how men should love Him in return. He promised her that very great graces would be given to those who had devotion to His Sacred Heart and to those who helped to spread this devotion. He gave a special promise that this devotion would win the conversion of sinners and this should be of very special importance to us, because, as legionaries, we are engaged in this work of conversion. Experience has proved that this is so, and that many who had turned away from God were converted through devotion to the Sacred Heart. This is the reason why the Handbook gives such importance to this devotion.

When we honour the Sacred Heart, therefore, we are honouring God as Man. We recognise God as a God of love. We know that we must return that love by loving God and also our neighbour. Legionaries should regularly ask for the help of the Sacred Heart in their efforts to convert sinners; they should try to increase their own love for God and try to establish the spirit of love in others. The world contains very much hatred, jealousy and disunity. It is very much in need of the spirit of love. There will never be true peace in the world until all men learn the great message of love as preached by Christ and his Church. Let our devotion to the Sacred Heart fill us with the spirit of love; may it also help us to bring a new spirit of love and brotherhood into the lives of men so that the world will at last enjoy true peace.

26 DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

SPIRITUAL READING-

Handbook Chapter XXXIX - Section 2

Last Paragraph

We have seen last week why devotion to the Sacred Heart is important. Today I want to talk to you about some of the simple ways you can practice this devotion. Even if you know these already, this might serve as a reminder to you that you should explain these forms of devotion to the people you visit.

The first and most important form of devotion is, of course, going to Mass and receiving Holy Communion. You all know the importance of the Mass, but here I want to emphasize that you are not going to Mass just for your own benefit. You are doing so because you want to return love to God for all the love He has shown to you, and also you wish to make reparation to the Sacred Heart for your own sins and the sins of others.

If you can go to Mass everyday, that is a wonderful thing, but at least you should go on the first Friday because that is a day specially set aside for devotion to the Sacred Heart. It has been recommended that people should go to Mass and receive Holy Communion on nine consecutive first Fridays, but as a rule, once people start the first Friday devotion, they get to like them so much that they will not limit themselves to nine. The first Friday of every month will be a day of special importance to them for the rest of their lives.

As well as going to Mass and receiving Holy Communion, people are asked to go to Confession. This, of course is necessary for anybody who has committed serious sin, but even for someone who has only venial sins or minor faults to confess, this monthly confession is to be highly recommended. There is scarcely a better way to ensure that we keep on the straight and narrow path.

I hope every one of you will take this first Friday devotion very seriously, and this is something you should find easy to talk about to Catholic families when you are on visitation. And if some Catholics can not attend Mass on the first Friday, this will give you the opportunity to encourage them to receive every Sunday, especially the first Sunday of the month.

Another important thing is the consecration of homes to the Sacred Heart. In order to do this you must get a picture of the Sacred Heart and you must invite the priest to your home. He will bless the picture, bless your house and then consecrate the house and family to the Sacred Heart. Most Catholic families will only be too glad to have this done if it is explained properly to them. Unfortunately, many Catholics never heard of it, it is up to you to enlighten them.

Other forms of devotion to the Sacred Heart are the Stations of the Cross and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The Stations of the Cross are very popular during Lent, but people should be encouraged to do them privately at other times too, because they are a great way of reminding us of how much Christ suffered for our sins.

As regards visits to the Blessed Sacrament, some people think this is no longer important, especially since in many churches the tabernacle has been changed from the high altar to a side altar. But it is as important now as it ever was. Indeed for legions, it is more important now than ever, because if others are failing to visit the Blessed Sacrament, it is our duty to visit it more frequently so that by our example we will convince others that we really believe that Christ is present in the Tabernacle. It is only then that we will be able to encourage others to visit the Blessed Sacrament where Christ is waiting to welcome them.

There are many other ways we show our devotion to the Sacred Heart, (e.g.) by saying short prayers like "Sacred Heart of Jesus I place all my trust in thee". And we should not forget the morning offering which enables us to consecrate all our prayer, works and sufferings of the entire day to the Sacred Heart.

Everything I have said here, you may have heard before and you may think it is old fashioned, but remember that it will be very new for many of the Catholic families you visit. Remember too the great rewards that have been promised to those who promote devotion to the Sacred Heart. One of them is: "I will give priests the power to touch the most hardened hearts". You can rely on this same promise because when you go on legion work you go as representatives of the priest. So with the aid of the Sacred Heart you too can convert even the greatest sinner.

THE WEEKLY MEETING

SPIRITUAL READING-
Handbook Chapter XXVII-No. 1

The Handbook clearly explains the rules and obligations which bind every Legionary. One of those rules is that the Presidium should hold a regular weekly meeting and that each Legionary must regularly and punctually attend the Presidium meeting. The Legion has always insisted on this rule being observed and has never agreed to a Presidium being established unless the weekly meeting is possible. What are the reasons for this rule? We may consider three important ones.

In the first place the Legion, like all good works, depends on prayer for obtaining success in its work. The grace and blessing of God is obtained by prayer and the Legion will not succeed unless prayer, plays a big part in its activities, and in the life of its members. The weekly meeting is a very inspiring and fruitful assembly of prayer. The members gather together under the patronage of Mary herself and recite her rosary and other prayers. Christ has said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, we also gather in the name of His mother. The spiritual benefits gained from the prayers of a Legion meeting; must surely have a very great influence on the success of the work done by that Presidium. This weekly renewal of our spiritual strength and courage will more than compensate for the sacrifices made in regularly attending the weekly meeting.

In the second place, the weekly meeting ensures that regular work is being done and in an organised and effective manner. A person may be very enthusiastic and zealous in apostolic work. But unless he approaches the work in an efficient and organised manner, he could easily lose very many of the benefits available. The weekly meeting provides that necessary organization. A certain area or problem, or type of work is carefully studied, a plan of action is worked out, the people available for the work are allocated their particular duties so that the maximum use is made of the human resources available. No wasted effort or overlapping is allowed. Each week, progress is checked.

ed or reasons found if the work is not proving successful. By such careful and exact methods, the chance of success is surely greater than if the work is the unorganised efforts of various individuals.

There is a third good reason for the weekly meeting. It is a very human reason but we are, after all human beings. The regular meeting gives each individual encouragement and hope. If we are working alone, we can easily become tired, or discouraged if progress is slow. But when we meet our fellow legionaries each week we are encouraged to be faithful to our work and to be persevering even when progress seems very slow. This is true of any activity; it is also true of apostolic work. Support and the presence of others will always encourage us. We also gain from the advice and experience of others. Common problems are discussed the efforts made by others are considered and a successful attempt made by someone else can point the way for us to a successful conclusion also.

The weekly meeting, therefore, is a very important and valuable part of the Legion work. We should also remember that to attend the meeting regularly each week will demand some sacrifice. It is not always very convenient for us. There may be difficulties as regards bad weather or lack of transport; our friends may be doing something that time and we may like to join them. But the sacrifice that we make to attend the meeting despite such difficulties is itself a prayer. Such a spirit of sacrifice will certainly obtain for us the graces we need to successfully carry out our work for the salvation of souls.

Let us then always be faithful to our weekly meeting. Our regular attendance not only is beneficial to ourselves, but it will encourage other members to be regular in attending also. A Legionary who is tempted to miss his weekly meeting will not do so if he sees all the other members attending every week. If such a Legionary still misses his meeting frequently then he will probably soon stop coming, and this is better than having a member who is not sincere. We shall certainly gain very much from our regular weekly meeting.

SPIRITUAL READING
Handbook Chapter XXVIII -- Section 2

Under the title "Basic Duties of the Legion", Chapter 28 of the Handbook, Section 12, We read:

"As far as prudence will dictate the legionary must aim at bringing the spirit of the Legion to bear on all the affairs of daily life, and must be On the alert for opportunities to promote the general object of the Legion, That is to destroy the empire of sin, uproot its foundations, and plant on its ruins the standard of Christ the King."

This statement deserves careful consideration, especially at the present time when religion for many people is something which is confined to one hour on Sunday morning. When so many people have pushed religion into a corner like this, Legionaries might be inclined to the same. A legionary might say that he will devote so much time to his religious duties and his legion work, but the rest of his time he will keep entirely for himself - for his work, for his study for his recreation and his other social activities.

Before we condemn this attitude we must admit that it is very good to have a timetable to follow. If a legionary does not fix a definite time for his legion work every week, there is a danger that he will not do the work at all. But while we recommend the following of a timetable for legion work, we must condemn the legionary who says "I have my legion work done, now I am master of my time for the rest of the week, my religion cannot interfere with the rest of my activities." A legionary who says such a thing fails to see that Religion and life are inseparable. There just cannot be any such a thing as a part-time Christian. To be a Christian means to be a follower of Christ, and a person cannot be a follower of Christ on Sunday and then forget Him or deliberately offend Him during the rest of the week.

We legionaries must be followers of Christ all day and everyday. Our religion must influence every aspect of our lives even down to our smallest actions. As the Handbook says: "Ones

Speech, and dress and manner and conduct, however simple they may be must never be such as to discredit!"

Because of the work we do, people will watch us. They will try to find fault with us. They will criticize us. So a very high standard of conduct is expected of us at all times. This is why the Handbook says that we must bring the spirit of the Legion to bear on all the affairs of our daily life. But the Handbook is demanding more than just good example. It tells us to be constantly on the alert for opportunities to destroy the empire of sin and plant the standard of Christ in its place. In a word we are told to be always on duty always anxious to search for the lost sheep, always trying to convert the other sheep who are not of this fold. If we are alert, we will find plenty of opportunities, because everywhere we go, we meet people, and wherever there are people there are souls to be brought nearer to Christ. When talking to a person in a bus or during a break from work, or in the market place, we should try to introduce the name Jesus, or some aspect of religion into the conversation. Occasionally we will ~~get~~ ^{meet} with insults, but in general we will find that people are very willing to talk about religion. But we must be careful not to offend, or criticize the beliefs of the people we speak to. And we should not get involved in heated arguments. If some people are not willing to listen, there are others who will listen willingly provided we use kindness, tact and charity. But we must not expect people to come to us. We must go out and meet the people and we must begin the conversation.

People will tell us to be prudent. Of course prudence is necessary, but may be in the past we often pretended to be prudent when in fact we were just lazy and lacked courage, and as a result missed many opportunities of helping people. But the past is gone. It is the future that matters. So let us promise that in the future we will never let such opportunities pass. This would be a useless promise if we were to depend only on our strength, but we can depend on our Lady to help us. If we turn to her, she will enable us to be always alert, always on duty.

29 TO EVERY CREATURE

SPIRITUAL READING *Handbook Chapter XXXIX, v. No. 1*

When a man is about to die, his family listens attentively to his last wishes. These wishes will always be respected by the family and they will be carried out as faithfully as possible.

When Christ was about to go to heaven, He gave a very special command to His followers. He told them to preach the gospel to every creature. That is, he wanted His followers to tell everybody about God the Father and about Himself.

These were His last words. Do we respect them? Do we try to put them into practice? We may say we do. We may be able to mention a large number of people we have spoken to about Christ. But may be these are people who are our own friends or from our own tribe. Examine the way you have been doing visitation. Perhaps you have occasionally avoided visiting people who were not of your own tribe. If you have, this is a serious fault. Christ said: "tell everybody", so you must visit everybody. You may say that those people are not friendly towards you. But this, should not keep you away. This is a great challenge to you. You must try to show them friendship in spite of their hatred and bitterness. If you do this you will eventually win their friendship.

Now what about your attitude to members of other religions? You may say, you have visited Protestants! Perhaps you have even converted some. But what about Moslems? You may have visited these too but perhaps you felt it was useless to talk to them about Jesus. But they have a right to know what Catholics believe and you have a duty to tell them. And don't forget many Moslems have a great respect for Christ. But never get involved in a heated argument with them. Try to tell them in the simplest way possible what Catholics believe. But all the time show great kindness and friendship for the people you speak to. This friendly attitude will have a much greater effect than any arguments you can give.

We have examined our attitude towards members of other tribes and people of other religions. We should now examine our attitude to certain people we classify as sinners. (e.g.) harlots

drunkards, thieves. Do we despise these people as if there was no hope for them? If we do our attitude is very different from that of Christ. We should remember that Mary Magdalene was once a harlot but she was converted and became one of Christ's most faithful followers. We should remember too that one of the first important works that the Legion did was to organise a retreat for prostitutes. Of the 31 who did the retreat, 23 gave up their sinful ways and became very good living Catholics.

Again what is our attitude to thieves, especially to prisoners and ex-prisoners? Do we look on them as criminals for whom there is no hope of reform? Such an attitude would be very wrong. The person to whom Christ said: "This day you will be with me in Paradise" was once a thief. We have no right to look down on prisoners or ex-prisoners. Instead, We have a duty to help them in every way possible.

When we hear of person who commits some sin no matter how great it is, we have no right to condemn him or to despise him. Rather our attitude should be: "There but for the Grace of God go I". Christ was kind, gentle, forgiving to everyone and that is the message he wants us to bring to every creature.

30 PRAY FOR US SINNERS

SPIRITUAL READING *Handbook Chapter XXXVII-Section 14*

Everyday we say the Rosary. That means that fifty times everyday we say "pray for us sinners", but do we ever think of what these words really mean? I am sure we don't - or if we think of the word sinners at all, we imagine it refers to other people not to ourselves. We believe we 'are good holy people. And because we are in the Legion, we might be inclined to consider ourselves first class Catholics while we took on others as sinners and as second class members of the Church.

This would be the greatest mistake we could possibly make. If we were to behave in such a proud Way Jesus would condemn us just as surely as he condemned the proud Pharisee

Of course we don't have to close our eyes to the evil around us.

There is hatred injustice immorality everywhere. But if we examine our own lives we will see that there is sin and evil within us also. We tell lies we cheat in various ways, we curse others, our hearts are often full of hatred and jealousy. In these and many other ways, we add our share to the evil in the world around us.

So we have a very good reason to say: "pray for us sinners" and to remember that the word sinner refers to ourselves. But there are also many other reasons why it is necessary for us to adopt this humble attitude.

Firstly, if we think we are very good people, if we think we have no need of God's Grace, then we can be quite sure that God will not give it to us. That is what St. Peter meant when he said: "God resists the proud but to the humble he gives grace". This is clear from the gospels. Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them. The only people he publicly condemned were the proud Pharisees and lawyers.

Secondly, 'if we behave in proud way when doing our Legion work, we will not make much progress, because nobody likes a proud person, whereas as the Handbook says: "every door opens to the humble Legionary". When we visit a house we are not there to judge. We are not there to show our holiness or learning by preaching at great length. We are there as humble servants of Jesus who was prepared to wash the feet of his disciples.

Thirdly, it is very necessary that we constantly remind ourselves of our sinfulness because we live in a proud age. People no longer consider themselves sinners. That is probably why people do not go to confession as often as they used to. On Sunday mornings, we see large numbers receiving Holy Communion. But if we go to the Church on Saturday evening, we do not see many going to confession and admitting their sinfulness. May be we don't go to confession as often as we used to. May be we don't go to confession regularly at all. This would be a great mistake because we are all sinners and we all need forgiveness.

There is one final reason why it is necessary for us to admit our sinfulness and behave in a humble way. If we recognise our sinfulness and go to confession, we will be giving good example to others

and we will also have the opportunity of bringing others to confession with us. When you are going to confession you may see someone who has not been to confession for a long time. You can easily say: "I am going to confession, will you come with me?"

If we are aware of our own sinfulness that is a sign that our conversion has begun and that we are on the road to holiness, but if we think we are holy, that is a sure sign that we are far away from Jesus. Jesus is the light. If you hold an object near a light, even the smallest fault can be seen. When you move the object away from the light, these faults are no longer visible. The lesson is clear. The nearer we come to Christ the more aware of our own sinfulness we will be.

31 FRIENDLINESS, PATIENCE, LEADERSHIP

SPIRITUAL READING Handbook Chapter XXXI - No. 3

We will not be good Legionaries if we are impatient, if we do not listen to others, if we are not sympathetic. As Legionaries we are constantly working with people, therefore people must be able to like us. But they cannot like us if we do not have certain good qualities. There are many good qualities which we must constantly strive to acquire but I will just mention three: Friendliness, Patience, and Leadership.

Friendliness: This means that we treat every single person with respect. Whether he is young or old rich or poor, educated or illiterate, we look on him as a brother in Christ. Let us ask ourselves honestly do we in fact, do this? For example, do I greet my juniors? Or members of another tribe? Or people who are poor? Some of these may not want to be called my friends but that does not matter. I must still respect them. Christ said: "If you love those who love you, what reward shall you have? Even the pagans do that". Again do I thank every person who helps me even in a small way. If a person asks me questions do I show that I am really interested? Friendliness means that I show kindness, love and respect for every person.

Patience: As Legionaries, we need much patience. People we try to help will disappoint us many times. Think of all the times people have promised us to come to church on Sundays, to fix their marriages and to have their children baptised, but week after week, they disappoint us. But if we are good Legionaries we will hide our disappointment and remain friendly and patient with such people. God's grace depends so much on our bringing it to other that we must hold it ever ready for them to accept and we may be holding it a long time.

Sometimes people want to spend a long time talking to us.

Are we patient with them? Do they feel free to come to us with their problems? An impatient manner will drive people away from Christ because it drives them away from us. We must train ourselves to be generous with our time for others. We must always be ready to listen with an understanding manner and with a sincere desire to give whatever help we can.

Leadership: A Legionary must be a leader, but this does not mean that he should be proud or try to act in a haughty way. It means that he wants to serve and he is always looking for opportunities to help others. He will help in his Parish in every possible way and he will encourage other Catholics to take an active part in church affairs too. A Legionary must show his leadership by thinking of new ways to make his Legion work more effective, and he must look out for new work which the Legion can do or look for new places where the Legion can be established.

Friendliness. Patience, Leadership, - these are important qualities that every Legionary should try to acquire. But we will never acquire them by our own effort alone. We must pray. We should often ask Our Lady to help us to obtain all the virtues necessary to make us good Legionaries.

32 VISITATION

SPIRITUAL READING-

Handbook Chapter XXXVIII - Section 10

Today I want to talk to you about visitation, and first of all I wish to remind you that the Handbook, chapter 38, has much to say on this subject. You should read it carefully. It is really inspiring. But here I simply wish to give you some practical rules about visitation. The rules might be summed up as follows: (1) know where you are going, (2) know why you are going, (3) know what you are going to say.

The first rule is 'Know where you are going'. In the presidium you are appointed to a particular area or a particular street. You should decide to visit the street systematically, that is, house by house. Often it happens that legionaries just wander aimlessly along the street trying to decide which house to visit first. They do not know where to start and so they waste precious time. Better visit all the houses, Catholics and non Catholics alike. And legionaries should have a notebook so that they can record the name of the street, the houses visited, the number of people in each house, their religion, their problems (if any) and whether or not they were invited back. If the notebook is carefully ruled in columns, these details could be entered without delay.

The second rule knows the purpose of your visit. It should be clear that you are not going on visitation for your own enjoyment. You are a representative of your presidium. You are a representative of the Church. Indeed you are a representative of Christ. This is a great responsibility, so you must exercise the greatest care. Before you go at all you must prepare, and that preparation should begin at the presidium meeting. Know the brother or sister who is to visit with you, and after the meeting arrange with him, or her, the definite time and place you will meet to go on visitation. The ideal thing would be to meet at the Church and make a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament and pray for the success of your work. It will not be possible for all of you to meet at the Church but, wherever you meet, you should say some short prayer (e.g.) "Come Holy Spirit", which you could say silently as you walked together to your place of work.

Your third rule is, when you arrive at a house know what you are going to say. Of course you will greet the people in a friendly and respectful manner, but do not waste too much time on this. The people will want to know who you are and what is the purpose of your visit. So without delay introduce yourselves as members of the Legion of Mary, and say that you are visiting all the houses in the area on behalf of the priests in the parish. Having heard this much, the people will probably tell you what religion they are and you will easily know if you are welcome. But if they do not tell you, you should politely say that you would like to know if they are Catholics or if they are interested in the Catholic religion. It is important to find out the religion of the people because obviously you would not speak to Catholics in the same way as you would talk to Protestants or Muslims.

When you visit a Catholic Family the questions you should have in mind are: are the parents attending Church: are they receiving the sacraments; if they are not, try to find out why. It might be because they have not been married in Church. Enquire about the children. See if they have been baptised and if they are being prepared for the other sacraments. It is amazing the number of Catholic parents who are careless in this regard. But if all the members of the family are practising Catholics, try to inspire them to greater things; (e.g.) encourage the family rosary; encourage them to have their house consecrated to the Sacred Heart, and make known to them the importance of going to Mass and receiving Holy Communion on the first Friday of every month, or better, you may be able to persuade some to go to Mass every day. Wherever possible, encourage Catholic families to pray for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, and try to convince parents that the greatest blessing that God could give to them is that a son or daughter should become a priest or a reverend sister. Finally, when visiting Catholic homes, be on the look out for suitable candidates for the Legion - either as active or auxiliary members.

Obviously all these things cannot be spoken about in one visit or indeed in anyone house. However, they are points to have in mind. Otherwise there is a danger that we will waste much time on general talk and achieve nothing.

When visiting Protestants your approach will be different. Perhaps you could talk about Christian unity, but here you must

be careful. Mary will say "We are all worshipping same God, so we are fine". But all is not fine. If all was fine you would not be visiting at all. Emphasize the things we have in common, but do not try to hide any points of catholic faith.

As regards Muslims may be we have been too timid in the past. By this I do not mean that we should be aggressive towards Muslims. Legionaries should never be aggressive or hostile towards any one, and they should never get involved in a heated argument. Your work is to spread the peace of Christ, not hatred. But when I say we have been too timid, I mean that we often have been too afraid to look for converts, and remember, Conversion work is one of the most important works of the Legion. So when visiting a Muslim family, you might ask if they would allow one of the children to become a Catholic. I think some would agree to such a suggestion. Do not be afraid to talk about Our Lady to the Muslims. They also have respect for her.

Finally, whether you are visiting Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, or pagans, your aim is to draw the people nearer to Christ. How you will do this will depend very much on how the Holy Spirit inspires you, and that is why you must pray to him often.

33 COURAGE

SPIRITUAL READING-

Hand Book Chapter XXVIII - No. 3

The Legion takes its name from the old Roman legion. This Roman Legion was, perhaps, the most magnificent fighting force the world has ever known. Its soldiers were highly trained, obedient and full of courage and loyalty to Rome. (See Handbook Appendix J).

Why did the Legion take its name from this famous pagan fighting force of many centuries ago? The answer is that many of the qualities that this pagan army had are also the qualities of a good legionary. The legionary is also a soldier, but he is fighting a spiritual battle, he is fighting against the forces of evil and like a loyal and faithful soldier will continue to fight until he achieves victory. The loyalty, bravery, Obedience and courage of the Roman

Soldier must also be shown by the Legionary, but now these qualities are being used in the service of Christ the King, to establish his kingdom on earth and to win souls for him.

What can we say of a soldier who is a coward? He sees the enemy or he knows where to find him, but instead of fighting bravely, he runs away and hides, or allows the enemy to defeat him by refusing to fight. What of a Legionary who lacks courage against the forces of evil and allows Satan to win victories, to lead people to eternal loss?

Each one of us should give serious consideration to this matter, and discover what kind of courage we have in this spiritual battle. At the present day there is a very great need for Christians who have real courage, who are ready to publicly profess their Christianity and defend it. We have far too many people who are Christians in name only.

At various times we hear or read of others attacking the Church, the Pope, the Bishops or Clergy. Others attack or mock some teachings or practices of the Church. How many Catholics get up and defend the Church? In most cases, Catholics remain silent or some will even join in the attacks themselves. What kind of Christianity is that? Where is the courage that should inspire us to defend the teaching of Christ and the Church which He founded.

If we really believe in Christ and in His teaching, why do we allow such things to continue while we remain silent? His enemies are speaking loud and strong, but we remain silent. This does not mean that we must go about quarrelling with people; that is not the spirit of Christ and will only drive people away from the Church. But we know the truth and we must be ready to explain it to others. We must be ready to show clearly in our daily lives that we are real followers of Christ and that we are not prepared to do things which are wrong and sinful. We must be faithful to our religious practices and beliefs and not neglect them because others may mock us or criticize us.

If this is necessary for every Christian, it is all the more necessary for the Legionary. A Legionary has promised to take an active part in the work of the apostolate. How can this be done unless the Legionary has courage to publicly profess his faith and try to lead others to Christ. As Legionaries, we shall have to do

Works which may be difficult and demand sacrifices. This same courage will be needed to perform such tasks successfully. Courage is needed to attend our weekly meeting regularly and fulfill the duty assigned to us each week. This is the type of Christianity that is so much needed today because all around us are people who are interested only in material things, in riches, in extravagant living, in enjoyment, in getting what they want even by evil means. We must have the courage to fight against this world spirit and bring Christ into daily life once more. Unless this is done, the present day evils will continue with, I disastrous consequences for countless souls.

Let us also remember that courage has its own reward, if you are ready to publicly profess your faith, to defend the Church, to try and bring the message of Christ to others, above all, to show Christ in your daily life, then people will respect you; they can see that you are sincere, that Yourself practice what you preach. But if you are known as a Catholic and live an evil life, people will lose respect for you and for the church you represent because they see you are just like the Pharisees, a hypocrite.

Courage is very much needed in our Christians today. Let us, as legionaries, give the example to others. Let us be real Catholics, let us be proud of the church we represent, let us defend it, let us bring its message to others. That is our work as true legionaries.

34 "WITHOUT HER WE CANNOT KNOW OR

LOVE THEE"

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XXXV - No. 7

The Legion of Mary was established to provide people with a means to take part in the work of the Apostolate, to help in telling other about Christ and his message, to bring people to Christ. Those who founded the legion decided to dedicate the organization to Mary and to work through her "They showed great wisdom in this decision because this was the very same means used by God himself in planning our salvation.

From the very beginning, Mary was given an essential part in God's plan. At the very moment of the fall of our first parents it was said in the scriptures that a woman would play an essential part in our future redemption. She was in God's mind then, and as the world waited for the redeemer to come, prophecy continued to speak of the woman and her child, who would crush the head of Satan. So the story of the future redemption cannot be considered without also considering this woman who will be the new Eve, bringing life and salvation to a human race that had lost all such through the first Eve.

When the time came eventually for the coming of the Redeemer, the woman was also ready. Mary was that woman. From all eternity she was the one who was chosen to be the mother of the Redeemer. Scripture gives us the story of the Annunciation, when this wonderful invitation was offered her. She was asked if she accepted the privilege offered to no other creature before or since, "would she be the mother of the One who was to redeem mankind. A Redeemer who would be the Son of God Himself. At that moment she was the representative of all mankind. God was offering us salvation. She was the one who would accept this offer on behalf of man. She was a worthy representative. She must have known that this would mean great suffering and sorrow for her but she willingly gave her consent and the work of salvation was begun. God had become man. Her son would be born in Bethlehem, and years later He would die on a cross on Calvary and man would once more be reconciled with God.

All the privileges that Mary received, all the honour that men have given her down through the ages come from that great fact that she was the mother of God. "All generations shall call me blessed". She provided for the needs of the Child as any mother does and for thirty years of His life He lived with her in their home at Nazareth. The scriptures tell us that as He was about to start his public ministry she was there again. At Cana in Galilee, it was at her request that He performed his first miracle when He changed water into wine at the marriage feast. So we can say that she also began his public ministry. When His mission was completed and He was about to die on the cross on Calvary, Mary was there at the foot of the cross playing her part in the work of salvation.

We see then that we cannot consider Christ without also considering Mary. She gave the Redeemer to the world. She took part in his work of redemption. We can also be sure that the fruits of that redemption are still applied to men through Mary. The church recognises her as the mediatrix of all graces, which means that all grace which come to men, come through Mary. She is still looking after the children who were redeemed by her son. This was the work given her by Christ himself on Calvary. This is the work she will continue to do the end of time.

As legionaries therefore, we know that in working with and through Mary we are following the same plan use by God himself. Surely He knew the effective way of bringing salvation to men. Why should we hesitate to follow his example. Not alone is it the best and most effective way, it is the only way and those who try to exclude Mary from the story of salvation are ignoring the clear teaching of the scriptures. Such an approach cannot meet with success.

Every catholic should have a strong devotion to Mary the mother of God. But legionaries are surely expected to honour Mary in a very special way. The legion is her army working for the salvation of souls. How can we call ourselves members of that army if we have not a very great love of Mary, our Queen. If we want success in the work of apostolate, Mary must be with us, she must be able to recognise us as her soldiers. Through her we can more effectively get to know her son, we shall better learn His message and how we are to fulfill it in our daily lives.

Therefore, it is recommended that legionaries practice frequent devotion to Mary and honour her in every way possible. The rosary is still the prayer most pleasing to her. Faithful recitation of the rosary regularly will surely keep us united to Mary obtain her help and lead us to her son. Let us always have a very great devotion to Mary, Queen of the legion and mother of our redeemer.

35 PERSONAL CONTACTS

SPIRITUAL READING *Handbook Chapter XXXIX - No. 4*

As Legionaries we know that we have a duty to seek conversion, we know we have a duty to visit and have personal contact with every individual, but the problem is how do we do this successfully? The answer is we must develop a Christ-like personality. Christ won more converts by His dynamic, sweet, gentle, loving personality than He did by His teaching. Many times we are so concerned with the teaching or the message that we completely forget that the person may not be ready to receive it. That was not Christ's way.

Let us recall the two disciples on the way to Emmaus although the great event of our salvation had happened they were unaware of it. They were so occupied with their own grief after the death of Christ that they were not aware of His presence with them. When Christ joined them they did not recognise Him.

Many times the people whom we contact have similar troubles. They may have family trouble, they seem lonely, depressed and without hope. What do we do? How can we show them there is hope?

Notice what Christ did with the disciples on the way to Emmaus. He did not come out immediately with the good news of our salvation. No. He first listens to them. Because He listens to them, the disciples trust this gracious stranger enough to tell Him their deepest feelings and fears. Now Christ has won them and, therefore, He can speak to them. He has found out their desires. He can speak His message to them to meet their needs. Here was a man, to them a perfect stranger, who really listened to them. He was really concerned about their problems. Christ's story does not end with just speaking to them. He shared the Eucharist with them. The Gospel tells us that they knew Him in the breaking of Bread.

Jesus is our model in winning converts or bringing back lapsed Catholics. When we visit people in their homes, or wherever the opportunity to meet them comes our way, we should try to enter into

Conversation with them. Be a good listener, and show that you are interested in their problems and interests.

Do not get bored if you want to win people for God. The art of converting is to conceal the technique. When both of you have talked at length, just ask the question, "Are you a Catholic?" Then if the answer is, "No" ask, "Why did you never think of becoming a Catholic?" The answer will be one of two: "No reason" or he will give the reason. Many say: "Because nobody ever asked me." Mr. Frank Duff (the man who began the Legion of Mary) told me that he was once on a boat coming from America when he got into conversation with a lady. She told him many of her problems in which he showed keen interest. Before they ended the conversation, he asked if she was a Catholic. When she replied that she wasn't, he asked her the reason. She replied, "I have been waiting thirty years for someone to ask me to become a Catholic." She was very happy and as soon as she arrived at her destination, she began to take instructions.

If a person whom you contact has problems about religion, explain them to him as best you can and then arrange for him to get instructions even if you don't wish to become a Catholic. Then switch the conversation back to what it had been. Do not force people to make more decisions than is necessary. Merely present the truth, but do not embarrass them. It is comparatively easy to force a man to accept the truth, but not so easy to convince him. Impress upon him that he should never become a Catholic unless he is convinced that it is the right religion and until he is ready to do all that the Catholic Church requires of him.

As we go on our work of conversion, let us take Mary with us. Let us pray fervently to her and seek her help. No one is more anxious than she to win people for her Divine Son. If we have miraculous medals we should give them to those people who are interested. But we must be careful to explain that they are not to be used as "talismans". We should emphasise that the medal is to remind us that Mary is our Mother and that we should pray to her.

Every Legionary should make an all out effort to get at least one convert a year. If we try, when the day of reckoning comes, we shall see how pleased God is with our efforts.

*SPIRITUAL READING—
Handbook Chapter XXVIII - Section 14*

"Ask and it will be given you, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you." (St. Luke 11, 9-10). These words were spoken by Jesus when his disciples, having watched Him in prayer, were obviously deeply impressed and asked Him to teach them how to pray. Jesus first of all gave them the words of that beautiful prayer, the Our Father, which sums up what our sentiments ought to be when we get on our knees to pray. Then in case they don't understand very well, he goes on to discuss with them how they would behave in the event of having to get help from a friend in the middle of the night. He said, the man who is in bed will be surprised at the disturbance and his first reaction will be to tell you to go away. If however you continue to worry him, he will eventually, for peace sake, get up and give you what you want. He brings the discussion to a close by making very clear the point he wants to make, saying: "If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children or friends what is good for them, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask." (Luke 11)

God is indeed our loving Father, always ready and waiting to hear from us, more willing to listen and give than we are to ask and receive. Almost every day someone we meet, or hear from, asks us to pray for them, and often without being asked, we see people in spiritual and material need and we know we ought to ask God's help for them. At times we can speak to people about God's mercy and encourage them to take their troubles to Him. When we meet people who regard this as preaching at them, they will not be willing to listen so what do we do then? Instead of regarding them as hopeless cases and dismissing them from our minds as such, let us turn to God who alone can judge.

Jesus lays down two conditions for our prayer to be effective: faith and perseverance. Faith, because unless we believe that God loves us and wants only what is best for us, our prayers will only be empty words, and as Shakespeare said: "Words without thoughts

never to heaven go". Perseverance in praying will move God to compassion, just as the man disturbed in the night had to give in to his friend. Our prayers will not always be answered just as we want or expect them to be, because God knows best. Again it calls for faith to accept the answer as it comes, but above all to be convinced that every prayer is not only heard but answered.

37 ASPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

*SPIRITUAL READING—
Handbook Chapter IV—Legionary Service
No. 2, 3*

We became Legionaries because we wanted to take an active part in the work of the apostolate. We must realise from the very beginning that this means we shall have to make many sacrifices if we want to fulfil our duties as Legionaries. It demands a spirit of sacrifice to spend some hours every week attending our meeting and doing our weekly work. Many of the works we undertake may be difficult and people may not always welcome us in our efforts to preach the message of Christ. In all such cases the spirit of sacrifice will be necessary if we are to continue in our work for the salvation of souls and the spread of the Church of Christ. Therefore our work as Legionaries will always be a work of sacrifice. We should not be surprised at this. The work of converting people to Christ has always demanded a Spirit of sacrifice.

Let us look at Christ Himself and how He won our salvation. He did not achieve this by an easy life. No! It was a life of great sacrifice from its first moments. He was not born in a magnificent palace with many people to attend Him and His mother. He was born in a stable, a place where animals were kept. Soon after His birth, He had to suffer the hardships of exile when Joseph had to take the Child and His mother and run away to Egypt because Herod wanted to kill the Child. When they returned to their own country, the family moved to a very poor village where Joseph had to work as a carpenter to provide for the daily needs of the family. It was a life of poverty and hardship.

During his three years of preaching, He went about on foot, traveling bad roads. He said that He had not even a place to lay His head. He had to depend on others for His daily food. He was constantly attacked and abused by the Pharisees and others. Finally, He was scourged, crowned with thorns, abused in a very shocking manner. He was given a heavy cross to carry to Calvary. He was nailed to the cross and left to die for three hours in very great suffering.

That was how He won our salvation. He told His apostles that if they wanted to follow Him, they also must take up their cross daily and suffer. He warned them that they would be abused, imprisoned and even killed. This is what happened and they with so many others, later died for the name of Christ. So the story of salvation is one of suffering, and the cross itself has become the sign of the Church established by Christ.

It must be clear to us; therefore, that suffering is part of the work of winning our own salvation and that of others. It is the way Christ showed us; we cannot establish some other way because there is no other. By sacrifice we obtain the grace of God for ourselves and for others and without His grace we can never achieve anything. Our life here on earth is only a preparation for the life to come. If we want to merit an eternal reward we must prove ourselves worthy of it and we can do that by showing that we are ready to take up our cross, to suffer for His name. By doing so, we also show to others that we ourselves believe in the message that we preach to others. How can we go out and tell others about a God who suffered and died to save us if, in our own lives, we are not ready to suffer also. Our own life is the best sermon we can ever preach, we shall win people much quicker by our own example than by any words we may say.

In this modern world it is not easy to accept difficulties, hardship, and suffering. All around us we see people who want to live an easy life. They want all the money possible and are ready to do evil things in order to get it, they want big cars and magnificent houses, they want lavish parties with food and drink for hundreds of people. Such people do not want to hear about a God who suffered and died on Calvary, who told us that we also must be ready to suffer if we want to merit eternal life. They will tell us that we are fools, and abuse us if we do not look for these things

also. We may be tempted by such people and the life they live. But we must not lose courage, we must remain strong in our faith, in our belief in the Christ who died on Calvary for us and who is calling us to follow Him. Our spirit of sacrifice will obtain for us a great reward, the joy of seeing God for ever in heaven, it will also win the grace of conversion for others to put aside their evil ways and listen to the message of Christ.

Each Legion meeting we attend should encourage us to new efforts and renew our own spirit of sacrifice. We have made a sacrifice in coming to our meeting. Let that same spirit of sacrifice grow in us so that our work for the salvation of others and the spread of the Church may constantly increase and prosper. But of course we should remember that sacrifice does not mean sadness. It can be a joy. Christ Himself said: "my yoke is easy, my burden is light."

38 GOD IS LOVE

*SPIRITUAL READING-
Handbook, Chapter, XXXVIII section 15*

"God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God abides in him." So wrote the Apostle John in his Epistle (1 Jn.4). Love is a word that is very much abused in the world today, and yet it is something that every human being longs for. When we go through the pages of Scripture, we see that it was love that made God create man, as if God was not satisfied with heaven all by Himself and his angels. God loves us and to show that love He made us to know, love and serve Him here on earth and to be happy with him forever in heaven.

In the Old Testament, the name, the holiness, and the glory of God are shown to us, but it is in the New Testament that we learn about a new richness of God's love. Again we quote the words of the Apostle John:

"He who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this was the love of God made manifest among us, that God sent his only son

into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. (1 Jn. 4)

That beautiful passage points out that God's love for us is shown in the way He saved us from our sins. Sin is the very opposite to love but it must be understood that when we sinned, God did not turn away from us it is we who turned away from God but He determined to come after us and save us.

In the natural order of things when someone loves us, we are glad to give them love in return. It is the same between God and man there must be a love relationship. God gave Ten Commandments to Moses, but Jesus came along and reduced them to two: Love God and love your neighbor. See how simple it is. Not a list of "don'ts", do something-love.

But we cannot love God without loving our neighbor. "If anyone says 'I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen' (1 Jn. 4).

This love of one's neighbor is important for every Christian but especially for us Legionaries, so we might begin by putting it into practice in our own praesidium. Too often we hear of quarrels, disputes and bitterness among legionaries. This just should not be. The world is full of hatred but it should find no place in our lives; we must examine ourselves carefully, on the following points. Do I show love and respect towards our officers? - towards the legionaries that are older than me? - towards those who are younger than me? - towards those who are not of my own tribe?

We must show love to all no matter what their age, their education, or their tribe. That means that we overlook their faults, that we be kind and helpful towards them. They are our brothers and sisters, our fellow workers in the great work of the apostolate. If we do not show love to these, how can we bring love to others?

Secondly, we must show love towards the people we visit, and we can do this only if we follow the advice of the handbook and try to see Christ in every person. It will not be easy to have love for some people, especially for those who do not receive us kindly.

But Christ himself said: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". (Mt. 5v41)

We must never forget that Christ suffered for all men. He loved all men. We must try to do the same. We must love our fellow legionaries the people we visit, the people we work with, the people we meet on the street, every body without exception.

Love is not some sentimental idea or something divorced from real life. Love means that we accept others as they are with all their faults just as God loves us as we are in spite of all our failings.

39

CHRISTIAN JOY

SPIRITUAL READING-

Handbook Chapter XXIII - Section 4

There are many sad people in the world today. Some are sad because they have experienced great suffering, disappointment, or failure. Such people deserve our sympathy. But there are other sad people for whom we find it difficult to have sympathy. These are the people who act like the Pharisees. They constantly wear a frown on their faces; they try to live very strict lives and they think that anyone who does not live like them is a sinner. Such people look on religion as a set of rules and regulations and they think of God as a kind of policeman, who is constantly watching to see if we do anything wrong so that he can punish us.

But this is not the kind of religion we find described in the Gospels. The very word "gospel" means good news, - joyful news. If we read the Scriptures we will see that the Apostles and the first Christians were joyful people. In fact no other religion stresses the importance of joy so much as does Christianity and no other book has as much to say about joy as the Holy Bible. Here are a few examples. The night before Jesus died, He preached a long sermon to the Apostles and He said "All this I have told you that the measure of your joy may be filled". (Jn 15) After the Ascension, the Apostles "returned with joy to Jerusalem". After Pentecost, the Apostles rejoiced because they were "found worthy

to suffer for Christ (Acts 5). And repeatedly in his epistles, St Paul wishes joy to his newly converted Christians.

The Apostles and St. Paul were full of joy because they realized that Christ had made them his close friends, and had called them to share in his work. Their joy came from knowing that in all their work they were united with Christ.

Everybody desires joy and happiness. Unfortunately too many look for it in the wrong place. Some people look for joy and happiness in having plenty of girl friends - or boy friends - as the case may be. Others seek it in money and much possessions.

But pleasure got in this way, quickly passes away, whereas the happiness and joy which we all strive for is something which lasts forever. Each person is made for God and this union with Him is the only reason for our living in this world. As St. Augustine says, "You have made me for yourself, O Lord, and my heart will not rest until it rests in you".

If we want happiness then, we must seek God in all things. But we cannot go to Him on our own. We must bring others with us. This is why we are very like the Apostles. They were joyful because they were called to share in Christ's work of saving the world. We as legionaries have been given the same work to do. We have reason to rejoice.

The people we visit should see that we are filled with peace and joy. If they do not, there is something wrong. If we seem to be perpetually sad and downhearted, if we feel that our legion work is an impossible burden, we are not true legionaries at all, and we must decide at once either to change our attitude or else to gracefully retire from the legion. This should be obvious when you consider what our work as legionaries is. When we are going on visitation, we are like sellers going to the market. What we are selling to others is Christ, but they can only see him through our words and actions. If they can see that Christ has given us something which they have not got - if they can see that He has given us the peace joy and happiness which they long for, they will gladly accept him. But if they think that Christ and his teaching has only made us sad and sorrowful, they will not welcome us or our religion.

However, we must not try to wear a false smile. People do not laugh for no reason, but if a funny situation does arise, laughter will come of its own accord. Christian joy is not something that we put on for a few minutes when we are talking to people. It is part of our life and it comes from union with Christ. Because Christ has called us to share in his work, and promised to be with us always, we should be convinced that nothing really evil can ever happen to us. We may meet with disappointments and we may have to suffer, but like the Apostles, let us rejoice that we have been found worthy to suffer for Christ. It does not matter what form the suffering takes whether it is sickness, disappointment or failure of one kind or another, so long as we accept the suffering willingly, and offer it up for conversion of sinners we really are suffering for Christ. Suffering accepted in this way will be much easier to bear. Indeed it will be a source of inward joy and peace for us.

It is easy to talk about joy in this way but it may not be always easy to experience it in our lives. Let us turn to our lady the Cause of our Joy and ask her to help us not just to be joyful ourselves, but to enable Us to bring joy to others especially to those who have heavy crosses to carry.

40 CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTIONS

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter-XXVII-NO.7

One of the greatest needs of our time, especially in this country is catechetical instruction. It is said to see vast numbers of baptized Catholics growing up in complete ignorance of their religion and their duties to God. There are not enough Priests and Sisters to do this work so lay people must help, and legionaries especially can give very valuable help. Indeed this should be one of the principal works of the legion of Mary.

But since it is such an important work we must prepare ourselves for it. We can do so by prayer frequent reception of the Sacraments and by studying the Bible so that we will be acquainted

with the life of Christ. This is necessary because the teacher of religion must make known to his pupils the loving warm personality of Jesus.

In our religious classes in the past, the emphasis was on questions and answers. We concentrated on informing the pupils rather than forming them. But what is the aim of all teaching of religion? Is it to get the pupils to learn all the Catholicism answers and all the Bible stories so that they will pass their examination? No, our aim is to form Christ in our pupils. To develop sons and daughters of God who will be active members of the mystical Body of Christ, the Church.

In every lesson, we are concerned with God and the pupil. The pupil's purpose in life is to reach God, and Christ is the means of achieving this. Christ himself said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; No one comes to the Father except through me."

I am not condemning the memorization of Catholicism answers. On the contrary, I recommend it, but only when the pupil fully understands the doctrine being taught. And above all, we must make the pupils realise that religion is not something to learn out of a book, but a life to be lived for twenty-four hours of the day. Our aim is to get them to practise in their daily lives what they have learnt. They should also be able to defend their faith when necessary and be able to explain it to non-Catholics. When non-Catholic asks questions, they have a right to an answer, so all of us should be prepared to give it. Hence we must be aware of our responsibilities and we must make our pupils aware of theirs.

It is a great challenge to us to develop in our pupils the virtues contrary to thieving, bribery and corruption. We must never lose sight of the fact that the pupils we teach today are the future Church and the future citizens.

The teacher of religion must do everything he can to teach religion in a way that it will be understood and appreciated. Jesus is our model Teacher. We cannot improve on his method. It is interesting to note that he never used a text book. He never gave a Catechism definition as we know it today. He taught mainly through parables and from people's everyday experiences. He knew the needs, the failings and virtues of His listeners and He

adapted His teaching to suit them. He let them see that He was deeply concerned about them. If we try to imitate Christ's method of teaching, the religion lesson will be a happy experience for our pupils. They will want to come back again to hear more of it.

This approach to teaching religion may seem too difficult for us. We might say, "there are others better qualified than I to teach". But if we do our best, God will give us all the help we need.

Think about Jesus choosing the Twelve Apostles. He did not look for high qualifications in these men who would later change the face of the earth. It was poor uneducated people that Jesus selected as His Apostles. Fisherman who were invited by Christ, left their nets and followed Him. A tax collector was invited and he also followed Jesus. You too, have been chosen and have freely followed Him. Jesus helped His Apostles. He will also help you.

But if there are some Legionaries who do not wish to teach, or who are not able to do so, they can act as helpers by visiting home and getting the children to attend religious instruction. The great desire of all Legionaries should be that the day will come when all things will be restored in Christ. Therefore, the Legionary can never relax and say that his job is done. We must keep on striving to bring souls to God, and remember that He will never be out-done in generosity.

"He that shall do and teach, shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:19)

"Those who have instructed many in virtue will shine as brightly as stars for all eternity" (Daniel 12:3)

41 MATERIAL RELIEF PROHIBITED

SPIRITUAL READING

Handbook Chapter XXXVIII section 2

One of the strongest Rules of the Legion is that material relief - Such as money, food and clothing - must not be given as our Legionary work.

Some people find this rule very difficult to understand. They think it is going against one of the strongest commands of Christ.

But once the rule is understood properly it will be seen that this is not so. We all know that charity to the poor is very good. Christ has told us that whenever we do to the least of His brothers we do to Him. So we cannot pass anyone by who is in need of help.

Why then is there a Legion rule against material relief? These are many reasons. Here are some of them: - The aim of the Legion of Mary is to bring spiritual help to people. Clearly then it has a mission to all men - to rich and poor alike. If the Legion were to give things to people it would quickly become known as a relief-giving organization. (i.e.) an organisation whose aim is to help the poor and the needy. If the Legion got such name, people who do not need relief would not welcome visits from Legionaries. Consequently the Legion could do nothing for such people even though they may be in great spiritual need.

But the giving of material relief might also restrict the work of the Legion among the poor. If the Legion started giving things, gifts would always be expected when Legionaries visit. If they didn't give, anything, people might be disappointed or get angry and say they never wished to see Legionaries again.

You can see then why the Legion is so strict on this rule that material relief must not be given. Let us observe this rule with great care at all times.

When you are on visitation, if you meet people who need money or food or clothes, you should report it to the Presidium. The presidium may then get in touch with some organization, such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which will be able to help. But if there is no organisation or society in the Parish that can help - or if the case is so urgent that it would be too long to postpone action until the next presidium meeting, you may get a friend, or some other person to do something to help. But be sure that he does not mention your name. It is very important that the help is not in any way associated with the Legion.

It might seem that we are making little of relief organisations. But this is not so. We should hold them in the highest regard and encourage them in every way - but we must never forget that the primary work of the Legion is spiritual. Material relief must be left to other organisations.

In conclusion it might be necessary to point out that works of service are not forbidden by the Legion. We can do shopping for people, clean their house, wash their clothes, cook their food and look after their children. Legionary work like this shows that we really have love for others and don't just talk about religion.

42 PRAETORIAN MEMBERSHIPS

SPIRITUAL READING *Handbook Chapter XXXIII-Section I*

The Praetorian are active Legionaries who decide to take on extra obligations. I wish to emphasise that they do all the duties that an active member is supposed to do. The praetorian degree is not an honour or a reward for one who has given years of faithful service to the Legion and now wishes to retire. A praetorian is one who is determined to continue doing all the work of an active legionary, but he wants to do more. So he takes on three extra duties. He promises to: (1) say all the prayers in the Tesseræ everyday; (2) to go to Mass and receive Holy Communion everyday; (3) to recite some form of the office every day.

These three points demand a little explanation. Firstly, the daily recitation of all the prayers in the Tesseræ. Many active legionaries already do this, though in fact they are obliged only to say the catena. But the Praetorians take it as an obligation on themselves to say all the prayers in the Tesseræ. This may seem to be a very small obligation, but so faithful say these prayers everyday demands great care and sincerity.

Secondly, daily Mass. The point to be explained here is that one should not be afraid to become a praetorian simply because he could not guarantee with absolute certainty that he would be able to go to Mass and receive Holy Communion everyday without fail. So long as one has a definite intention of going to Mass everyday, and is determined to make the necessary effort, that is all that is required. If afterwards one fails occasionally due to some unforeseen circumstances, he does not thereby break his promise.

Thirdly, the daily recitation of an Office approved by the Church. Many legionaries may not know what this means. Well,

an Office is a form of prayer, which is made up of psalms, scripture readings, and hymns. There are a number of different kinds of Office. A list of those from which the praetorian may choose is given in the Handbook. The details about how a Legionary becomes a praetorian are also given in the Handbook, but here I only wish to stress the importance of this degree of membership.

Every Legionary has a duty of advancing in holiness and of seeking closer union with God. A praetorian is one who tries to do just that. And the means which he uses, namely, the Mass, the Office, and prayers, are the means which have been used by the Saints themselves. There is no better way. In the Mass, Christ offers himself once more to the Father, and anyone who attends Mass has the privilege of taking part in the offering of this great sacrifice. And in the Holy Eucharist he receives Christ himself, the source of all holiness.

In the Office, not only has he the opportunity of saying the psalms, which are prayers inspired by God himself, but because the Office is the public prayer of the Church, anyone who recites it, is not just praying as an individual. He is joining thousands of others, priests, reverend sisters, reverend brothers, and lay people. Who are saying the same office that very same day?

You can see then how important the praetorians are. Not only are they trying to advance in holiness themselves, but by their prayers, they play a great part in the success of the Legion work.

I know it is not possible for all of you to become praetorians, but I am sure some of you could. Do think about it. The obligations are not that difficult. If you really tried, you could get to Mass everyday, and the saying of the Office does not take so much time. You probably waste a lot of time everyday reading useless material, or even doing nothing at all. How much better it would be to use that time to say the Office. So you should carefully consider the possibility of becoming a praetorian, - and I mean you should consider it carefully. Do not make a hasty decision and then find that you were not able to keep your promise. Study all the Handbook has to say on the praetorians. Ask advice from your spiritual director or from some experienced legionaries, but above all, ask advice from Our Lady herself. Pray to her that she may guide you to make the right decision. She may not want us

all to become praetorians, but I am sure she does want us all to become better legionaries, and that is something we can try to do right from this very day.

43 AUXILIARY MEMBERS

*SPIRITUAL READING-
Handbook chapter xxxiii - The Pri-
mary Degree, The Auxiliary*

In nearly every activity in life there are people working quietly and unnoted behind the scenes, but their work is important for the whole undertaking. In hotels, cooks work in the kitchen. The guests' never see them but they enjoy their food. In television shows, the stage managers and camera men are not seen by the audience, but their work is important for the success of the show.

The auxiliaries in the Legion of Mary can be compared to these back room boys. The auxiliaries are (in the words of the Handbook) "those who are unable or unwilling to assume the duties of active membership, but who associate themselves with the Legion by undertaking a service of prayer in its name".

The service of the Auxiliaries is a service of Prayer and the prayers they say are those on the Tessen (Legion Leaflet). These prayers are: (1) the prayer to the Holy Spirit; (2) 5 decades of Rosary; (3) the cantata; (4) the concluding prayers. The auxiliary promises to say all these prayers everyday. He may spread prayers throughout the day at his own convenience.

The call to prayer is imposed on all men. Christ himself said we must always pray. By this he meant us to make our work a prayer, but clearly he also meant us to set aside certain times especially for prayer - just as he did himself. The Church was founded in an atmosphere of prayer on Pentecost Sunday. The Apostles and Mary were together in prayer when the Holy Spirit came to them. In their preaching, the Apostles and St. Paul repeatedly call for prayer. For example, St. Paul said: "Cease not to pray and make supplication at all times in the Holy Spirit." (1 Tim 2).

Quite clearly, we cannot over-emphasise the importance of prayer, and that is why auxiliaries are essential to the Legion. The

Handbook compares them to people who make ammunition for an army that is out fighting a war. Just as the army has no hope of victory if it has no ammunition so the Legion has no chance of success if it is not sustained by prayer.

Who can be recruited as auxiliaries? The answer is easy. Any Catholic who is willing to undertake this service of prayer in the name of the Legion. But in order to undertake such a service, obviously, he must know something about the Legion. That is why the handbook says persons should not be accepted lightly as auxiliaries. They must first be given some information about the Legion. The duties of auxiliaries must be explained to them, and even after they have promised to become auxiliaries their names must be kept on a provisional list until a three month probation period is served. Only then is their names registered on the auxiliary roll of the Presidium. (This auxiliary register is kept by the Vice-President.) From this it should be clear that it is necessary to call back to see the auxiliaries often.

But these rules are not intended to be an obstacle to recruiting auxiliaries. The simple fact is that there are thousands of people who would willingly become auxiliaries if it was properly explained to them. Think of all the old people, the sick and infirm, and the people whose work or whose family responsibilities leaves them with little free time. These cannot become active legionaries but they would gladly become auxiliaries and thus be of tremendous service to the Legion. And it also should be pointed out that once such people become auxiliaries their lives have a new meaning. They are happy to know that they are members of Our Lady's Army, and happier still to know that their prayers and sufferings can help to win souls for Christ.

Every Presidium should have a good number of Auxiliaries. The Presidium should not ask them to do active work but it should keep in touch with them by visits and also by occasional rallies and meetings. The Actes is an admirable time to get active and auxiliary members together. So today, let us ask our Vice-President to look at his auxiliary register to see how many auxiliaries we have. I am sure we will be surprised to find we have so few. Surely this is enough to tell us to start recruiting auxiliaries at once.

44 RECRUITING

SPIRITUAL READING *Handbook Chapter XXII-No. 1*

I want to talk to you today about recruiting. In doing so I will answer three familiar questions: Why? Who? And How?

The first question is why? Why recruit at all? The reason is obvious. When a tree stops growing, it is already dead. So it is with the Legion. Some Legionnaires think that if their Presidium has 10 or 12 members, they should not recruit more until some of the present members drop out. But this is not so. A Presidium needs new blood regularly to keep it alive and active. The Presidium that has stopped recruiting is already a dead branch of the Legion. Its members will do no useful work, though they may do a lot of talking. We must not let that happen to this Presidium and the only way we can prevent it, is to look for new members, and if we think we already have too many members for one Presidium, then it is time for us to start another.

The second question is who? What kind of person should we try to recruit? The Handbook gives the answer. Any Catholic who leads an edifying life, is animated by the spirit of the Legion and is prepared to fulfill all the Legion duties is fit to become a member. But this could be misleading. It does not mean that before you recruit somebody you must ask him "are you animated by the spirit of the legion" or "are you prepared to fulfill all the Legion duties?" If you were to say such a thing to somebody, he would not know what you were talking about, because he does not yet know anything about the Legion spirit or Legion duties. In practice, any ordinary, sincere Catholic can become a legionary. He may have many faults but if he has good will, the Legion can mould him into a true Apostle.

But the most difficult question is how? How do you go about getting new members? Some people think the priest should make appeals from recruits for the Legion during his Sunday sermon. But this never works. The Legion depends on personal contact. You must go to the people yourself and ask them to join. In many places, the Legion has been successful in getting new members from

those who attend daily Mass. It is easy to see why. These are people who are already making a real effort to serve God by sanctifying each day. That is the type of people we want in the Legion. So for the coming week, at least two members should be appointed to attend Daily Mass with a view to getting recruits for the Legion.

But only a few people can attend daily Mass. You must see the others in their homes. When on visitation, recruiting must be always on your mind. Some Legionaries find it more difficult to visit Catholic homes than non-Catholic ones, because they just do not know what say to their fellow Catholics. Here is something you can say - ask them to join the Legion. Don't be afraid. Even the most unlikely person may become the best Legionary. But if some refuse to become active members, ask them to become auxiliaries. If you properly explain what it means to be an auxiliary, I am convinced many will join. Very few people refuse to pray for a good cause. By the way, when on visitation, always have some Tesseræ (Legion leaflets) with you. They will help a lot.

Finally, you should get recruits from among your friends. It is strange that some Legionaries do not tell their friends that they are in the Legion. Perhaps, they think it is part of the Legion secrecy. It is not. You should tell them. They may not know much about the Legion but when they know that their brother or their friend is in it, they will think that it cannot be too bad. And when you ask them to join, if they are still hesitant, your best advice to them is that which Jesus gave to his first followers: "Come and see".

But in spite of your efforts you may still find it difficult to get new members. You may find that the educated people and the young are slow to join. It is easy to say they are too proud or too wild. But it might not be all their fault. Maybe the Legion, - maybe this presidium has given a wrong impression. Teenagers may think that the Legion is an organisation for old people - and in their eyes, anyone over 30 is old. Educated people may think that the Legion does no work which would interest them. We must do everything possible to make the Legion attractive to such people.

We might begin by starting a junior Presidium - or if we have one already, see that it is going well. In this way, we will be training youths who will fill the senior ranks later on. May be we

could also start a special presidium for secondary school leavers. Attractive Legion work could be provided for them (e.g.) organising youth clubs, teaching catechism - and in certain cases teaching other subjects, also helping handicapped children or helping the old and disabled. Young people are by nature generous.

Educated people might be attracted to the Legion if it undertook such work as adult education or true devotion to the nation.

There is almost no end to the kinds of work the Legion can do. We must get our Presidium doing as many types as possible, because new work will bring new members and new members will bring new life to the Presidium.

45 "I AM ALL THINE"

SPIRITUAL READING-

Handbook Chapter XXVII - Section 5

When we joined the Legion, we were probably filled with the desire to do some spiritual work for others. Later, as we grew more and more involved in the Legion spirit, we realised that our task was an enormous one, calling for a complete giving over of ourselves to Mary so that she could use us to spread the Kingdom of her Son, Jesus. And so, on the Ascension day we came to the altar of Our Lady and we placed our hand on the Vexillum and said: "I am all thine, my Queen and my Mother, and all that I have is thine." Here we were expressing our complete dependence on her and we were offering ourselves entirely to her.

When we offer ourselves to our Lady like this, we might wonder what she wants us to do. Well, her command to us is the very same as it was to the waiters at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you." In other words, seek to do God's will in all things. We must ask her to enable us to know what God's will for us is, and also to have the generosity and the courage to do it. But to a great extent, God's will for all Legionaries is very clear already. You will find it stated in the standing instruction which is read for you every month. If you observe all these basic duties of the Legion, you are, in a very real way, being a faithful servant of Mary.

But you cannot relax and say, I am doing all my legion work already, nothing more is expected of me! We should remember the warning of St. Paul: "he that thinks he stands firm should be careful lest he fall." Going through life - especially for a legionary - is like climbing a steep hill. If we once relax in our efforts there is a danger that we will slip down to the bottom. We have to struggle on, with ever greater determination until we reach the top - and for us the top is heaven. We might express this more simply by saying that we must constantly strive to perform our legionary duties with greater faithfulness, with greater love and devotion. In a word we must constantly strive to become more holy.

At the acts ceremony we said, "I am all thine". Do we really act as if we belong to Our Lady? Do we seek her glory in all things? or do we look for our own glory in everything we do? Are we disappointed if we are not praised for the good work we do? Do we even feel insulted if we are not appointed officers? If that is so, then we cannot truly say, "I am all thine."

Let us forget about our own glory and seek only the glory of God and His blessed Mother. We can best do this by making Jesus known and loved among as many people as possible. We have Christ's own command, "Make disciples of all nations". We must take this command seriously. We have received the great gift of faith. We cannot stand idly by and selfishly retain this gift for ourselves while all around us people are living in ignorance and in sin. "freely have you received, freely give". (Mt. 10 v. 18).

As legionaries, we have said "all that I have is thine". Let us, then, use all that we have our prayers, our time, our talents, for the glory of God and the conversion of sinners. The multiplication of the loaves and fishes teaches us that we do not lose anything by giving. The owner of the loaves and fishes not only helped Jesus to feed 5,000, but he also got his own food, and he could claim the twelve baskets which remained over as well. He was richer by giving. It is the same with us legionaries. When we work for others we enrich ourselves. Cardinal Newman summed this up very well when he said "When we serve, we rule; when we give we have; when surrender ourselves, we are victors."

Let us then surrender ourselves completely to Our Lady in order that we may belong more fully to Jesus. This is what St.

Louis Marie De Montfort recommended in his book "The True Devotion." He recommended that we surrender to her our body and our soul, our goods of fortune, our interior and spiritual goods. This is the type of devotion to Our Lady that all legionaries should aim at, but they should study "The True Devotion" carefully before they try to practice it. In the meantime let us use the knowledge and ability we have in the service of our Blessed Mother. We can do this by carrying out all our legion duties with the greatest possible care.

46 MARY'S HUMILITY.

SPIRITUAL READING - Handbook Chapter XXVII Section 2

"He that is mighty hath done great things to me and holy is his name." We often misunderstand humility. We think it consists in speaking ill of ourselves; in failing to acknowledge the gift that we possess; in not seeing anything good in anything we do. But this is not what our lady did. Let us listen to her words in the Magnificat. "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, for behold from henceforth all generation will call me blessed."

When we hear Our Lady saying that all generations will call her blessed, we might think that this is pride. But it is not. It is true humility. Humility is truth, simplicity, sincerity. The humble Person sees whatever good gifts he has, not in order to praise himself - that would be pride - but to praise God who has given those gifts. That is what Mary was doing when she said: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me." Let us meditate for a moment on the "great things" that God had done for Mary.

Firstly, from the very beginning of time, God had chosen Mary to be the Mother of his Son. Long before she was born, she already existed in the mind of God as the mother of the Redeemer. Her son was to be the true son of God, equal to the Father, and so Mary, who was only a creature, could truly be called the Mother of God. This is a miracle we cannot sufficiently wonder at. In order that Mary should be worthy to become the mother of his Son, God filled her with his grace from the first moment of

her existence, so that she was preserved free from all stain of sin. This privilege we call the Immaculate Conception. But God performed another miracle for Mary. He enabled her to become a mother without ceasing to be a Virgin. This was something never before known in heaven or on earth.

These are "the great things" that God did for Mary. She did not hide these privileges, but neither did she pretend that they were in any way due to her own power. She knew they were entirely due to God so she said: "My soul magnifies the Lord."

Let us try to imitate Mary's humility. Let us see the great things God has done for us and let us praise his name for his goodness. Perhaps you think God has really done nothing for you, but if you examine your life, you will see that He has done wonders for you.

He has called you to the sacrament of baptism and thus made you his own child. He has repeatedly forgiven you your sins in the sacrament of Penance. He has given you his own Body to receive in the Holy Eucharist. He has called you into the Legion and thus made you one of his dear disciples.

He has given you many other gifts too. Perhaps you are very intelligent, or perhaps you have great talent for some particular work. You may be a good speaker, or you may have the ability to make friends with all kinds of people. All these are wonderful gifts. If you have any of them, do not feel proud because as scripture says: "what have you that you have not received". But, neither should you hide these gifts which you have. "Let your light shine before men." Use your talents to praise God, as Mary did, to bless his power, extol his bounty, and lovingly adore his holy name.

47 EDEL QUINN

*Handbook Chapter VII - Section 1 OR
Prayer Leaflet on Edel Quinn - Her Life*

Story

We are all trying to be saints - bringing ourselves closer to God. It is a long job - not until the end of our life can we achieve it properly. Some of our members though, do seem to be especially close to God - and these we should try to imitate.

Though we know that many people have led very good, holy lives, we cannot call them saints until the church has studied them, and the lives they led, and are sure that they must be in Heaven. The legion of Mary has its own very special person who, we are praying, will soon be called a saint by the church.

This person is Edel Quinn, a young Irish girl who spent the last eight years of her life working for the Legion in East Africa.

She was a very intelligent girl, and wanted to go to University but she left school at the age of seventeen to help support her younger brothers and sisters. While she was at work she met a member of the Legion of Mary and went along to a Legion meeting, she was accepted as a member and was soon spending almost every evening doing Legion work - going back several times in one week to people who were lonely or old. She didn't like visiting, but she tried to live her life the way Mary would have lived it.

She wanted to become a Reverend Sister, but waited until her younger brothers and sisters had finished their schooling. While she was waiting, she tried to live like a sister - going to Mass and Holy Communion each day, saying the Rosary, and spending a long time each day in prayer. In order to do this she used to get up very early and she often missed some of her meals.

When she was finally about to join the sisters, they found that she had tuberculosis. She wouldn't be able to become a sister, she was dying. She was always a very happy person, and even now when she had a big reason for being sad, she was still happy. In hospital she made everyone happy - as if she had gone there

for a holiday! The other patients often went to her for help instead of to the nurses.

After about a year and a half there, she was no better and no worse, so she decided to leave and make better use of the little time she had left to live. She went back to work and back to the Legion.

Three years later, in 1936, she offered to go as a Legion envoy to East Africa. Many people thought that she would die before she even got there, but they let her go.

She lived for eight years longer and started the Legion in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania. Nothing was too hard for her to try, and she never asked anyone to do anything she wouldn't do herself.

She had numerous difficulties to face besides all the travelling and her bad health. Many people were against the Legion, or wanted her to change the rules. But, in spite of all this, she started hundreds of hospitals and thus brought a new strength and love to the Catholic Church.

She did not let anyone know about her bad health until just before she died, when she wrote home that she was very tired. She died on May 12th, 1944 and is buried in Missionaries' Cemetery in Nairobi, Kenya.

There are many things about Edith that we can imitate - her happiness first of all, and her selflessness and courage - but most of all her spirit of faith and prayer. She never worried about the future, but left it all in God's hands, taking each day as it came and doing her best in everything that happened - knowing that everything was God's will. And she knew that regular, sincere prayer was the door to the treasures of God's love.

Let us try to imitate Edith Quinn and pray that one day, she will be known and loved by all Catholics.

48 CHRISTMAS

SPIRITUAL READING- Handbook Chapter XXXI - NO. 4

It is not many days now to the feast of Christmas. As Legionaries we will often think during these days about Mary, because her time is near. We will greet this mother for the birth of her son, our Saviour. At this time we will pray the joyful mysteries of the Rosary every day and we will think about the events of that time. We will give thanks to God for giving us such a Saviour and at the same time such a mother.

This birth touches us. The birth of Jesus is not the same as the birth of any other child. We usually rejoice at the naming ceremony of our Friends' child, even though the birth of that child does not do anything for us. The birth of Mary's child changed everything. It made us all children of God if we so wish. It changed us from creatures to real children of God. How? Because the child that Mary bore knew what he wanted, not like other children. He wanted to become one of us. Born into the family of human beings. It is his own wish to be with us, because he wants us to be with him always. That is why we have something to rejoice about. Many people do not know why they rejoice Christmas.

As Legionaries, it is our work to make more and more people know Mary, the cause of our joy, and her son, Jesus. We can make more people know about this and desire it and make an effort to be real, active Children of God. Who does not know Christmas time? The whole town and the whole world celebrate this feast. But many do not know the reason of celebrating, or they forget. We must remember the cause of our joy, and help others to remember. We must try to bring them to church to celebrate intelligently facing that, to Christmas day mass. I think the first one is better but the second may also be a place of blessing for them. Why do I say this?

Sometimes, in big towns, Christmas is a kind of fashion parade where people will put on their best clothes as for a big social event.

Sometimes it is just a time for big ceremonies and parties. At midnight mass there is not so much chance for this kind of showing off. People will be making vigil (aisun) like the shepherds. They will be making an effort to be awake when they are tired. They will be more likely to remember the first Christmas night when the angels came with the good news - not to the rich and the respectable people first, but to the ordinary workers in the fields.

Therefore, prepare your minds for Christmas. It only comes once in a year. Bring as many people as you can to Christmas Vigil. But also invite some to the Mass on Christmas day. By doing this you will have a happy Christmas and a special blessing from the child and his mother.

49 HOLY WEEK

SPIRITUAL READING— Handbook Chapter XXXIX - Section 4

Soon it will be Holy Week. All weeks and all times are holy, but this one is the greatest. In the three last days - Thursday, Friday and Saturday - the most important ceremonies of the whole year are done in the church. The whole people of God - people and their priests - will be very busy these days. They will be remembering the greatest days in all the days since the beginning of the world until now. But it will not be empty remembering. The power and the glory of our redemption will be present in those sacraments and those ceremonies of Holy Week. There is no end to the power of God which he wants to share to us. There is only an end and limit to our own desire to accept God's gifts.

Therefore, first of all, we must prepare our hearts to be big, and not to be small and mean. The limit of our heart is the limit of the grace that will be given to us in this time of power and grace. We are in the legion to help Mary do the work of her son, our Saviour. As we look around this town, we know that we are too weak to do this work. We need strength and power. Without God's grace we can do nothing. Holy week is the special time of God's salvation to us. In those three days, which will never be

forgotten in all the world the power and the victory was gained by Jesus.

On Thursday evening Jesus showed the power of his love for us. He called his followers to join him in eating the last meal together. Eating together is a sign of love in the family and between friends. Jesus said this and he showed it by washing his disciples' feet. He ate with his creatures to show them that he wanted them to be his friends and brothers (sons of mother). He spoke with them a long time that night. Some of his words are written down for us in St. John chapter 13 to 17. These words are spoken to us as well as to the apostles who first heard them. Those who have a chance should read them. There are no words of love like them in all the world, about the rest of that Thursday evening, read Matthew 26:20-30. (Perhaps we can read it now).

Friday is a day of mourning and horror, like a public execution of armed robbers. If we do not remember the words of Thursday we may think of nothing but the sadness. But, because it was all done for love of us, this awful day was not only the worst thing ever done by men, it is even called Good Friday.

Saturday night - the Easter Vigil - is the greatest of all feasts without exception. There is the whole heart and power of Christ and his church. The ceremony reminds us of our own baptism. Perhaps we will also have the joy of seeing new Christians baptised on that night of nights. Perhaps we will have helped, as Legionaries to bring one or two or more of them to the water of baptism and life. If so, what a joy on that night! If not, let us think. We are surrounded by non-Christians. We should not rest easy, but we should consider and plan how we can try, by next Easter Saturday to have brought some people to catechism class, to the water of eternal life. We can make start now, by inviting as many as possible to take part in those three great days of holy week.

*SPIRITUAL READING—
Handbook Chapter XXXVIII - No. 20/21*

If you are not a long time in the Legion, or if your presidium is not working at top speed, you may think that legionaries are a very sad and serious group of people and that they don't laugh or rejoice very much. But if you get to know the real spirit of the Legion a bit better, you will know that it is not a Mournful society. Legionaries should become more and more interested. In their work and their understanding and their prayer, they should become more like real Christians, more like the first Christians. The first Christians were very joyful people. Why is this?

At the time of Christ, the whole world was pagan. The pagans of that time were either rich people or slaves most of the rich ate and drank and fornicated until they were sick and tired of life before they were old. The slaves had no life at all, mostly. They were just bought and sold like cows or goats in the market. People in general said "Eat, drink and be merry because tomorrow we die" they certainly ate and drank and vomited it all up and began again. But their meriment did not succeed. They were dying of sadness and boredom.

Then a small group of people began to be known in their town. They were different. The pagans called them Christians because they worshiped a certain bush carpenter called Christ. They did not worship the gods of the government, so many of them were killed. In spite of this some of the pagan began to like the Christians because they loved one another, and they seemed to be joyful in spite of persecution, so more people joined them. In all the towns along the roads from Jerusalem to Samaria to Asia to Rome, the good news spread.

The pagans first heard something like this: God was born into this world in a certain bush country over there. He was kind and good and he spoke the truth. Because of this the politicians killed him. The truth is bitter. They killed the Lord like an armed robber. They nailed him to a cross between two thieves. But this is the good news: On the third day he rose again, alive and glo-

rious. We saw him. Peter saw him first. The others met him also and are with him and talked with him. He told them to tell the good news in Jerusalem and Samaria and Asia and Rome and to the ends of the Earth. It was good news because it was this news, although tomorrow we may die, yet Jesus the Lord has conquered death, not only for himself but also for all those who believe in him and do his work. With him we can live forever and share his glory and his joy.

The first Christians saw the risen Lord, or heard of him from witnesses. Their hearts were full of joy as they told their neighbours, going out two by two. That is just the same thing that Legionaries are doing to this day. They are spreading the good news. Those who spread bad news may be sad. But Legionaries rejoice. Their joy no man can take from them. Jesus is risen Alleluia!

51 PENTECOST

*SPIRITUAL READING—
Handbook Chapter XXXIX - Section 7*

Today we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world. Alleluia."

Let us first look at the events before the Pentecost and then at Pentecost day itself.

St. Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles that Jesus had shown himself alive to the Apostles after his Passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking to them about the Kingdom of God. When He had been at table with them, He told them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. "It is", He said, "What you have heard me speak about. John baptized with water but before many days you will be baptized with Holy Spirit." They thought He was going to restore the kingdom of Israel, but He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit

has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

These were Our Lord's last words on earth and immediately after His Ascension; the Apostles went to the upper room in Jerusalem where they devoted themselves to prayer with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

When Pentecost day came, they had all met in one room when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house, and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire. These separated and came to rest on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign languages as the spirit gave them the gift of speech. At that time there were many strangers in Jerusalem. These were Jews from various towns in North Africa and Europe who had come to Jerusalem for the feast. The sound of the mighty wind attracted them to the house where the Apostles were. They were amazed because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They said, "are not these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in his own native language?" some of the Jews laughed at the Apostles and said they were full of new wine. But Peter replied that they were filled, not with wine, but with the Holy Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit had come to the Apostles, they were new men. They were transformed and changed. Today the Holy Spirit wishes to come to us, to give us new life, to make us new people, changed from our old ways of selfishness and sin. Yes, the Holy Spirit can change us, and He really wishes to do so. There is only one thing that can stop Him and that is ourselves. We won't let Him. We don't believe we can be changed. We don't even want to be changed. We are afraid to be changed because we are happy as we are and we fear that to live as a true Christian, as a true apostle, would be too difficult.

Of course it would be difficult - indeed it would be impossible if we had to rely on our strength. But if the Holy Spirit comes to us, He will make it easy for us, because He can fill us with love, zeal and courage. He can enlighten our minds and make us understand the things that really matter. He can let us see how unimportant are many of the things we worry so much about, and

how infinitely valuable our immortal soul is. The Holy Spirit can make us understand the wonders of God's love for us, and fill us with the desire to go out and spread this love among others as the Apostles did. All this and more the Holy Spirit can do for us if we only allow him.

So let us open up our hearts to the Holy Spirit as we conclude with this sincere prayer to Him.

Come, O Holy Spirit, to each one of us. Fill our hearts with your love so that there will be no room in us for hatred, jealousy or greed. Help us to know God's will and enable us to keep all his commandments. Make us true legionaries, anxious to go out and make God's love known to the world. And above all, O Holy Spirit, when we are tempted or when we are in difficulty, may we have the consolation of knowing that you are always near us. Amen.

52 THE BEGINNING AND THE END.

SPIRITUAL READING
Handbook Chapter IX - No. 4
Last two Paragraphs.

At the end of the Index to the Legion Handbook, page 288, occur these words: "References to Our Blessed Lord have not been indexed. For every word of this Handbook has Him in mind, and therefore he should be found in every part of it. In every person, in every place, in every circumstance and happening, the Legionary should meet Jesus."

Now this is very true and important, because, whatever way we look at it, the Legion apostolate has no meaning at all unless it is directed to Jesus Christ Our Lord. The object of the Legion, we are told on page 3 are to advance the reign of Christ. It means no more and no less than establishing the reign of Christ over the hearts of as many men as we can possible reach. In other words, the Legion exists for the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the extension of Christianity, for the wider and firmer establishment of Christ's Church.

The name 'Christian' means a follower, a Disciple of Christ. We are just like those earlier followers of Jesus who walked with Him on the roads of Galilee and Judea, listening to His words, loving Him always, ever ready to do His bidding. We must always bear in mind that the Christian Religion is not just a society of religious-minded people who are bound by certain rules of right and wrong and certain beliefs and methods of worship. Above everything else, it is the Community of the Disciples of Jesus. We must think always that our principal duty as disciple of Jesus is to get to know Him better, to love Him better, and to serve Him better. As legionaries that is the principal thing that we should be trying to get others to do also.

First of all, we should know the Life of Our Lord thoroughly. There is a good short Life of Our Lord published by the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland in booklet form. Every legionary should buy a copy of this, or of some other life of Our Lord, and read it thoroughly, thinking well over, what is read, trying to understand its meaning as well as possible. Next the legionary should go to the best account of Our Lord's life of all, namely, the Holy Gospels. St. Matthew's Gospel is the best one to start with. It should be read over and over and thought on very carefully. Also every effort should be made to find out what the difficult parts means.

Finally, we should note that reading of the Life of Jesus, even in the Gospels, will not enable us to know Him properly unless we are faithful to prayer and to the reception of Holy Communion. The best way to get to know and to love someone is by personal contact, and so the best way to get to know and love our Divine Lord Jesus Christ is by prayer and Holy Communion through which He comes to dwell in our hearts.