

Functions

1. The Acies

Bearing in mind the importance of devotion to Mary in the Legion system, each year there shall be a consecration of legionaries to Our Lady. The consecration – which shall comprise both an individual and a collective consecration – will take place on the 25 March or on a day close thereto, and will be known as the Acies. This Latin word, meaning as it does an army ranged in battle array, is appropriate to a ceremony in which the legionaries as a body assemble to renew their fealty to Mary, Queen of the Legion, and from her to receive strength and blessing for yet another year's battle with the forces of evil. Moreover, the word is in effective contrast with praesidium, which contemplates the Legion, no longer drawn up in united array, but split up into its various sections, each engaged in its own particular sphere of duty.

The Acies is the great central annual function of the Legion, so that it is necessary to stress the importance of attendance on the part of every member. The essential idea of the Legion, upon which all else is built, is that of working in union with and in dependence on Mary, its Queen. The Acies is the solemn expression of that union and dependence, the renewal – individual and collective – of the legionary declaration of fealty. Hence it is manifest that any legionaries who can attend, and yet fail to do so, have little or none of the spirit of the Legion in them. The membership of such persons is not an asset to the Legion.

The following is the procedure: -

On the day fixed for the ceremony, the legionaries shall assemble – if possible in a church. At a convenient spot is placed a statue of the Immaculate Conception, suitably decorated with flowers and candles. In front of the statue will stand a large-size replica of the Legion vexillum, which is described in chapter 27.

The proceedings commence with a hymn, followed by the opening prayers of the Legion including the Rosary. An address by a priest on the significance of the consecration to Our Lady follows. Then the procession towards the statue begins. The Spiritual Directors go first in single file. Then the legionaries, also singly, except in the case of great numbers when they may advance in pairs. On reaching the vexillum, each one (or each pair) pauses; then, placing the hand upon the staff of the vexillum, he repeats vocally, as an individual act of consecration, the following words: "I am all yours, my Queen, my Mother, and all that I have is yours." This done, the vexillum is relinquished, the legionary bows slightly and passes on. If the number of legionaries is large, the making of the individual act of consecration will occupy some time, but the impressiveness of the ceremony will gain rather than lose by that fact. It will help if an organ be played during the procession of the legionaries to and from the statue.

It would not be in order to use more than one vexillum. Such expedient would shorten the proceedings, but it would destroy their unity. Moreover, the note of haste would be discordant. The special characteristic of the Acies should be its order and dignity.

When all legionaries have resumed their places, an act of consecration to Our Lady is said aloud by the priest on behalf of all present. Following this, the *Catena* is recited, all present standing. Then follows, if at all possible, Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament; after which the concluding prayers of the Legion are recited, a hymn is sung, and the Acies terminates.

It would be in order, of course, to have Holy Mass celebrated on the occasion of the Acies, in place of the Benediction, the other details of the ceremony remaining the same. The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery would absorb into itself and present to the Eternal Father, through the "one Mediator" and in the Holy Spirit, all the consecrations and spiritual offerings which are placed in the maternal hands of "the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord." (LG 61)

The above formula of consecration: "I am all yours, etc." should not be mechanically or thoughtlessly pronounced. Each one should compress into it the fullest degree of understanding and gratitude. As a help towards this, he should study *A Marian Synthesis*, appendix 11, page 351. This endeavours to set forth the unique part played by Mary in salvation, and accordingly the extent of each one's debt to her. Perhaps the Synthesis could be made the subject of the spiritual reading and of the *Allocutio* at a *praesidium* meeting shortly before the Acies. It is suggested that it be also used as the collective act of consecration at the ceremony itself.

"Mary is an object of terror to the powers of hell. She is 'terrible as an army set in battle array' (Song 6:10), for, like a wise Commander, she well knows how to dispose her power, her mercy, and her prayers for the confusion of the enemy and for the benefit of her servants." (St. Alphonsus Liguori)

(From the Legion of Mary *Handbook*, pages 173-175)

APPENDIX 11

A MARIAN SYNTHESIS: PRESENTING IN BRIEFEST POSSIBLE COMPASS THE STUPENDOUS ROLE OF COOPERATION GIVEN TO MARY IN THE TOTAL SCHEME OF SALVATION. IF DESIRED, IT MAY BE USED AT THE ACIES AS THE COLLECTIVE ACT OF CONSECRATION, OR (WITH THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OMITTED) ON OTHER OCCASIONS

Our Queen, our Mother,

The momentary pause before your standard gave time only for the briefest formula of love. Now we are more free to let our hearts reveal themselves and to enlarge that little act of consecration into a fuller profession of our faith in you.

We realise the immensity of our obligation to you. You gave us Jesus who is the source of all our good. But for you, we would still be in the darkness of the lost world, still under the ancient sentence of death. From that extreme of misery, you in that merciful design, assigning to you a part which could not be more noble. Though utterly dependent on the Redeemer, you were decreed his helpmate, brought as near to him as a creature could be, made indispensable to him.

From all eternity you were with him in the intention of the Most Holy Trinity, sharing his destiny: Proclaimed with him in the original prophecy as the Woman of whom he would be born: Joined with him in the prayers of those who awaited his coming: Made one with him in grace by the Immaculate Conception which wondrously redeemed you: United to him in all the mysteries of his earthly career from the angel's message to the cross: Established in glory with him by your Assumption: Seated beside him on his throne and administering with him the realm of grace.

Of all mankind, you alone were pure enough and strong enough in faith and spirit to become the New Eve who, with the New Adam, would reverse the Fall. Your prayer, already full of the Holy Spirit, drew Jesus down to earth. Your will and flesh conceived him. Your milk nourished him. Your surpassing love enveloped him and enabled him to grow in age and strength and wisdom. In a real way you moulded him who had made you. Then when the hour ordained for the offering was come, you freely gave the divine Lamb to his mission and to his sacrificial death on Calvary, enduring with him a plentitude of suffering like unto his own – such that you would have died along with him but that you were detained to nurse the infant Church.

Having thus been his inseparable helper throughout the accomplishing of Redemption, you have been no less with him, no less necessary to him, in the

Christian dispensation. Your maternity expanded to receive all those for whom he died. You mother mankind as you mothered him, because we are in him. Each soul remains committed to your patient care until at last you give it birth to life eternal.

As it was willed for the completeness of the plan of salvation that you should be instrumental in every part of it, so was it required that you be included in our worship. We must appreciate what you have done, and through our faith, our love, our service, attempt an adequate acknowledgment.

Having thus declared the vast extent and sweetness of our debt to you, what more is there to say but to repeat with all our hearts: "We are all yours, our Queen, our Mother, and all that we have is yours."

"This is the first time that an Ecumenical Council has presented so vast a unification of the Catholic doctrine on the place which Mary most holy occupies in the Mystery of Christ and the Church. But such is in conformity with the purpose, which the Council had proposed to itself, of manifesting the face of Holy Church. For Mary is joined to the Church in the very closest way. As has been magnificently declared: 'She is its grandest part, its best part, its special part, its choicest part.' (Rupert de Apoc.)

In truth the reality of the Church does not consist solely in its hierarchical structure, its liturgy, its sacraments, its judicial pronouncements. Its deeper essence, the primary source of its efficacious power to sanctify, are to be sought in its mystical union with Christ. This union cannot be regarded as something apart from her who is the Mother of the Word Incarnate, and whom Jesus Christ willed to unite so intimately to himself for the accomplishing of our salvation. This explains why it is that into that survey of the Church must properly be inserted the loving contemplation of the wonders which God has wrought in his holy Mother. The knowledge of the correct Catholic doctrine on Mary will always constitute a key to the exact comprehension of the Mystery of Christ and the Church.

And so it is that we proclaim the most holy Mary to be the Mother of the Church, that is to say of all the people of God, of the faithful and their pastors." (Pope Paul VI: Discourse during Vatican Council II)

[This quotation does not form part of the Synthesis.]

(From the Legion of Mary *Handbook*, pages 352-354)