

Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Devotion

The Four Secrets of the Legion

By Father Francis J. Peffley

The first secret of the Legion of Mary is the Secret Bag. Actually, it isn't the bag that is secret but what is put into it. Passed beneath the meeting table from member to member unobtrusively and inconspicuously after the allocutio, it is still a very obvious item in Legion proceedings since it provides for the Legion's only means of financial support. From the beginning, the Legion has never required dues from its members and never will. It relies on the affordability, charity and self-sacrifice of its members. It has been noted that the "sacrificial" offering placed in the bag should be a *real* sacrifice and should be proportionate to the time, effort and sacrifice that is required on one to be an Active member. (Hopefully a loose dollar or change in the pocket or purse will not be the reflection of that sacrifice!) By rule, every member's hand is to be put into the bag with or without a donation. (It presumes the hand will be empty coming out!) This simple act, when viewed from the world-wide perspective, supplies enough revenue for the entire Legion to support itself and to underwrite the sending of missionary Envoys and Extension Workers throughout the world. The "secret" aspect of this is that nobody knows who gives what. Secret Bag donations should not be seen lying next to a member's handbook at the meeting, nor should members be seen to be hastily opening a wallet or digging into a purse or pocket as the bag heads their way! The offering should be ready and hidden below the table when the bag makes its rounds. Remember the name, *Secret Bag!* On the local level the money is used to purchase supplies: rosaries, scapulars, miraculous medals, holy cards, and literature used in the work of the praesidium. Once a month, from the weekly collected balance, after local expenses are met, the bag should be emptied of the remaining amount (another amount will be forthcoming within the month) and donated to the next higher council, which in turn, from accumulated praesidium funds, sends its donation to its higher council. From there money is forwarded to the Concilium in Ireland for the maintaining of our global evangelizing organization.

The second secret: the Fourth Standing Instruction. In the early handbooks the fourth Standing Instruction read as follows: "*The preservation of an absolute secrecy in regard to any matter discussed at the meeting or learned in connection with the Legionary work.*" The current handbook re-phrases this: "*Absolute respect for the confidential nature of many matters discussed at the meeting or learned in connection with legionary work.*" That previous rule of "secrecy" is still in effect; with the word "secrecy" stretched out to read, "Absolute respect for the confidential nature of." And with the modest change of "*many*" matters learned or discussed, we are aware of the common understanding among legionaries that knowledge gained on assignments or discussed at meetings (names, state of life, state of mind, state of soul, circumstances of

those visited or situations discussed at meetings) is “classified information,” limited to Legion ears only, and usually for those legionaries closely involved. But the Legion of Mary itself is not a secret, and should be made known to everyone in every place: its purpose, its spirit, its works, its successes, its benefits and above all its Queen and Mother!

The third secret of the Legion is what I like to call *The Secret of the Rosary*, from the title of a book by St. Louis de Montfort. It means not that the rosary is kept a secret but that its dynamic power is generally unknown. The secret of the rosary is its power against sin and evil and its power to generate goodness. I often tell the story of a lax Catholic friend of mine who began saying the rosary after reading *The Secret of the Rosary*; he came back to the sacraments, entered the seminary and is now a priest! Bishop Hugh O’Boyle of Ireland once said that sin and the rosary cannot coexist in the same person. Either a person will give up sinning or they’ll give up saying the rosary. True prayer and true sin are not able to coexist. And this is just part of the secret of the power of the rosary, that it leads lapsed and lax Catholics to inner conversion or brings them back to the sacraments. Bishop Sheen noted that if you teach a non-Catholic to persevere in praying the rosary he will either stop praying the rosary or become Catholic. He will be pulled into the Catholic Church by “Our Lady’s safety rope,” as the rosary has been called! The rosary is also an unfailing and powerful weapon against temptation and evil. It has been compared to David’s little stones and sling he used against Goliath. That string of small beads is our reliable sling in the face of personal trial and temptation, as well as being a winning weapon against the Goliath of evil we face in the world today.

The fourth secret of the Legion is the secret of Mary. Again, it’s taken from a book by St. Louis de Montfort called *The Secret of Mary* in which he asserts that Our Lady is so precious in God’s sight that he doesn’t share her with everybody, that he sort of keeps her to himself and only shares her with his closest friends! De Montfort claims this is why Our Lady is not mentioned much in scripture, because she is God’s personal treasure. De Montfort explains that the secret of Mary is not Mary herself since she is universally known; the secret is in the *True Devotion Consecration* to her, a sure but hidden path to holiness that is “secret” only because so few are aware of it. If I were to ask at Sunday Mass how many are familiar with or have read the book *True Devotion to Mary* by Saint Louis de Montfort, perhaps fifty hands out of a thousand would go up. In contrast with the second secret above cautioning confidentiality, this secret must be divulged, it must be made known. Since September 7, 1921, God has revealed his secret to the Legion of Mary, has opened his jewel box, so to speak, and handed to legionaries his personal treasure. Legionaries must teach, preach and reach this unnoticed lifeline to holiness to everyone – the True Devotion Consecration which has produced more saints in the last few hundred years than any other form of devotion: St. Louis de Montfort, St. Therese, the Little Flower, Frank Duff, Edel Quinn, Alfie Lambe, Maximilian Kolbe, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II. These and more have discovered, lived and disclosed this secret of Mary. It is

hoped that every legionary will be a “close friend” of God and accept this treasure for themselves and pass it on to others.