

*Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Spirit*

## **The Gospel to the World**

By Father Francis J. Peffley

In Chapter 16 of the gospel of Mark is found Our Lord's last words and testament. These are not his last words before death but before his final appearance to the apostles. His dying words were: "Into your hands I commend my spirit; it is finished." His part of the Father's work was done; the work of the apostles and their successors was about to begin. The last words of loved ones are precious and are taken seriously. What were his last words? They were a commission, a commandment to take up and complete the work he had begun while in his short time on earth: "*Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation!*" This is the "Ascension Commandment," the commandment that Frank Duff has said the Legion is *obsessed* with. By Baptism and Confirmation Catholics and especially legionaries are actually obliged to follow that commandment; it is one of the two fundamental features of the Christian identity, the other being the pursuit of personal holiness.

To fulfill the last wishes of a loved one is an honor and an opportunity to give a proof of love. What Our Lord then asked the apostles to do and now his followers to do is what has been happening for over 2000 years; it is why we are Catholics today: somebody passed on the Faith to us! Parents, grandparents, a friend, neighbor or relative proclaimed the good news and passed on the gift of the true Faith. Our love for Christ should be dominated by the desire to fulfill his request to offer his gift to everyone, to pass it on to as many people as we can. The handbook insists that when Christ said "all" he meant *all* – each and every person individually – for each and every person, from infant to elderly, is of infinite value, not only because he gave his life for them on the cross (their price tag is the blood of God!) but because he created them with an immortal soul which will live forever in either Heaven or Hell. It is important to recall often that for them their earth-life will end, but their eternal life *cannot* end.

It is because of this love for each soul – and with a special love for his faithful followers – that he arranged for the members of his Mystical Body to complete his giving of love by "proclaiming the good news to the whole of creation." He did not say, "Convert to the good news the whole of creation," for that would be impossible and contrary to his intent, which is to have every soul approached and *offered* the true Faith. That is our work: to offer *his* gift of love to his children through *our* gift of love for his children. It means a diligence to keep his last words alive by alerting each person we meet to the reality of his love for them, by being willing to go to any lengths to insure their eternal happiness which is union with him in heaven.

In the chapter of the handbook entitled *His Last Testament*, there are lines written by Frank Duff in which he shares with his legionaries the Legion's aspirations to proclaim the gospel. It is the longest complete sentence in the handbook and has been called a *Canticle of Evangelization*; I think it should be read reverently and often by every legionary and, for that matter, by every Catholic, in order to keep the Lord's last words ever alive in mind and heart.

## **A Canticle of Evangelization**

*"Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."*

That Christian commission  
drastically drives us out  
to people everywhere –  
to the least ones,  
to the greatest ones  
to those near,  
to those remote,  
to the ordinary people,  
to the wickedest,  
to the farthest shack,  
to all afflicted creatures,  
to the diabolical types,  
to the loneliest lighthouse,  
to the leper,  
to the forgotten sort,  
to the victims of drink and vice,  
to the dangerous classes,  
to the dwellers in caves and caravans,  
to those on the battlefield,  
to those who hide,  
to the avoided places,  
to the lowest den,  
to the icy wastes,  
to the sun-baked desert,  
to the densest jungle,  
to the dismal swamp,  
to the uncharted island,  
to the undiscovered tribe,  
out into the absolute unknown  
to find if there is someone living there,  
right on to the ends of the earth  
where the rainbow rests!  
No one must evade our search  
lest the gentle Jesus  
frown upon us.