

Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Spirit

The Spirit of the Legion

Part One

By Father Francis J. Peffley

The handbook, when touching on the duties of the member – aside from the four Standing Instructions – refers to a legionary's devotion to Mary as a *duty*: "... as much an obligation of membership as the weekly meeting or the active work. *This is a point of view with which members cannot be too deeply impressed.*" Of course, true love should never be considered a duty, but rather a willingness to give. So when touching on the spirit of the Legion the handbook states that Mary herself is that spirit, and that members aspire to that spirit by imitating her virtues. Legionaries must include in that "duty" mentioned above the desire to develop the ten virtues of Our Lady as found in the writings of St. Louis de Montfort. It is said to pray to the saints is a holy act, but to imitate their virtues is a state of holiness. Legionaries who take on the practice of the ten principle virtues of Our Lady – who is herself the spirit of the Legion – will themselves become that very spirit in union with her! As you know, a virtue is a habit of goodness that becomes established in the soul and affects the whole life and makeup of the person. The desire for virtue is the fundamental disposition every Christian should have, and Mary was the perfect Christian. What better way to acquire these virtues than to have the Legion system and principles for our guide, as it was for Frank Duff, Edel Quinn and Alfie Lambe.

Her Profound Humility

Profound humility is the first of Mary's virtues to be considered. Sometimes to become humble necessitates being humiliated; other times it means accepting honest praise honestly! It is said to pray for humility is a dangerous thing, for it is one prayer that is usually answered! And the other prayer that is most often answered is for suffering, but that is for the select few and not recommended for the faint-hearted! To be safe, praying for God's Will is the way to go, since it is the one prayer that is *always* answered because God's Will happens all the time! However, to be meek and humble of heart like Jesus and Mary is the virtue to be prayed for always. Though she was God's masterpiece of creation, she was the most humble of all his creatures because she knew and acknowledged that her unique blessings, virtue and holiness were gifts from God. A true legionary is a humble person, and humility is the best item to take on the praesidium assignment, because people are usually inclined to accept a humble person. As Our Lady was the humble handmaid of the Lord, so legionaries are called to be humble and meek instruments in the hand of God. The Bible says God gives

grace to the humble and resists the proud, so humble legionaries can always count on available grace in their meetings and on their work.

Her Perfect Obedience

Mary was perfectly obedient to the will of God. She asked that it be done to her according to his Word, his Word to which she listened, and which she obeyed without question or hesitation. She listened, assented and obeyed. Legionaries imitate her in this virtue when they listen to God and obey his laws, when they listen to the Church and obey its rules, when they listen to the Legion, assent to the Holy Spirit in the Promise, and obey the rules of membership. *Perfect* obedience comes when the members consciously know they perform all their actions *from the motive of pure love of God* as Mary did.

Her Angelical Sweetness

This is a quality a legionary cannot do without, and if once acquired will definitely mean identifying with the Blessed Mother, for angelical sweetness – not just ordinary sweetness – is her “body language”, her style, her outer organic expression of her love. To imitate her in this virtue will require of some legionaries heroic effort, for each is unique in temperament and desire. Legionaries faithful to their handbook will take to heart the section entitled INFINITE PATIENCE AND SWEETNESS MUST BE LAVISHED ON A PRICELESS SOUL. Note the words chosen to emphasize this point: *Infinite* patience and sweetness *must be lavished* on a priceless soul! To be willing to make this effort to apply her sweet way of acting – for example when tempers steam and irritation boils, or when rebuffed or criticized – is the calling to high sanctity. The transformation that will take place in the soul and actions of legionaries who answer this call will bring peace and calming resolution to every situation and truly turn the legionaries into living copies of Mary.