

Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Spirit

The Spirit of the Legion

Part Two

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Her Continual Prayer

The fourth virtue of Mary is her continual prayer. For legionaries, a normal day could consist of the Morning Offering or a short renewal of the True Devotion consecration, Holy Mass, perhaps Hours from the Office or the rosary, Grace before and after meals, Legion Prayers and night prayer. This is commendable, but it is not continual. If imitation of Our Lady's *continual* prayer is to be a reality, it must be based on an awareness of the Presence of God, who is present by his *power* as sustaining creator of the world, by his *providence* as our caring guide to heaven, and by his actual *indwelling* of our souls by sanctifying grace. Keeping some notion of this Presence in mind from moment to moment, with occasional personal aspirations, will help in the practice of continual prayer. The story is told of a holy grandfather whose grandchild asked why he always had a rubber band around his wrist. "To remind me that God is always here," he said. "The rubber band bothers me from time to time, reminding me to talk to God." Being full of Grace, Our Lady not only lived *in* the presence of God but *was* the presence of God. It is in the practice of this awareness of God's presence that legionaries can truly imitate Our Lady in this virtue.

Her Universal Mortification

The word *mortification* means penance in the form of self-denial or sacrifice in the process of *dying to self*, which is the actual meaning of the word. An example would be to be *mortified* in an embarrassing situation – "I could have *died!*" or to be named Morticia as in the Addams Family TV show! Our Lady's mortification was not like ours, since she never knew sin. Hers was made clear at the Annunciation, with her total preference for God's Will over her own, and this was the state in which she lived, moment by present moment, her entire earthly life. This is our ideal, but for us with a human nature weakened by original sin and compounded by personal sin, mortification becomes a daily willing against "the world, the flesh and the devil, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life." A legionary's sincere pursuit of sanctity must include some practice of mortification, must have the intention of willingness to prefer God's will over his own, in all the sequences of daily life, and to maintain the practice till actual death. It is said "Love is in the Will," and if mortification is looked upon as a proof of love for God and Our Lady rather than as a difficult ascetical practice

to attain virtue, it is possible for legionaries to share in Our Lady's Universal Mortification.

Her Spotless Purity

Of the ten virtues of Mary recommended for imitation by legionaries, her Spotless Purity is the most inimitable when we consider her as the Immaculate Conception since, from the very first second of her existence, she was created pure and lived in that state her entire life, whereas the rest of mankind must endure the sad effects of original sin in human nature. Mother Teresa once said "There is no holiness without purity." The Legion of Mary is a means of perfecting that human nature by offering a system of holiness, and in the Legionary Promise is found support for the meditative legionaries who make this prayer their own: *that I may be pure in her who was made Immaculate by you*, and from the Concluding Prayer for faith: *to perform all my actions from the motive of pure love of You*.

Her Heroic Patience

The word *patient* comes from the Latin word *patiens* which means the willingness or ability to suffer, "*to bear pains or trials calmly or without complaint*," or as the dictionary continues, "to manifest forbearance under provocation or strain." A patient person is someone who suffers well, who is not "hasty or impetuous, who is steadfast despite opposition, difficulty or adversity." When these definitions are applied to Mary, whose motherhood was lived under the mental and emotional shadow of the impending death of her Son, the One and Only God, and the stark awareness of the reality of his actual crucifixion – yet having to go through the day to day routines of ordinary life, dealing with circumstances and people with their various personalities and moods – we get some sense of what her heroic patience might have been.

All Christians, called to sanctity, are expected to practice patience, and since sanctity is the object of the Legion, it would seem legionaries are called to practice not merely *normal* patience but *heroic* patience in imitation of their mother. A re-reading and assimilating of the above definitions into mental prayer and trying to apply them to personal and legionary life is indeed a worthy practice and goal for all legionaries.