

Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Things

The Legion Picture

By Father Francis J. Peffley

The interesting and unusual picture on the cover of the handbook and tessera was created by Hubert McGoldrick, a young Dublin stained-glass artist in the early days of the Legion's history. It is unique in that it presents a visual file or compendium of the *spirit, purpose, theology* and *devotion* of the Legion of Mary within the confines of a single painting.

Spirit

First to catch the eye is the domination of the dove – symbol of the Holy Spirit – hovering over the entire scene and overshadowing the Blessed Virgin, recalling the Annunciation and Pentecost, and emphasizing Mary as the instrument of the Holy Spirit to bring Christ to the world through her Legion. Then we see Our Lady as a pillar of fire, enveloped by the flaming Spirit of God, with her halo his color of red, guiding and protecting the Church and her legionaries towards intimate union with Christ and the promised land of heaven. This recalls the pillar of fire of the Old Testament, which guided and protected the chosen People of God toward the Promised Land. And below, at her feet, not easily noticed, are very fine and precise lines of red, symbolizing grace radiating towards her faithful legionaries.

Purpose

Surrounding Our Lady are the sister and brother legionaries holding the two great symbols of love and sanctity: the crucifix and the rosary. St. Louis de Montfort said that there will be legionaries of the latter times who would have the names of Jesus and Mary on their lips, and a crucifix and rosary in their hands – their weapons in the war against evil as they struggle for holiness in themselves and in the world. And notice that these legionaries – “in battle array” – in orderly, unified lines going back as far as the eye can see and representing all Active and Auxiliary members on earth and in eternity – *are following Our Lady to victory*, holding high the Legion banner, and the Vexillum, the Legion Standard which encapsulates the Legion's full motive and mission: to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit through Mary, and to work for them as they seek to conquer the world.

Theology

The border forming a frame for the full picture features three quotations from the Bible. Leading down into the bottom left corner are the words *Beata Quae Credidit* meaning *Blessed is she who believed*, a quotation from Elizabeth who

said, “Mary, blessed are you who believed what God revealed to you would be fulfilled.” Along the bottom and up the side is seen *Muliere Ecce Filius Tuus – Ecce Mater Tua*, the Savior’s words to his mother and St. John from the cross: “Woman behold your son, son behold your Mother.” The final quotation from Scripture, running up the left border across and down the right hand side translates as “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head.*” Mary, as the woman of Faith, whose consent to the angel’s proposition made redemption possible; Mary, as spiritual mother of the Mystical Body of Christ; and Mary, the woman of prophecy, who, co-redeeming with her divine Son from the very beginning, is the same Mary of the Legion, whose legionaries she mobilizes and trains to “strike” and crush the ancient head of evil.

Devotion

Above Our Lady’s head are the Latin words *Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum*, “My soul magnifies the Lord,” the opening words of the Catena, the “chain” of prayer which links all legionaries to each other and to Our Lady, and which is depicted by the design of red links of chain around the border. The words show that Our Lady not only does not interfere in or obscure the way to Christ, but magnifies him and is the light on the way to him. A close look at our Lady’s forehead will reveal a star, a reminder that she is “Star of the Sea” and the “Morning Star,” guiding wandering souls to Christ and brightening the way of those groping in darkness. Our Lady with her arms extended as on the Miraculous Medal shows her to be the Mediatrix of all Grace, and her stepping on the serpent shows that she is the new Eve, destined to crush the head of that serpent. The first Eve said no to God – the new Eve said yes to God; the first Eve was tricked into sin by the serpent, but the new Eve crushes sin with the serpent under her feet, as she stands on the dark globe of the world.

In contrast to the orderly red lines of grace on the upper side of the globe, the irregular, disordered black lines below the globe show the influence of evil on mankind. Underneath the writhing serpent with its angry, hateful head we see some of the devil’s armed legionaries, in unmatched uniforms, mingled with a confused collection of souls, those people living “in darkness and in the shadow of death,” the ones the legionaries are marching forward to save. In the background is seen blue, the color of dawn, the color representing Our Lady coming forth as the morning rising, for she was the herald of the dawn of Salvation, bringing Christ into the world.

The final way of looking at the Legion picture is to look at it as the devil would. We know that the enemy’s intention is always to distort the truth, goodness and beauty of God’s world and to attempt to put himself in God’s place by trying to turn everything upside down. So by turning the Legion picture upside down, we see the way the devil would like things to be: there is the mockery of the Mass, with the chalice and the host, with Satan in the place of Christ, radiating his evil

on sinful humanity and making immobile the Legion, Our Lady and the Holy Spirit!

Our Lady has shown her legionaries the beauty and grandeur of the Legion through this inspired picture with its warning that the enemy is ever present. Looking at this icon of her Legion, knowing it to be an inspired composite of all that the Legion is known to be, may her legionaries forever find themselves in that ordered and unified line of Our Lady's loyal and courageous ones, ever marching victorious over evil and into Eternal Life.