

## *Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Things*

### **The Vexillum**

By Father Francis J. Peffley

The Legion Standard, or Vexillum, is the art-piece made of metal and marble which stands on all the Legion altars of the world. It is modeled on the vexillum of the historic Roman Legion, known as the greatest fighting force in all of history. Its soldiers were known for their dedication, courage, endurance, and loyalty to the emperor. Their ability to work as a team, to be united under the one leader with the vision to conquer the world is exemplary. The Legion of Mary vexillum symbolizes that these same qualities are to be found in the members of the new “Roman” legion, the Legion of Mary, Empress of the world and Queen of Heaven and Earth.

The old Roman standard consisted of three parts: a globe, representing the world, topped by an image of the emperor, and above that an eagle with outspread wings, symbolizing the empire’s dominion of the entire world. Just as the Bible mentions the Holy Spirit hovering over the waters at the time of creation, over the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, over Our Lady at the Annunciation, and over the apostles and the early Church at Pentecost, so the Legion replaced the eagle with a dove with outspread wings, representing the Holy Spirit, hovering over the world with the spirit of peace and dynamic love, which he infuses into the Church and the Legion for the eventual coming of the reign of Christ. The Holy Spirit hovers over all Legion members, in their meetings, works and activities, and they are constantly reminded of him by the prayers, the Legion Promise, and by the ever-present vexillum on their altars, as he brings to life, through them, Our Lady’s care for souls.

On the Roman standard would be found the words *Pax Romana* – a reminder of the empire’s universal presence in the world – and the image of the emperor at that time. The words on the present vexillum are the words *Legio Mariae*, a Latin reminder of the universal presence of the Legion of Mary in the world today. The image of the emperor has been replaced by the image of Mary in the miraculous medal, showing her as mediatrix of grace, distributor of all graces. By this embedding of the miraculous medal in the vexillum, members are reminded of how important a tool it is to be used in Legion work. Immediately above the miraculous medal, to left and right, are two flowers, barely noticed in the design – a rose and a lily: the rose, a symbol of Mary, Rose of Sharon, and the lily, traditional symbol of St. Joseph. Together they make reference to the “Mystical Home of Nazareth” described in the handbook.

The staff of the Roman vexillum linked the emperor to the globe of the world beneath him, thus symbolizing his ruling power; for the Legion, Our Lady is above the world, channeling her graces and care through the staff, a symbol of

her organization. It should be noted that this is where the members place their hands during the making of the Promise and at the Acies consecration, realizing they are the channel between Our Lady and the world as she seeks out and serves her Son. As the old Roman legion would use the globe as their statement of intention to conquer the world for Rome, the Legion of Mary sees the globe as a symbol of the potential domain of Christ and would seek to conquer the world for him.

So legionaries must remember to place themselves in this position between the Holy Spirit and Mary, and continue to be the open channel of his gifts through her to the world. At every meeting and on every assignment, they should recall that the Holy Spirit hovers over his spouse as she lives in the Legion of Mary. Pope Pius XI called the vexillum “the beautiful standard of the Legion of Mary” because it is a reminder of the power of the Holy Spirit, the presence of Mary, and the mission of the legionary to bring Christ to the world.