

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

### **Crowd Contact**

By Father Francis J. Peffley

The Church has many ways to evangelize – through radio talk shows, the distribution of books, CDs and DVDs, Catholic newspapers, special articles and pamphlets, retreats and seminars, but the heart of evangelization, according to the handbook is “*the individual and persevering touch of one warm soul on another soul.*” In other words, *direct* evangelization. The Legion calls this “personal contact”. It goes on to say “*In the measure that personal ‘contact’ weakens, so does real influence.*” It is most important that legionaries have this principle of personal contact in mind in whatever work they do. It is the foundation on which grace builds as one soul meets another. And that is what evangelization actually is: personally carrying the fire of the Catholic Faith to others; passing on this living flame to people devoid of faith, whose “candle” of potential believing has never been lit; to those whose wick of faith has gone out or is in danger of being extinguished. Just as at the Easter vigil, when one lit candle ignites another, so it is with the personal contact the Legion recommends. By extending our flame to others we retain our own, which increases with the light of truth and the intensity of love.

There is a saying that goes “You can’t see the forest for the trees.” The handbook suggests that legionaries should see the tree and ignore the forest! That is to say when facing a crowd always look to the individual, for every individual person in that crowd represents “a priceless soul.” How much is each soul worth? Nothing less than the Blood of God! Every soul is worth the Blood of God – the Blood of Jesus Christ. So every soul is of infinite value, destined for an eternal heaven or eternal hell. With the torch of evangelization the legionaries are called upon to light up the darkness enveloping a crowd by touching the flame of faith to every individual soul, one at a time.

The handbook gives advice on how legionaries should approach Crowd Contact work. The same friendly, welcoming approach used on the book-barrow is the attitude to be present here. Since legionaries are called to be instruments of God’s grace, speech and manner are to be considered, for they are the instruments of contact. Legionaries are to be “unassuming and deferential,” the standard qualities of a good legionary on any assignment. In discussions they are to avoid any words that would give the impression of arguing, or of “battling” with the other person. Preaching at them or coming across with a tone of superiority is not to be found there. Doing this work with humility, deference and respect is always to be as our Blessed Mother would be. It is then that she will enhance the legionary’s weakest words and give an almost infinite apostolic blessing to the encounter.

Legionaries should take on this apostolate to the crowd as the Blessed Mother would: seeking individual souls, being in anguish over their needs and yearning to help them to heaven. Legionaries must share her anxiety for souls and must go to them, for being her hands and her heart, they actually participate in her care for souls, and make up her “mystical body” – her spiritual presence on earth in the form of the Legion of Mary.