



# Legion of Mary Active Membership



## Every Priest needs a Legion



Every priest must admit he has more work than he can handle. In all parishes and missions there are difficult cases, where the priest would like to do more but cannot. His time is limited and the needs are many—family troubles, fallen away Catholics, potential converts, propagation of the Faith, youth programs, etc. None of these problems can be adequately treated if the priest is only there for a few hours a week.

## The Role and Purpose of the Legion



This is where the *Legion of Mary* comes in. In simple terms, it is to the priest, what priests are to their bishop. The Legion is an extension of the priest, enabling him to reach persons and places which would otherwise be morally or physically inaccessible. For he can only be in any one place at any one time. Also, there are certain people who would never ever approach or talk to a priest, but who would reveal much to a layman. Thus, each week, by a correct and prudent use of his legionaries, the priest can be omnipresent and effective in a large number of cases—without physically being present. Pope Pius XI says: “Tell the faithful that, when united to their pastors and their bishops, they participate in the works of the Apostolate....to make Jesus Christ better known and better loved. They become great factors in bringing about the restoration of Christ’s Kingdom.”

## Permission required to start a Praesidium



Active membership entails being part of a local unit of the Legion of Mary. This unit is called a *Praesidium* or “Fortress.” A new *Praesidium* always needs to be set up and initially guided by an already existing *Praesidium*. A new *Praesidium* cannot be started without the formal permission of the Legion Curia and the permission of the parish priest. This is to ensure that the Legion Rule and Spirit is passed on in its integrity by a body that has had practical experience of this Rule and Spirit.

## Regular Weekly Meetings



The local *Praesidium* must meet regularly each week—that is an essential aspect of the Legion. If this cannot be guaranteed, then there is no point forming a *Praesidium*. The work of the Active Legionary varies according to the circumstances and needs of each parish. It is, so to speak, the eyes, ears, hands, feet, mouth and heart of the priest. It is an extension of the priest and so embraces a wide variety of work.

## Variety of Apostolic Work



Work can include working with fallen away Catholics or potential converts; teaching them the Catechism; visiting the homes of parishioners and non-parishioners in order to seek out fallen-away Catholics, converts to the Faith or Tradition; printing Catholic propaganda; distribution of Catholic literature; working with the youth of the parish; visiting the sick and elderly in their homes, hospitals or nursing homes; keeping the priest informed of parishioners in temporal or spiritual need; recruiting persons for parish organizations; spreading St. Louis Marie de Montfort's *True Devotion to Mary*; encouraging greater Mass attendance and anything to raise the spiritual fervor of the parish; organizing the Fatima Pilgrim Virgin Statue to visit the homes of parishioners; organizing Rosary rallies and processions; working with the down and outs, etc.

## Self-Sanctification Comes First



Active Legion membership does not open the doors to the vice of activism. The primary role and obligation of all Legionaries is to sanctify themselves. Only then will they be able to sanctify or assist others. For we cannot give anything to others what we have not got ourselves. To help further this self-sanctification, the Legion is based upon and follows the spirituality of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. Therefore, all Legionaries should consecrate themselves to Mary following the method explained in his book, *True*

Devotion to Mary. They would also do well in familiarizing themselves with his other works—a compendium of which can be found in the book *God Alone* (available from Montfort Publications, 26 South Saxon Ave, Bay Shore, NY 11706). They also have many other books on the Legion, Frank Duff, the True Devotion, etc.

### Major Conditions for Membership



The Legion Handbook's Standing Instruction to Active Legion Members, regularly reminds them of the four basic requirements that are at the foundation of Legionary service—upon which all the others are built.

*"Legionary duty requires from each Legionary:-*

*First, the punctual and regular attendance at the weekly meetings of the Praesidium, and the furnishing there of an audible report on the work done.*

*Second, the daily recitation of the Catena.*

*Third, the performance of a substantial active Legionary work, in the spirit of faith, and in union with Mary, in such a fashion that in those worked for and in one's fellow members, the Person of Our Lord is once again seen and served by Mary, His Mother.*

*Fourth, the preservation of an absolute secrecy in regard to any matter discussed at the meeting or learned in connection with the Legionary work."*

### Legion Work is Serious Work of Love



From the above basic duties we see the need of a variety of qualities in the Active Legionary. The primary quality is one of CHARITY, without which all our work is nothing but the tinkling of a brass cymbal—as St. Paul puts it. It is charity that makes light of all things, as the Imitation of Christ says: “A great thing is love, a great good in every way. It alone lightens all that is burdensome and bears all that is unjust. For it carries a burden without being burdened, and makes all that is bitter, sweet and savory. The noble love of Jesus pushes us to do great things...Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of labors, would willingly do more than it can, does not complain of impossibility, because it conceives that it may and can do all things...When weary, it is not tired; when frightened, it is not disturbed—but like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounts upwards and securely passes through all” (Book 3; Chapter 5).



Without this spirit of love, the Legionary will not persevere, nor will he be effective in his work amongst souls—for as St. Francis de Sales so

truly said: *A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a hundred barrels of vinegar!* The Legion Handbook insists upon this spirit of charity time and time again. Anybody wishing to join the Active ranks of the Legion, must pray and acquire this spirit of charity if they are not to do the Legion a great disservice.

### Qualities Built on Charity



From the Handbook there emerges a litany of virtues and qualities that should clothe the charity of the Active Legionary: Close union with Mary; a profound spirit of prayer; lively faith; deep humility; great courage; unflagging perseverance; heroic patience; universal mortification; all embracing obedience; punctuality, discretion, reliability and cooperation. Obviously, few join the Legion possessing all these qualities—but nobody should join the Legion if they are not prepared to strive to acquire these qualities. For as in any great military force, it is not quantity that counts, but QUALITY. It was said of Jesus that He did all things well. Let it also be said of us. Quality counts!

### Obedience to the Legion System



On this the Legion is resolute. To quote the Handbook: “The Legion system is invariable. Experience shows that some persons want to impose upon the Legion, some composition of their own minds. Other persons are apt to conceive that they are out of the common and that their methods are legislated for...It would be better if these persons would refrain from posing under the name of the Legion. All this will have an unhappy sequel, for this springs from a false spirit of independence. Such will never attract special blessings from heaven. A *Praesidium* seeks to build upon sand if it does not respect the Legion code under which it works—a fact which explains the insistence, throughout the Handbook, on the necessity of exact adherence to the order of meetings and the general procedure as laid down therein.

“Members are not at liberty to vary the rules, for each variation makes others inevitable, till finally, the body in existence bears the name of the Legion, but little else—so much so that it should be disowned by the Legion, even though valuable work is being done...If past experience is an indication, then no branch of the Legion will fail if it is worked according to rule. The Legion is a system which can be thrown out of balance by suppressing or altering any of its parts. So if unprepared to work the system exactly as described in the Handbook, then please do not start the Legion at all!” (Extracts from the Legion Handbook).