

## Perfection for Mary

The characteristic idea of our Legion work is that it is an outlet for Mary's motherhood. Firstly, she has ourselves as immediate object. We subject ourselves to her and she lovingly fashions us to the likeness of her son. Secondly, she uses that responsive material as a means of extending her mother-influence to others. Those two operations are really one and the same, intertwined; so that if Mary is not reaching out through us, she is not working in us. It follows that we must yield ourselves to the maternal process as much as possible so as to give Our Lady full scope. The handbook insists that our work should have the quality of excellence; or may I put it: perfection.

### **We Must Seek Perfection**

Perfection is an intimidating word. Yet St Thomas Aquinas asserts that he who does not seek perfection, sins. We are reassured to note that he does not say 'achieve perfection,' but only aim at it. And surely it is possible to make an attempt. That striving is vital to the Legion, whose very life depends on effort. If the heart did not struggle

convulsively and unceasingly to force the blood through the veins, our own life would be a flickering feeble thing – if it persisted at all!

So we must seek perfection. It is a frightening idea, for it suggests that we have to crush our nature into a new form at the price of great pain and unrelaxed struggle. But it need not be at such a price. You do not climb a mountain by straight, sheer ascent, if you can do it by indirect, ingenious approach. Likewise the pursuit of perfection is a question of mental conditioning, by which I mean the supplying of the mind with adequate motives, and then supplementing with right methods.

### **What is Perfection**

Genius has been defined as an infinite capacity for taking pains. Perfection might be defined as a constant attention to detail. Michelangelo said that trifles make perfection but that perfection is no trifle. Is that close attention to detail difficult? It cannot be, for it is the characteristic of every good workman. Transfer that sort of workmanship to the spiritual plane, and you have the saint. Mankind is a herd whose performance is at a dead level. Manage to jut one single inch above that level and the world acclaims you as 'great'. Do it in the spiritual order and you single yourself out in the eyes of God.

I am not punning when I say that the motive for that quest of perfection must be our motives. If our motives are not in order and vivid to us, no sustained effort is possible. It is not sufficient that our motive be the vague one of love of God. Our motive must be all Christian doctrine – in the sense that we must have a reasonable understanding of what I might call the origins and adventures of divine grace. We should have a notion of the different Divine Persons,

of the Mystical Body, of Our Lady's Office of Motherhood. This is necessary if we are really aspiring above the average. But that simple level of knowledge is readily available to you. For instance it is in the pages of your handbook. Possess yourself of that stock-in-trade and in it you will have your motive. It is due to your Christian condition – apart altogether from talk of perfection!

But why this use of the name of Mary as if she were a motive in herself? St Louis Marie de Montfort devotes many pages to explaining why. I summarise and add a little. If we say 'Mary' we never exclude Jesus. It would be a mentally impossible operation for the Catholic to imagine Mary as apart from Jesus. But it is possible to say 'Jesus' and to exclude the idea of Mary in varying degrees, i.e. from the Catholic who has a defective view of her role to the Protestant who just rules her out altogether. To do this latter is to make hay of the Christian message, as thousands of sects have so tragically succeeded in doing. Therefore it is well to go out of one's way frequently to insist on the presence of Mary.

### **Perfection with Mary**

Above I said that all Christian doctrine must be the mainspring of our action. Mary stands wonderfully for that full Christian doctrine. It can be summarised in the simple idea that we are all the time working in union with Mary for her son. We are her means of nourishing him, serving him, giving him. Obviously if we are to enable her to fulfil that function we must enter into it fully. We must endeavour to imbibe her spirit and to do our tasks according to her method. We work according to her spirit by having her at least indirectly before our minds at all times, and distinctly at some times. We do it according

to her method by trying to do everything well in the way that we might imagine her as doing it.

Mary's maternal office comprises all graces; busies itself even with the most 'microscopic' one. This means that our life is being lived under her eye, subject to her unsleeping care, with a degree of closeness, which far surpasses the human motherhood, and even defies imagining. Therefore it is not exceeding the reality, but falling far short of it to picture Mary as being with us in all our occupations, her mind and hands assisting ours, somewhat in the way that a mother would hold her child's hands and enable it to do things.

If we believe that Mary's action and our own are mingled, each affecting the other, it is imperative that ours fail not. In the measure that it does, it would, so to speak, pervert the work of Mary. For it would be much the same thing as if we held her hands and forced her into negligent performance! Which must not be! Therefore our acts must have reasonable quality and be done with the intention of making them a participation in Mary's daily care of her Mystical Home and children.

But is that degree of concentration possible, and if it were would it not entail a strain on the mind, which would end by becoming intolerable? I venture to answer that it is possible, and that it should not be a strain if rightly set about. I repeat that the real craftsman quite naturally aims at perfection and contributes those little extra touches which produce it. Secondly, it is not effort to the true artist to press after that perfection.

### **Making Each Act Perfect**

But an objection presents itself. We may allege that perfection is not in us – just as craftsmanship is not in



every man! But here a big distinction must be made; we are not working in a purely material way – nor are we judged by the finished product alone. We largely get the benefit of our intentions if the right degree of effort is there; so that in the eyes of Heaven each of us is a potential artist.

So let us work as the genuine artist would. We must make each act, however simple, a perfect one, which will lend itself to Mary's fruitful motherhood, enabling her to lavish her 'magnificence' on us. And what is that magnificence but the Holy Ghost who is with Mary and whom she gives.

How is perfection to be imparted to the petty, interminable string of movements, which go to make up the daily round? To such duties as housekeeping, agriculture, the crafts, office work, selling in a shop, attending to machines or whatever else may be at stake? Surely those things offer no scope to a programme of perfection? You would be wrong to think so. It is possible to put into each one of these occupations as much care – and perhaps more spirit – than Michelangelo bestowed upon his masterpieces. Outwardly his works have a perfection which ours have not. But it is to be insisted that the motive is being inspected by God. If our degree of care were equal to that of the artist, and if our motive were higher than his, then our work would be more perfect. An intriguing thought! For his work will remain forever drawing admiration, while that effort of ours probably vanishes from human notice the moment it was done.

So there, is a sort of technique. After you have experimented with it for a while, you may work out one which suits you better.

## Perfection for Mary

Keep alive in your mind in a general way that motive of 'Perfection for Mary'. Aim consistently at good performance, just as the craftsman would who had a pride in his work. Then at each new stage or natural pause or transition point, add an *extra something* to the task as a conscious, deliberate expression of your desire for perfection. This need be but a tiny touch occupying one second, but to be done with specific advertence to the aim. To make that advertence definite and eventually habitual, it must be crystallised in a phrase or even a word, which you will repeat to yourself as you perform the little *extra*. I suggest the formula: 'Perfection for Mary'.

Childish! Yes, if psychology is childish! Is mechanism childish? Are ejaculations childish? Is the Morning Offering childish? The suggested formula seeks to do intensively for a series of actions what the Morning Offering does more generally.

This little symbolic procedure is of importance. It is *extra*. It stands for that addition which makes the difference between ordinary good work and perfection. That outward gesture is the necessary occasional reminder of our motive and objective. Such regular reminders are needed to root a motive in us and make it operative in our behaviour.

## A Little Extra

Of what sort is that little *extra* to be? As occupations are infinitely different and the minds of men still more diverse, it must be left to the individual ingenuity to develop the method. But I give you some samples by way of mental springboard. An additional rub or stitch or trimming or polishing; a tying up of loose ends; an oiling; a final tidying

up; an embellishment; an act of courtesy. Or such as the following: After washing ourselves, there is the irresistible impulse to throw down towel and soap any way. But just as we should have cleaned ourselves properly, so should the whole action be rounded off into a completeness. Part of this would undoubtedly lie in placing the towel and soap evenly in their places. Childish? Would Mary in her home throw things about like a schoolboy? Some of us leave things after us like the poltergeists are supposed to do.

The artist would give his extra touches because he judged them to be necessary steps towards his goal of perfection. In your case they may not, humanly speaking, be necessary. To bestow that further rub upon the place you are drying may not make it any drier. But it links your drying operation to the housekeeping of Mary, and makes them part of the mechanism of Redemption.

Mentally burdensome? Once again I plead the artist whose seeking of perfection is not a burden, but an incitement, a stimulant, a refreshment. The adequate motive provides smooth driving power. Everything is a strain to the person who is not interested. In the measure that your heart goes into what you do, it becomes easier, a process which intensifies itself until the task can become one's enthusiasm. If we love Our Lady, and if we can associate a work with her and regard it as being of real use to her, then we have reached the stage when that work will be the opposite of a burden to us.

### **Turning Tedium into Refreshment**

That *extra*, though it increases effort, also turns on spiritual energy, which makes the work lighter. It is like adding sugar to something bitter, making it palatable; or

like injecting oil into groaning machinery. Or better still; take the case of the bird and its wings. Undoubtedly those wings add on to the weight of the bird and therefore form a burden. But that burden not only lifts itself but the bird along with it, and gives the bird command of distance and height; in fact, gives the bird its true meaning.

All of us, like that bird, need wings to realise our destiny. That monotonous succession of movements can weigh heavily on the mind so that sometimes we face life with a sense of desperation. If we do not enliven that routine, it will automatically deaden our day, and in the end destroy our spirit. Either we conquer the routine, or it overcomes us.

Here the principle of perfection enters healthfully in. Instead of being an added burden, it carries the burden. It supplies a motive for interest and effort. It turns tedium into refreshment. It gives meaning to each link of that galling chain which binds us. It opens a window and lets in light so that the dullness shows up as full of colour. It puts wings on us so that we soar to celestial heights.

If we manage to get that far, we have likewise solved the secret of contemplation. If the word 'perfection' rings formidable, 'contemplation' sounds worse. The thing itself is regarded as inaccessible to us, removed from our sphere. And yet is it but the continual, more or less conscious advertence to God! Obviously if in every act throughout the day we are striking that note of perfection in union with Mary and for the love of God, we are giving that faithful attention to God which is termed contemplation.



## A Formula for Conversion

Is there such a thing as a formula which would help us to bring people into the Church? If there is, we must at all costs avail of it, because all over the world the Legion has been assigned on a large scale to that particular task. The Legion seems to have a special gift for that work; it has taken to it like the proverbial duck to the water. That capacity must come to the Legion from on high rather than from within itself, because the Legion would at first sight appear to be the least suited society for that work. It is not a learned body, a study group. And as well it bears a name that does not particularly recommend it to people outside the Church, that is, the name of Mary!

If we are, so to speak, being driven by grace into that path, we must do our best to correspond. We should try to develop a technique and then struggle constantly to improve our methods. Obviously our conversion formula cannot be as precise as a mathematical one. Many variable factors enter in, some of them invisible. We have to consider

three things: God's will; our own will; the will of the person whom we are trying to convert. We can of course presume God's will in this regard. It is that all men be converted and live. We can direct our own will and to that extent we can count upon it. With regard to the third person; well, we do not know his dispositions, his intentions, or what he will do; we can only do our best to influence him.

### **God Wants All Men**

First of all, let us try to work on reasonably right lines, based upon faith. Faith by itself will not suffice, and therefore our actions must have in themselves a degree of worth. We must contribute what we can; we must be prepared to make sheer effort; we must not be found calculating just how much effort is to be used in any particular case, nor take an easy path in any particular contact. For note: even if in one case we may exert 'surplus' effort, that surplus will be put into some other channel. Nor should we be discriminating as to which persons would seem to us to represent the better prospect. Seeing only from the outside, we may often be mistaken. Therefore, remember: God wants ALL men.

If our members are few, the reaching out to all men would be an impossible programme. But they would not be few if every Catholic understood his apostolic duty. We have it in our own hands to increase our membership.

It would be a mistake to think that the converting agency must be an erudite one, for history points in the other direction. The Christians in the early ages of the Church were simple and often unlettered yet they spread the Christian faith to the ends of the then known world.

What of our own day? When Msgr Riberi went out to China, he was interviewed by the press and questioned

as to his policy. He replied that it was to convert the whole of China. He was asked how he would accomplish that gigantic task. His reply was that it could be done by mobilising all the Catholics of China to reach out to all their fellow countrymen. His hearers were incredulous. Did he really think that such a thing was possible, and if so how? 'Through the Legion of Mary,' was his reply.

### **Be Simple, Direct, Concise, Positive**

In our approach to non-Catholics we must study simplicity. Protestants are not impressed by close-knit logic on religion. 'Theological' is a good word to us, but to them a slightly sinister one. They regard it as ordinary people would the argumentation of lawyers – this is, as something which can be made to prove anything. So do not beat about the bush, but state the claims of the Church which carries on the life of Our Lord and is vested with his knowledge of Truth as much as possible to it. If granted, it includes everything, whereas complicated argument about many details may only end in the same way as when the kitten plays with the skein of wool, that is, in sheer confusion!

To Protestants we should talk Catholicism, not Protestantism; Catholicism and not Communism to the Communist! In going to a Buddhist, talk in a positive way about Catholicism! The principle should be that of displaying Catholicism, not of showing knowledge of those other creeds nor of attacking them.

### **Avoid Controversy**

In dealing with Protestants we should not let them do the shooting (as is their idea), while we content ourselves with a policy of mere defence. Always remember when dealing

with a Protestant that he has no right to claim that what he says is Protestantism, because in practice no two of them agree in doctrine. I urge this as important, because if a person can claim to be the mouthpiece of a Church or any great body, he has placed himself on a footing far superior to that of the individual. Each Protestant is only entitled to talk for himself. The only thing on which they enjoy unity today is that they are not in agreement with the Catholic Church. Protestantism has become an almost total negation. It is a good working rule to reason that Protestants are all painfully aware of this, are unsatisfied with their position, and would seize at anything which appealed to them as Truth. Try to give it to them. Keep away from the controversial note – that is, do not attack them. Avail of each of their objections to state the Catholic belief on that point.

### **Christ, Our Model**

In approaching people with intent to convert them, we should obviously take as our model Our Lord Himself. How did he go about it? The New Testament gives us a picture of his methods. His approach was tremendously simple, sure, unique. There is no evidence of lengthy disputation. He stated his claims bluntly. As typical, take that passage in St John where Our Lord foretold the Eucharist. That reference to a most extraordinary idea was in a way that we might regard as excessively downright. His listeners objected, and yet he did not argue. He contented himself with repeating his enunciation. He did not explain. He did not recall them as they left. He let them go.

Side by side with his claim, Our Lord worked miracles.



## Use Miracles

If this is the pattern given to us, how are we to reproduce it? His actions are our model. Well, after our fashion, we can see out the doctrine and the claims of the Church. But we cannot work the miracles! True, we cannot, but that is not necessary. We point to the Church though we did not found it, and we point to the miracles which we have not worked. This question of miracles is, I think, pivotal, and yet modern apostleship definitely neglects this aspect of things. Indeed, we are inclined to think that we are, so to speak, stepping down if we point to the miraculous, as if the intellect is the plane on which we must operate and that we become a little childish by bringing in the miraculous. And so we keep away from the miraculous. We advance most admirable logic and then are surprised that these to whom we speak are not converted. The logic is not having the same impact on those persons as it has on ourselves. Ah, but remember, they have heard similar sounding arguments about every other sort of cause; so that today a good argument does not convince and may only daze. Pascal says that the Truth can stand indistinguishable amongst a thousand fallacies just as the Eucharist can lie hidden among ordinary bread.

Accordingly, we must seek to end that stalemate in which everybody talks and then stays where he is. We must do something startling which is not capable of being waived aside as our logic is by their logic. Yes, we must produce miracles! We must do as Our Lord did in similar circumstances. We must shake and shock our hearers into listening and thinking.

## **Lourdes: God's 'Miracle Factory'**

When you read through the Gospels, you find there recorded many miracles. But the real fact is that Jesus Christ Our Lord went around almost breathing miracles. They were so numerous that St John declares that not all the books written could contain the account of them. The Church reproduces Our Lord's life in all its phases and therefore it must produce miracles as he did and for the same reason, namely to confound and to convince. In all ages those miracles have flowed. For long their channel was the great miracle working saints, whose doings are incredible to read of. I refer to saints such as St Vincent Ferrer, St Bernard and St Francis Xavier, at whose heels miracles fell thickly. But about a century ago, a change took place in the divine method. The era of the prolific miracle worker came to an end, and instead Our Lord established what might be termed a miracle factory. Why did he make such a change? May I be bold enough to guess as to the reason? Well, before that time people were much more simple. If a saint worked a miracle, it was accepted as such. But the French Revolution altered that old order. It set up science as the new God. There was, the New Idea said, no such thing as a miracle. It was either a fraud perpetrated by the Church for its own crooked ends, or else it was due to hidden psychological or scientific processes. When that doubt was skilfully and methodically implanted in people's minds, it was very hard to meet. For it would have been impossible to follow the saints around watching their miracles and subjecting them to scientific examination. Yet, if the idea of miracles was not to be frustrated, that critical investigation must take place. Accordingly at the very time when (historians say) the theories of the French Revolution had grown up, that is to say, about the middle

of the nineteenth century God changed his technique and set up his 'miracle factory'. It was at Lourdes!

### **Lourdes and Cana**

There is something epochal in the starting of Lourdes. It is somewhat in the same category as the Miracle of Cana, called in the Gospel the beginning of miracles. Like at Cana, Our Lady presides at Lourdes. At Cana the miracle was worked at her request, done through her and for her. This reminds us too that she is an indispensable factor in the work of conversion. So do not 'tone down' Our Lady. This marks a common error in our approach to Protestants. We may think that by suppressing her we are removing a barrier, whereas we are preventing its removal by not inviting the Woman of Cana.

From the little trickle first evoked from the earth by the scratching of the fingers of Bernadette, now gushes forth thousands of gallons of water every day. Like the gallons of water, so the miracles. They are innumerable. Only the merest fraction of them is counted, still fewer are officially recorded. The torrents of minor miracles and favours granted at Lourdes is incalculable. I do not speak of them. I am now referring to the big accepted miracles.

### **The Modern Reply to Lourdes**

Like Cana, Lourdes is a particular spot. A medical bureau has been set up there and that body investigates thoroughly every case submitted to them. And let me assure you, they are no gullible crowd. On the contrary, they are sceptical to the extreme degree necessitated by their vital task. They realise that Lourdes is there to give witness to the Catholic faith, and that this will only be effected by proving beyond question that the miracles

are due to divine power and to no other cause. And so they issue an invitation to all doctors and scientists to come and see; to read all the documents and to interview the persons concerned. Many scientists – those with faith and those with no faith – accept this invitation and go to Lourdes.

We should know the facts which emerge from those investigations. But few Catholics do, as is shown by the fact that they are easily silenced by glib talk about faith healing, auto-suggestion shock, hypnotism, and the like. It is confidently asserted that such natural phenomena explain away the miracles, and most Catholics are so little equipped with the facts that they are not able to answer that type of argument. But the fact is that *nothing is accepted* at Lourdes which could be the result of any natural process. If it could be, it would not be accepted as a miracle.

What do scientists say who have investigated Lourdes? Do they say it is faith healing, shock, etc.? They do not. Freely they admit that what is taking place is beyond their ken. Are they converted? Some are, but not the great majority. And this latter fact in itself is very important. It shows the modern mind, the modern attitude. They say: 'Truly there is no explanation known to us or to present day science for these alleged miracles. But a future stage of science will supply the answer. One hundred years ago the x-ray would have been regarded as a miracle, yet today it is but elementary science and is moreover healing certain types of cancer. Is it not likely that in some years' time we will have identified this remarkable power that is operating in Lourdes?'

All this sounds feasible to the present day mind, bewildered as it is by scientific discovery culminating in



the wonders of the atom and plans for space travel. Then it is no use talking to people in terms of miracles? Yes, it is. I have been contending that you must do so. But not until you have your arguments in order for dealing with that modern mind and its 'scientific' objections. I make some comments.

### **The Catholic Answer**

This talk by the scientists about the 'Wonder-ray' at Lourdes is so fantastic as to bring to mind an old saying to the effect that if we repudiate the miraculous we will soon be found professing the absurd. I will try to explain.

In the first place, why is that wonder-ray in the pay of the Catholic Church? Why is it working for us in that fashion? Why has it kept itself out of the hands of the scientists who are searching for such marvels and forced itself on those who were not looking for it at all? Why does it do good in every case, without corresponding harm in others? While the x-ray can cure some forms of disease, it does harm to the tissues and has a destructive influence in some cases. But this great new Lourdes ray does no harm to anything, and is able to cure every possible type of ailment, including absolute opposites.

### **Story of a Miracle**

But over and above all, that Wonder-ray at Lourdes is able to THINK!!! I give you an instance where the effect of an intellect is undeniably seen and which therefore shows that it is not with any wonder-ray or natural force that we are dealing, but that we stand in the presence of the power of God. It is the case of a girl from Brittany – a teacher, who fell into bad health. She was x-rayed and the diagnosis showed that she was suffering from advanced cancer at

the base of the stomach and that it had penetrated into the liver at one part. Surgery was resorted to. It was found that the cancer was too far gone to be removable or even touched. It had completely blocked the exit from the stomach into the intestines. The only course was to alter drastically the intestinal circuit, giving an exit from the other side of the stomach which was not yet invaded by the disease. This was done. The patient appeared to be cured; began to eat again, regained strength and returned to her work. But the surgeon privately advised the manager of her school that he must look out for another teacher; that the disease was rapidly extending and would soon obstruct the artificial opening.

And so it was. After a while the old symptoms recurred. Again she ceased to be able to deal with food. Again she was examined. The x-ray showed that the cancer had now spread over the entire base of the stomach, stopping the new entry to the intestines. And now the liver was completely affected. It was decided that no relief lay in an operation, and the patient was abandoned to her fate. Emaciation and weakness became extreme. She reached the final stages. She was now at death's door.

At this time there was a pilgrimage from her town to Lourdes. Though she seemed likely to die on the way, she was taken on it as an invalid. Arriving alive, she was lodged in the Asile. On the first morning she was taken to the baths. While in the water she was seized with such violent pain in the stomach as to cause her to scream out. She was taken back to the hospital and after a short time said that she felt hungry and wanted something to eat. This caused astonishment, for you must remember that for some time she had been unable to partake of food. She was given the food and was able to retain it. Then she

declared that she felt strength welling into her and that she would like to try to walk. She was lifted to the floor. She walked freely though naturally that would have been impossible. For, added to the fact of total weakness was the further fact that the muscles of her legs were wasted to nothingness. Yet she walked. Those around now realised that something extraordinary had taken place. She was brought down to the Bureau and a superficial examination was made. The cancer, previously evident to the touch, could not be discerned. She was instructed to report to her doctors at home for complete examination. She finished the pilgrimage walking about like a healthy person. Returned home, the searching investigation was made. It proved that every vestige of the cancer had disappeared from stomach and liver. She was perfectly cured. But here is the THINKING PART! The new opening had been eliminated. The surgical operation had been erased. The readjustment of the intestinal system had been undone. The old circuit was restored and no trace of the surgery survived.

### **How to Use the Fact of Lourdes**

We can easily imagine some scientific ray or force which would strike blindly at a cancer, crippling it so that nature is able to complete the cure. But we cannot conceive an unthinking force which would reverse all that surgery.

If there is in fact such a wonder-ray, it surpasses nature, for it is intelligent. It surpasses man, for it reveals a genius and a potency utterly exceeding the human capacity. It diagnoses in a flash the hidden ailment and as quickly heals it. Drugs, treatment, knives are unnecessary. If it could do that much, what are its limits? Should it not be possible for it to make a television set, or anything

else, instantaneously and without materials? As a natural proposition, the one thing is as feasible – or as ridiculous – as the other.

No. As I have said, we stand in the presence of God.

One of the smart aleck objections which is often proposed is that no one ever came to Lourdes with an artificial leg and went away with a flesh and blood one. That is true, but likewise we do not read in the New Testament of Our Lord having grown a leg on a person who lost one. He could have done so, but for some reason connected with his own laws, he did not. And what he then did, the Church does today – no more, but no less.

There are other thrilling facts about the modern Cana. That little stream which rose up from the dry ground between the fingers of Bernadette, produces today a mighty flow. Secondly, the water in each bath is only changed once a day. During the day, it received into it in hurried succession, all the awful diseases to which the flesh is prey. Yet at the end of the day the water is found to be sterile; there are no germs in it. That is the standing miracle of Lourdes. And the Brancardiers conclude their day by taking a good drink of that very water in which they have been immersing the sufferers.

I have not been attempting to give you a treatise on Lourdes or on conversion, but a formula – that is, a few ingredients which anyone can use. I now reduce it to its basic elements: Present in the gentlest and simplest way the claim of the Catholic Church, then point – as Our Lord did – to a miracle in justification of that claim. Be able to furnish reasonable proof that it is a miracle, that is to say, beyond the reach of any natural or scientific process.



## Our Lady of Cana

Cana is my topic. I must discuss it with you because of its importance, which is such that I may call it devastating. It bears particularly on your work. The mission of the Legion is to waken people up to God; and especially to reach out to those outside the fold and bring them in. I have been contending that in these processes we must strongly use two themes. The first is Our Lady and the second is miracles. And Cana combines the two.

### **Mary Still Brings Christ to Men**

In regard to Our Lady, we should never forget that Our Lord came by her, and would not otherwise have come. The great leader and founder of heresy, Calvin, said a beautiful thing about Our Lady, namely that God himself was under great debt to her because she opened a way for him into the world which otherwise would not have been opened. The Church's teaching goes further than he would have gone, and says that not only did she open that door, but that she keeps it open. In other words, she did not merely give Our Lord as a past or historical

action, but she continues to give him. Without her, he will not be given. It is false policy therefore to seek to propitiate Protestants by minimising her, to think that by suppressing her we are making it easy for them to come in. Mary is necessary so that the notion of converting by omitting a link which is necessary is self-contradictory. So she must be proposed and explained in the manner which has been made familiar to you in the Legion.

It would not be right to suppose that it is only the Protestants who need to be thus enlightened. Many Catholics do. Not long ago I was in a Catholic home where the conversation turned on to Our Lady and where sheer Protestantism was talked in regard to her. This sort of thing – cannot we get what we want from Christ himself? Why spend time going to her when we can go direct to him? That is the authentic anti-Marian jargon and it was numbing to hear it proceed from the lips of persons who would be esteemed excellent Catholics. I am convinced that those people are typical of many. I know that very many Catholics do not sufficiently understand the vital role of Our Lady.

### **Miracles Justify the Claims of the Church**

In regard to miracles, we are inclined to overlook the fundamental part they played in Our Lord's mission and after his time in the Church. The modern mind tends to lean upon itself and to overvalue its contribution to religion. The approach to conversion is the intellectual one. We are inclined to exhibit the Church as a sort of super university teaching everything. We summon the world into its halls and then we are surprised that so few respond. We are more than half ashamed to refer to miracles, as if it was a childish argument. What Our Lord

so relied upon we soft pedal. And I must here pass the comment that our methods are getting few conversions. We must not forget that Our Lord's behaviour in every department forms a headline for us to follow. We should do what he did, or at least we should try. I must of course explain that his appeal to the miraculous was to work the miracles. That is not within our power, but we can point to them, and particularly to the modern miracles which justify the claims of the Church.

Not only did the miraculous bulk big in Our Lord's mission, but a miracle actually opened it. The Church teaches that Our Lord's mission was inaugurated at the marriage feast of Cana; that it was opened in a sense prematurely; and that this was due to the intervention of Our Lady. That is an intriguing proposition which it is worthwhile delving into.

The gospel dealing with it says: 'There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee and the Mother of Jesus was there.' That is a short simple sentence and it is up to us to try to expand it by using our imagination. We can imagine that lovely woman there. She would be in the midst of the hurly burly, her sleeves tucked up, looking out for jobs and doing each one of them with competence. She was no passenger at the feast.

The Gospel goes on: 'And Jesus also was invited and his disciples.' From this form of words it is evident that Our Lord was invited in a secondary way to Our Lady, possibly purely because of her. Calvin, whom I have already mentioned, together with a number of other Protestant commentators, insists that such was the case; that Our Lord was invited only because of her, and Our Lord's disciples only because of him. This forms another exemplification of the ever present Christian law. Mary has to be present at

every epochal moment in Our Lord's life and the Church's life and in our own life and in every conversion.

### **Mary's Intervention at Cana**

The wine failed. In our circumstances we might be inclined to joke about such an occurrence, especially as some writers have suggested that it was the coming of the disciples to the feast that caused the shortage which must have been unexpected. But it was a grievous disaster for a Jewish family. These festivals were saved up for, stinted for; the whole prestige of the family hung on doing things in reasonable style. Failure at that moment would represent a crowning humiliation. The attentive eye of Mary perceived the crisis before any of the guests, before even the chief steward saw it. She must have intercepted some pained exchange of glances. Even then, before 'her hour,' she is shown to us as the mother of men, poised (so to speak) to anticipate the needs of her children.

She reacted in an extraordinary way which the gospel recounts to us. She went to her son and said to him: 'They have no wine.' Historic words! We might be inclined to think: Why should she not go to him whom she knew to be the Creator, the Master of nature, the worker of miracles? On the other hand, it is not told that Our Lord worked any miracle before then, though it is popularly believed that there were many private ones; and the old Christian narratives are full of signs and wonders of that description. Recall for instance the things that are told of the Flight into Egypt. But definitely there had been no public miracle.

### **Protestant Prejudice**

What did Our Lord do when thus addressed? We are told: 'Jesus said to her: "Woman, what is it to me and



to thee? My hour is not yet come.” Protestants in their strange fervour against Our Lady give these words a bad significance. Some of them contend that he meant: Why don’t you mind your own business? And others go further and assert that the words mean: What have you got to do with me? And then they point to the use of the word ‘Woman’ as indicating an insulting of her, a showing how little he thought of her!

This is unnatural on their part, and it is incomprehensible. It just proves the miserable things that can happen when one withdraws from the care of Mother Church and sets up in business as one’s own pope. Because you will appreciate that in the effort to lower her they have not hesitated to lower him, and to represent him as wanting in respect for his own most loving mother. They should remember that it is he who bids people to honour their fathers and their mothers.

Actually that particular phrase: ‘What is it to me and to thee?’ is a common one in Hebrew. It means exactly what it says, that is to say: ‘What has this to do with us?’ Where is the insult there? On the contrary, as many of the saints have pointed out, the phrase pointedly associates Mary to Our Lord’s own work. Therefore, the Lord does not offend against the Fourth Commandment in the way that Protestants, or some of them, infer.

It will be noted also that St John, who records this episode, can only have learned of the conversation from Our Lady herself, because it is plain that the conversation was a private one between Jesus and Mary alone. The Holy Ghost only reveals to the Evangelist where there is no human agency to tell. But Mary was there to tell that and other things, and therefore there was no need for any other revelation.

Moreover, that word 'woman', contrary to that depreciatory suggestion, has no unpleasant sound or sense. In Hebrew, as in Greek, the word was a stately address containing the notion of 'noblewoman'. Protestant scholars know that just as well as we do: and why, therefore, should they stoop so low?

But there is far more at stake in the use of that word than even the most respectful address. That word touches infinite chords. I have described Cana as an epochal moment. It is linked with other similar moments. Reflect that in the first promise of Redemption the word used is 'woman' – 'I will set enmities between thee and the *woman*' (Gn 3:15). Now again at Cana the word is used. It represents unquestionably a pointing back to that 'beginning of prophecies'. Jesus was declaring (not so much for her whom he was addressing as for the written word, the New Testament, of which she later on would be a source) that she was the Woman of Prophecy who would crush the serpent's head, and that he was her seed by whom that Redemption would be wrought.

Three years later, that word will appropriately be on his lips again. It will be on the cross when Redemption is consummated: 'Woman, behold thy son' (Jn 19:26). Again that vital linking up of Mary with the long chain of prophecies and to the plan outlined in Eden! To miss the significance of that word is to risk misunderstanding the mission of her on whom God has been pleased to pivot his plan.

### **'My Hour is Not Yet Come'**

But now we face an amazing mystery. While there is no shadow of incorrectness in Our Lord's reply, it is evident that he is reluctant to intervene. He states the reason: 'My

hour is not yet come.' By 'hour' he meant the time of his mission. He was not due to begin it yet, but the lesson of his words is unescapable: definitely the fulfilment of her request would launch him into that hour and soon into his passion.

Mary was equal in stature to that moment upon which the fate of the world depended. She was not as the ordinary mother, just blundering along out of good natured pity for the wineless guests. She knew the redemptive scheme and the drastic consequences of this miracle, described as the 'beginning of miracles,' out of which would issue the others as water gushes from its spring. Yet knowing, she persisted.

Imagine the son and his mother looking into each other's eyes – the two noblest people that have ever lived, or could live! What she saw there told her what she wanted to know. She turned to the attendants and said 'Do ye whatsoever he shall say to you'.

Again I ask: Where is the slighting or the insult, or the refusal that the Protestants talk about? The essence of the transaction is that he did not wish to perform that miracle because, like one link drawing another, it will automatically bring to pass the entire sequence of events which we call his mission. That first display of his power will lead him irresistibly to the cross and to the tomb. Did he fear that sequence? Most certainly that exquisitely constituted man did. But that was not the reason for his reluctance, which lay in the fact that the time fixed by the Father had not yet arrived.

What! Is there question of the divine decree being modified to meet a wish of his mother? It is astonishing, but why not? She was a strangely responsible agent in Redemption. Her will was operative at the Annunciation

and on Calvary, and it is manifest that the same law touched this intermediate occasion. If Mary makes that request at Cana, it will advance his hour. She does ask, and with simple sureness. But a deeper asking has issued from her than is on the surface of her words. She is the foretold woman who knows what she is asking for.

Her lips have spoken in announcement.  
She has pointed him away to Tabor  
And unwound the roads his feet will take  
Until they move from this place to the flags  
Of Pilate's floor. This is the gathering  
Of crowds, the pain, the glory, the defeat,  
The long inaugural of Calvary,  
And she had summoned it.<sup>1</sup>

### **'Fill the Water Pots with Water''**

Then ensued an incredible and apparently farcical performance. There were six great urns of stone or earthenware in the vestibule, each containing two or three measures of water for washing the hands and feet on arrival. This practice was obliged by the fact that sandals were worn, and that it was before the days of macadamised roads and concrete footpaths, so that travelling was dusty and dirty in the best of conditions. As well as being a ceremonial, it was necessary to wash on arrival. All the guests had come, and therefore the urns were empty or nearly so.

Our Lord pointed to these great vessels and said: 'Fill the water pots with water.' Note the ready obedience to this instruction which must have struck most strangely on the ears of those waiting men. Did they not object to that ludicrous behest? No, they did not. But observe too



the truly remarkable circumstance that Our Lady had in advance ordered them to obey.

Why did Our Lord not address himself directly to them without this sort of mediation? Why had she to interpose between him and them as if to guarantee him? That is the way in which the Holy Trinity arranged the miracle. The inference is definitely there; that without her command to the waiters they would not have obeyed him, esteeming the proceedings to be ridiculous – as indeed they would have been but for the climax! What is the purpose of filling up those enormous containers; considering that the ablutions are all over? And even if the men had guessed that replenishment of the wine was in view, why not utilise the empty wine receptacles instead of those inappropriate urns which will provide nearly 150 gallons of wine?

Why do the holy pages so specifically record that order of Our Lady to the servants if not to further emphasise that at this key moment of Redemption, as at the Incarnation itself, she had to initiate things, to introduce the Lord to men, to give him to his work. She is not the Redeemer but she has her secondary part to play. That is why the Catholic Church is so insistent that if she be not invited to the Christian feast, absolutely everything will go wrong there.

The waiters filled the urns with water *up to the brim*, as the Gospel suggests. Then Jesus said to them: 'Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters who had drawn the water. The chief steward calleth the bridegroom and saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then

that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now.' A memorable phrase which rockets down through history into our ordinary language. But later on there will be still better wine – that of the Eucharist!

The Scriptures concludes: 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested his Glory and his disciples believed in him' (J 2:1-11). Overwhelming in every one of its details! The Founder of Christianity in the presence of the apostolic group, the germ of Christianity, manifests to them his divine power, causes them to believe in him and he does it by the instrumentality of Mary.

### **Mary's Vital Central Place**

There we have a symbol of the vital central place that Mary is ever to occupy in the Church's system. Analyse that episode and you will see that Mary occupies at Cana a position exactly analogous to the position in which the Church sets her for us. Hark back to the fact that the miracle was premature; that Our Lord was reluctant. She was plainly made the arbiter of Our Lord's entry upon his mission. But that is nothing new. It was she who drew him down from Heaven to earth; and no one else but she could have done it. Similarly her presence and consent would be necessary on Calvary for the consummation of Redemption. Why? Could not, as the parrot cry of Protestants alleges, the Lord do all these things without her help? No doubt he could, but it was not his plan. That plan allotted to man a co-operating part in Redemption. What man could not contribute God gave. But what man *could* contribute, he was called upon to contribute. But before man could have the grace to co-operate in that way, one representative of mankind had to act on its behalf. The fullest degree of responsibility and co-operation was

exacted from that representative, thus raising that person, who is Our Lady, and in her all mankind, to a nobler level, to a partnership with the Redeemer. Thus sharing in Redemption and in its sorrows, man would later share in its triumphs and in its glory.

We must go out and explain these things to those who do not appreciate them and whose spiritual loss is thereby great. As Christianity is defaced by removing her, so does the individual life fade when deprived of her. Be encouraged in your efforts by the oft reiterated teaching of Pope Leo XIII that Mary is the mother of the whole human race, that every man is her child; and that in the soul of every one lies the germ of love for her.

But that germ must be fostered. Only in the measure that her children recognise her can she mother them. Cana exemplifies her role in a dramatic, thrilling way. So meditate on its lessons and then go forth and talk about its two great themes: Mary and miracles.

## Endnotes

- 1 John W. Lynch, *A Woman Wrapped in Silence*, Paulist Press, 1941.

## Mary – A Vital Link in God’s Plan of Grace

*An address to Auxiliary Legionaries of Mary*

These great gatherings of legionaries irresistibly transport one back in thought to an evening many years ago – nearly 15 years ago – when another sort of mustering took place. In that mustering there were only about as many persons as the number of years that I have mentioned, yet that mustering, poor and small though it was, was a great historical event; it was the first meeting of the Legion of Mary. Tonight is one of its sequels.

### **The Mobilising of the Marian Hosts**

We have heard the marching of feet this evening, and we have heard lips saying these words: ‘I am all thine my Queen and my Mother, and all that I have is thine’; and those same marchings are going on in other places and in other countries, and each day that passes sees those marchings of feet up to standards like this grow more



and more numerous, and more and more lips every day say those sweet words to her. Now, if there was no other thing concerned in the Legion of Mary and in auxiliary membership of the Legion of Mary, that alone is worth it all; that alone, that people should march up in these days when religion is a by-word in so many places over the earth – that numbers should march up proudly and firmly and say, from the depth of their hearts, those words of gratitude to her.

### **The Legion Debt to its Auxiliaries**

The address you have already heard this evening covered a great deal of ground. To a large extent it cut off my avenue of approach to the subject, so that I am obliged, like those people who follow the harvesters, to glean. I propose therefore, to seize on that word 'gratitude' which has just been mentioned.

It is a very important word. There is almost nothing more important, because, properly understood, it contains everything. The Legion is under a debt of gratitude to you, a number of generous souls who are giving the most precious thing they have – their prayers and a big quantity of them, in the service of the Legion. You are working for at least 20 to 25 minutes every day saying those prayers in the capacity of legionaries of Mary for the helping on of the work of the Legion. For that the Legion is grateful to you; it is indeed grateful, for it realises how dependent it is upon you. You are in the position of munition workers in time of war. Create this image before your minds; fancy that you look at some proud army – the proudest army the world has ever known. Think of battalion on battalion of perfectly drilled men, perfectly equipped men, rolling past and rolling past, until you think they will never

come to an end. The clear cut faces all looking ahead, the natural courage made stronger by the iron discipline and by the sense of a noble cause which presides over all: everything shows forth irresistible might. Yet, as you look, reflect. Consider that army only for a few days cut away from its sources of supply, so that food and drink cannot get through; clothing and equipment cannot get through; ammunition cannot get through. The doctors and the medical services are cut off and cannot lend their aid. That proud army, what is it reduced to? Disease, hunger, wounds and such like things play havoc in it. That army has become a frenzied, dirty, demoralised rabble, a danger to its own cause. Then do you realise that all the time it was dependent upon the great invisible host of those who fed it, equipped it, guarded its health. The Legion owes the same to you – its auxiliaries. You, who so seldom come together in a body, can be styled the Legion's great invisible army. The active forces are dependent on you, and they are grateful to you for your help.

### **The Auxiliary is Repaid a Million-Fold**

In a way it is hard to dwell on this side of things. We are asking you to give out of the generosity of your hearts, so that it puts us in an awkward position if we then proceed to prove to you that you are profiting by the transaction. For in the measure that you do a thing for profit, you strike at the idea of sacrifice, which is the foundation of your merit. Nevertheless, I must contrive to show you that your auxiliary membership is an immense gain to yourselves; that even though you are giving generously to the Legion, you are getting one hundred, one thousand, one million-fold in return. You may ask: 'How can that be?' My reply is that the *Legion teaches you how great is*

*Mary, enlists you in soldierly service for her, and makes you love her properly.* All this is something so great that words like million-fold do not measure the gain. It raises your spiritual life to a loftier plane and thereby assures you of a higher eternity.

### **Souls are not Approached except with Mary**

Sometimes Mary is kept in the background so as to meet the prejudices of those who make small account of her. This method of making Catholic doctrine more acceptable may accord with human reasoning. It does not reflect the divine idea. Those who act in this way do not realise that they might as well preach Christianity without Christ as ignore Mary's part in redemption. For God himself has thought fit to arrange that no foreshadowing or coming or giving or manifestation of Jesus should be without Mary.

### **From the Beginning and Before the World She Was in the Mind of God**

God himself it was who first began to tell of her and to sketch out for her a destiny unquestionably unique. For all that greatness of hers had a beginning very far back. It began before the constitution of the world. From the first, the idea of Mary was present to the Eternal Father along with that of the Redeemer, of whose destiny she formed part. Thus far back had God answered the doubter's saying: 'What need has God of Mary's help?' God could have dispensed with her altogether, just as he might have dispensed with Jesus himself. But the course which it pleased him to adopt included Mary. It placed her by the side of the Redeemer from the very moment in which the Redeemer was himself decreed. It went further; that plan assigned to her no less a part than that

of Mother of the Redeemer and necessarily, therefore, of those united him.

Thus from all eternity Mary was in a position exalted, alone among creatures, and utterly outside comparison even with the most sublime among them, different in the divine idea, different in the preparation she received; and therefore fittingly singled out from all others in the first prophecy of Redemption, addressed to Satan: 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head' (Gn 3:15). Here is the future Redemption summarised by God himself. Definitely, Mary is to be in an order of her own; even before her birth, and ever after, the enemy of Satan; below the Saviour, but next to him, and like unto him (Gn 2:18) and remote from all others. Not any prophet – even the Baptist – is thus set with him, nor king, nor leader, nor apostle nor evangelist – including Peter and Paul themselves; nor the greatest among the popes and pastors, and doctors; nor any saint; nor David, nor Solomon, nor Moses, nor Abraham. Not one of them! Alone, out of all creatures that will ever be, she is divinely designated as the Co-worker of Salvation.

### **Vividly and Unmistakably Revealed in Prophecy**

The course of prophecy continues: 'The Virgin,' 'the Virgin and Child,' 'the Woman,' 'Woman and Child,' 'the Queen seated at the right hand of the King,' the constantly recurring assurance that a woman is to be a prime element of our saving. What sort of future does this foretell of her? Do not the very greatest things that can be said of her seem to follow logically on? Hardly do we realise how crushing, how conclusive is the bearing of prophecy on this question of the place of Mary in the Christian religion. A prophecy is a shadow of a thing to



come, a glance which pierces time instead of space, a pale outline of a distant prospect. Necessarily, a prophecy must be less vivid, less clear, less real, than the reality of which it speaks. But necessarily, too, it must preserve harmonious proportion with that reality. Prophecy which pictured Redemption as wrought by a woman and her child together (and no other with that pair), who crush the head of Satan, would be radically inconsistent with an actual Redemption which relegates the woman to obscurity.

Thus, if prophecy is truly named and if salvation is a lifelong working of the Incarnation and the death of Jesus Christ into the fabric of the human soul (and Holy Church and Holy Scripture jointly so declare); then in the Christian system Mary must be found with Jesus, inseparable from him in his saving work, the new Eve, dependent on him but necessary to him – indeed no other than the Mediatrix of all Graces, as the Catholic Church sums up her gracious office. If what prophecy had glimpsed is really God's country, then those who belittle Mary are aliens to it.

### **The Angel Gabriel Was Sent From God**

The culmination of the prophecies arrives; the fruition of her age-old destiny is now at hand.

Consider the awe-inspiring working out of the merciful design of God. Attend in spirit the greatest peace conference ever held. It is a peace conference between God and mankind, and it is called the Annunciation. In that peace conference God was represented by one of his high angels, and mankind was represented by her in whose name we are gathered here this evening. She was but a gentle maiden, yet the fate of all mankind hung upon her on that day.

The angel came with overwhelming tidings. He proposed to her the Incarnation; and for a while, we are told, the fate of mankind trembled in the balance. The moment had arrived to which generations had looked forward, just as ever since all generations have looked back to it. It was the turning point of all time. There was a pause. The maiden did not accept at once; she asked a question, and the answer was given. There was another pause, and then she spoke the words 'Be it done to me according to thy word': those words that brought God down to earth and signed the great peace pact of humanity.

### **The Father Made Redemption Depend On Her**

How few people realise all that follows from that consent of hers. Catholics in the main do not realise the importance of the part that Mary played. The Doctors of the Church tell us this that supposing that maiden had refused the offer of motherhood that was made to her, God would not have looked further on through the ages. He would not have sought out another woman; the Incarnation would never have taken place. What a terribly solemn thing that is! It meant that she was the only hope of mankind. But our fate was safe in her hands. To her came the Redeemer; not to herself alone, but through her to us poor helpless humanity on behalf of whom she spoke. With him she brought us everything that our faith means, and our faith means our life to us. It is the only thing we have of any worth. Nothing else matters. We are bound to abandon everything for it. We are bound to make sacrifices to get it. Consider, therefore, that the faith of all generations, those that have passed away up to the present and the uncountable millions yet to come, the faith of all has depended on the words of that maiden.

## **No True Christianity without Mary**

In return for this infinite gift, all generations must henceforth call that maiden blessed. She, who brought Christianity on earth, cannot be denied a place in Christian worship. But what of the many people in this world who make very small account of her, the many who slight her, the many who do worse? Does it ever occur to those people to think that every grace they have they owe to her? Do they ever reason that if they were excluded from her words of acceptance that night, then redemption has never come on earth for them? They stand outside its scope. In other words they are not Christians at all, even though they may cry: 'Lord, Lord,' all day and every day. And on the other hand, if they are indeed Christians, and if the gift of life has come to them, then it has only come because she gained it for them, because they were included in her acceptance. In a word, the baptism that makes a person a child of God makes one simultaneously a child of Mary, and that, though they ignore her, or even (in the words of Shakespeare) 'turn all her mother's pains and benefits to laughter and contempt; that she may feel how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child'.

Gratitude therefore – a practical gratitude – to Mary must be the mark of every Christian. Redemption is the joint gift of the Father and of Mary. Therefore with the words of thanks to the Father must go up the word of thanks to Mary. If there is default in this, we have before us that worst of all types of people – the ungrateful child – more hideous, as Shakespeare says, than the sea monster.

## **The Son is Always Found with His Mother**

It was God's will that the reign of grace should not be inaugurated without Mary. It was his pleasure that things

should continue in the self-same way. When he desired to prepare St John the Baptist for his mission of going before himself, he sanctified him by the charitable visit of his Blessed Mother in the Visitation. On the first Christmas night, those who turned her from their doors turned him away. They did not realise that with her they refused him whom they awaited. When the shepherd representatives of the chosen people found the Promised of all nations, they found him with her. If they had turned away from her, they would not have found him. At the Epiphany the Gentile races of the world were received by Our Lord in the persons of the three Kings, but they only found him because they found her. If they had refused to approach her, they would not have reached him.

Proceed and we learn from the Fathers that Our Lord did not enter upon his public life without her consent: likewise, her request was the beginning of the signs and wonders and mighty deeds by which he proved his Mission. When the last scene came on Calvary which finished the whole awful drama of Redemption, she stood at the foot of the Cross, not merely – we are taught – because she was a fond mother, nor in any accidental way, but precisely in the same capacity as she was present at the Incarnation. She was there as the representative of you and me and all her other children, and Our Lord did not offer himself to the Father without her assent given on our behalf; the Cross was to be our sacrifice as well as his sacrifice. ‘For as truly as she suffered and almost died with her suffering son,’ - these are the words of Benedict XV – ‘so truly did she renounce her maternal rights over that son for the sake of our salvation, and immolate him, as far as with her lay, to placate God’s justice. Hence it may justly be said that with Christ she redeemed the human race.’



## **The Holy Ghost Operates Always Through Her**

Come a little further and we reach the feast of Pentecost – that important occasion when the Church was formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost. Mary was there; it was by the Holy Ghost operating through her that the Church was formed. How natural this is! What is the Church but the Mystical Body of Our Lord! What is Pentecost but a sort of new Incarnation! The same law applies: again is Mary an essential part. And so of all divine things to the end. On from that time to the present day and henceforth till time itself is lost in all eternity, the same divine arrangement holds: without Mary nothing is done in the order of grace. If Mary is not there, the grace is not given. That is a very terrible thought. It may provoke the question, 'Do those who ignore or insult Mary receive no graces?' They do indeed receive graces, but what an unpleasant way of getting them! Getting them and striking at the hand that gives them! Reviling her through whom those graces come!

## **What if Mary is Left Out?**

Now what is our position as legionaries of Mary? It is that we, first and foremost among all Christians, must set ourselves to understand these things. We must meditate on them because if we do not enter into them, we are narrowing down the channels of grace and that would be most grievous misfortune. The working out of our whole life depends on our entering into God's arrangement of things. If we work outside God's scheme we are a failure, even though we may amass great material wealth, or leave a name that becomes history. It is in proportion as we accommodate ourselves to God's plan that we achieve success. If we have adhered closely to God's plan, we are

a great success, though we may be the poorest looking creature that ever lived: though nobody may ever hear of us. But remember this, no matter what our works and strivings and prayers may be, if we leave Mary out, we are not accommodating ourselves to God's plan. The graces which come to us are only a fraction of what we should be getting. We are largely failing in our life's work.

You legionaries must be in the forefront of this knowledge of Mary, of this realisation of her all important position in God's plan. You must work to increase your numbers and try to involve the hearts of others in that love of yours for her, until like ripples in a pond which reach out to the farthest banks, this love of yours will reach out and embrace all peoples and nations and fill them with this understanding love for Mary. Do this for her, because under God you own her everything.

### **What Place Must we Assign to Her**

I am speaking to generous souls, and I take it that you realise your great indebtedness and burn to show your gratitude to her. In what way is acknowledgement to be made to Mary? What price are we to give her in our lives? Some persons will have difficulties on this point, which proceed from applying earthly ideas to heavenly things. 'How' - they will say - 'am I to apportion prayer to Mary and prayer to the Divine Persons or to the saints? What is the exact amount - neither too much nor too little - which I am to offer to her?' Protestants especially are perplexed by this question of devotion to Mary. They do not grasp it, and their difficulty presents itself as follows: 'Would I not turn away from God were I to direct my prayers to her?'

All those grades of doubt arise from the fact that they are thinking of the Father and the Son and the Holy

Ghost and of Mary and the saints, as if they were so many statues, so that to turn to one they must necessarily turn away from others. Now it seems to me that the best reply to all these types of difficulty lies in the recommendation: 'You must indeed give all to God, but give it all with Mary.' For - strange to say in this apparently extreme devotion to Mary will none of the perplexities be found which measuring and moderation bring.

### **Every Action Should Endorse Her Fiat**

The justification of this method is to be found in the Annunciation itself: that great peace pact of which we spoke a while ago. In that moment all of us were joined with Mary, our representative. Her words included our words, and in a sense she included us. Now the daily life of a Christian is nothing else than the formation of Our Lord in that member of his Mystical Body. The formation does not take place without Mary, any more than did the original Incarnation. Her consent and co-operation are just as necessary to the daily growth of Christ in our souls as they were to his original taking of flesh. What does all this involve for us? It involves many things, which in the end lead to one thing. In the first place we must deliberately and whole heartedly acknowledge her position as our representative in that great peace conference. We must ratify the things she then did on our behalf, so that we can enjoy, without shame and in their fullness, the infinite benefits she brought to us. And that ratification: of what nature is it to be? Would a once repeated act on our part suffice? Work out the answer to this question in the light of the fact that it was through her that every act of our lives has become the act of a Christian. Is it not reasonable and proper that likewise every act should

bear some impress of our acknowledgement and gratitude to her? So the answer is the same as that I have already given: 'You are to give her everything.'

### **Let us Magnify the Lord With Mary**

Have her before your mind at least in some slight way at all times. Unite your intention and your will to hers in such fashion that every act you do during the day, every prayer you utter, is done with her. She is left out of nothing. Whether you pray to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost, or to a saint; it is always prayer in union with Mary. She repeats the words with you. Her lips and your lips form the words together and of everything she is a part. Thus she is far more than at your side. She is, as it were, in you: your life is you and she giving all to God.

By this wholesale form of devotion to Mary we acknowledge handsomely the part she played and daily continues to play in our salvation. Thus too we enter into God's arrangement and thereby place ourselves in the very floodtide of grace. Likewise it is the easiest devotion to her. It solves the doubts of those who say 'how much' and of those who fear lest giving to her is taking from God. Explain this devotion to those outside the Church. They will understand it readily and it may solve the difficulties of many of them.

### **Her Touch Gives Purity and Fruitfulness**

This devotion is usually known under the name of St Grignon de Montfort's True Devotion to Mary, or as the Slavery of Mary. It teaches us to give ourselves and all that belongs to us to her without reservation of the slightest little thing. We make ourselves what in the world would



be called the slaves of Mary and we place in her hands the disposal of our entire lives and all our spiritual treasures in order that by her and with her we may be more perfectly enabled to give ourselves entirely to God.

For remember this: in the giving to him, all our poor efforts are enriched by her. They are cleansed of every stain as they pass through her hands. Our impure intentions are made pure. All our human motives are super-naturalised. Our very imperfections are changed to perfections, if we unite ourselves to her in the practice of this sweet devotion. But we must trust ourselves to her completely. Selfish ideas will continue to rush into our minds: 'If I give all to her, what about the duties of my state in life; what of my family and friends, and all the other things of my life for which I am absolutely bound to pray?' Now remember that you must make some little act of trust with regard to these things. You cannot say 'I am all thine, my Queen, my Mother and all that I have is thine,' and then proceed to add a whole series of conditions. That would be the very negation of the other words which you have uttered. Remember that everything is safe with her. You must trust her. She is the guardian of all the treasures of God himself. She is capable of being the guardian of your concerns. Along with all your prayers and works and sacrifices add all your goods, spiritual and temporal, throw all your obligations and desires, all your daily trials and needs, into that great sublime heart of hers, and tell her to do whatever she likes with the whole lot.

### **Give and Do Not Count the Cost**

You will find that your own concerns, big or small, will not suffer – but I do not wish to detract from the beauty of your sacrifice by further urging of this aspect. It will

suffice to recall that once upon a time a multitude of ten or twelve thousand were in a desert and were hungry. In all that number only a few individuals had brought food with them. What they possessed amounted to five loaves and two fishes, and they were asked to give them up for the common good and they did so with willingness. Then, those few loaves and fishes were blessed and broken and distributed to the multitude. And in the end all that immense throng did eat, until they could eat no more; and among them those who had given the original seven items of food. And yet what remained over filled twelve baskets, full and to overflowing! Now supposing those individuals had said: 'What good will these few loaves and fishes be to so great a multitude? Besides we require them for our wives and little ones here with us and oppressed by hunger. We cannot give.' But no! They gave and they and theirs received far more from the miraculous repast than they had contributed to it. And no doubt they had a form of claim to the twelve basketfuls if they desired to assert it!

Such is always the way of Jesus and Mary with the princely soul who gives its poor possessions without reserve or stipulation. The gift avails to satisfy the wants of a vast throng. Yet, one's own needs and intentions, which had appeared to suffer, are filled to overflowing, and still the divine bounty lies scattered about.

Let us hasten to Mary with our poor loaves and fishes, and press them into her arms so that Jesus and she may multiply them to feed the souls of the millions hungering in the arid desert of this world.

The form of one's ordinary prayers need not be changed as a result of the undertaking of the true devotion. One still may pray for one's usual intentions and for all special purposes, but subject in future to Mary's good pleasure.

## **De Montfort's Method of Entire Consecration**

If you wish to carry the practice of this devotion further, you will find it all set out in De Montfort's book called *True Devotion to Mary*, and in his smaller work called *The Secret of Mary*. You enter on the devotion by an Act of Consecration to her. Therein you give her all the things you have in this world and all those you will ever have. But mark this: the main consideration is not the saying of the act, but the bringing of the idea of the Consecration into your lives. Words by themselves mean little. The contrast you have made with her must be rooted in your heart, and it must affect the daily tide of your lives. You are her property and possession. Under God, all your treasures belong to her, and she disposes of you and them as she thinks fit; perhaps deprives you of them altogether. If you practice the devotion in this spirit and with constancy, you will find that rather wonderful things will happen in your life.

## **Mothered by Her, We Grow Wondrously in Christ**

We have just spoken of the multiplication of loaves and fishes. At the outset we spoke of the multiplication of human beings. Fifteen had come together and placed themselves under the care of this most fruitful Virgin, and like magic they have been multiplied into countless thousands of legionaries. You will find that these miracles of multiplication will be repeated in your own lives if you prepare for it in the same way. Give your lives utterly to the fruitful Virgin and they will be made fruitful and everything in them will be utilised for the greater glory of God.

And to the Legion, what will your efforts not be worth? They will avail to spread the Legion far and wide,

everywhere bringing the love of Mary with it, so that in the course of years multitudes, who had treated her with scant courtesy, will – with full understanding and from the depths of their hearts and backing the declaration by the practice of their lives – repeat those words: ‘I am all thine, my Queen, my Mother, and all that I have is thine.’