

Some Special Divine Interventions on Behalf of the Church

Today is a time of great trial for the Faith. The Church is in what we see as a deep winter, but which very many think to be a dying. A large proportion of Catholics are declaring that the doctrines of Catholicism have to be re-defined in order to make them suit the modern mind. And each and every one of those folk is perfectly winning to undertake that task. Ultra-progressive theologians have proposed that every doctrine should be subject to destructive criticism as a way of determining what was good in it. Then the parts shown to be defective would be made good by new buildings. In other words you blow down the city for the purpose of finding out what should be re-built and in order to leave a vacant field for building. This might possess five per cent of sense as applied to an earthly city. As applied to the city of the Faith, it is a reckless insanity. It would mean in fact that the Faith of the people is to be destroyed for the purpose

of a future re-building of that faith. I repeat, I shout out: madness! As if it was easy to re-build a destroyed faith! It is terrible that such folly as that can be found in those who are teachers.

While the innovators have not succeeded in shaking down everything, they have certainly produced a menacing situation and many are found yielding to depression in regard to it. Depression is not a good stimulant towards remedy, especially in spiritual things for it is almost an opposite to faith. We must put the question to ourselves: What exactly is the power of depressed faith?

It is a source of happiness to see that the Legion stands up so well in that storm against the Faith. The big reason for this is the Legion's devotion to Mary who is the Torch of Faith and who destroys all heresies. Another reason would be the Legion's constant prayer for Faith. The Legion Prayer is a prayer for Faith. One is emboldened to hope that the Legion is destined to play a key part in the supporting of the Church through the crisis of this spiritual winter and into a glorious spring. But of course we must likewise act strongly and bravely.

Sometimes things are so bad in a campaign that it is necessary to retire behind fortifications, to await reinforcements, and to restore our courage. When Napoleon drove Wellington out of Spain and Portugal, the Duke took refuge behind the lines of Torres Vedras near Lisbon, that is with his back to the sea. There he re-built his army and after a while sallied forth to victory.

But there is no need for the Church to do that – which would be almost equivalent to retiring into the Catacombs as of old. We are not back in the days of the Roman Empire, nor are we living in the present-day China! We have our full power of action and we must use it. I think

that the Legion is just continuing to do that, undeterred by the surrounding perils.

However, it is important that we muster to our side all the aids possible. In addition to the working of our system to the full and the perfecting of all our spiritual resources, we must also strengthen our Faith on which ultimately everything depends. I have referred above to the fact that we are not in the grip of an approaching death but in a winter. Out of that winter the Church is destined to emerge not only intact but as in the spring of nature, that is to a renewal of life. It will have cast off much of its decayed substance and it will be bursting with expansion and efflorescence. Another proof will be afforded of the truth of those monumental words: 'I will be with you all days even unto the consummation of the world.'

No matter what storm is permitted to assail the barque of Peter, no matter how long the Lord may appear to sleep, the moment will come when he will arise and bid the tempest to be still.

In order to exemplify that and as well to make more vivid to ourselves that ever-present divine protection, I am going to take a couple of moments in history where powerful attempts were made to falsify the Church and where things looked as bad as could be. Human recourse seemed to be unavailing. Then God intervened in a dramatic way, and in spite of the greatest power on earth asserted the truth and put down the false. Though I only take that couple of instances, it is not out of any poverty of material. For the story of the Church abounds in like remarkable events. Where human capacity has been reduced to helplessness, a display of the divine might enters in to re-adjust the balance. It is reasonable to

suppose that where the Church has always been brought through its winter into a fair spring, it will happen again with no less degree of certainty than the similar events of nature accomplish themselves.

My first episode concerns the Temple of Jerusalem. Speaking one day to the Benedicta (curia) Reunion, I discussed King Solomon. Necessarily I dwelt on his greatest achievement; that is the building of the Temple. It was one of the wonders of the world. For sheer magnificence it could not be exceeded. It is said that in its construction and embellishment silver rated only as one of the baser metals.

The Temple housed the central ceremonial of the Chosen People: the Sacrifice of the Old Law which prefigured that of Calvary and of the Mass. Obviously the Sacrifice of Christ would at once render empty and meaningless the Sacrifice of the Temple. Thereby it would make obsolete the Temple itself – except that it was converted to Catholic use which was not destined to be the case.

Looking forward to that future date from about the year 534 before Christ, the Prophet Daniel foretold that not only would the Temple be abandoned by God but that it would be completely destroyed. Here are his words: 'Then after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain and the people that shall deny him shall not be his. And the people with their leader that shall come shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary' (Dn 9:26). This prophesy was re-affirmed by Our Lord himself in words of infinite sorrow. Here is the relevant text from St Matthew (24:1-2): 'The disciples came to Jesus to show him the buildings of the Temple. And Jesus said to them: Do you see all these things? Amen I say unto you: There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.'

Those prophecies were accomplished when Vespasian first and then Titus (AD 70) took and utterly destroyed Jerusalem and laid the Temple waste.

There we have a key position. According to the Christians the New Law and a new order have supplanted the Old which is never to be renewed. As part of it the Jews were scattered over the whole earth and deprived of their central ceremony, the sacrifice. Talking before on this subject, I have suggested that it was strange that the Jews had not reproduced the sacrifice in their subsequent history, although at times great multitudes of them lived together in the one place, a fact which would seem to call for the renewal of their worship. Neither did they seek to re-build the Temple either then or when their national life was re-established in Palestine. One explanation of the latter which has been given is that the site lay in the Arab part of Jerusalem. But surely it was not necessary that a new Temple should be built on the exact site of the old? In any case all Jerusalem is now in possession of the Jews. Will they attempt to re-build the Temple? I think that they will not.

Now I have to return to my original theme, which concerns an astounding effort to do that very thing: Re-build the Temple on its old site. This enterprise proceeded from a most unexpected quarter, none other than the Roman Emperor Julian, named the Apostate.

A word about this extraordinary personage will be of interest. He was the nephew of Constantine the Great who turned the Roman Empire to Christianity. Julian was educated as a Christian but had no taste for it. His whole attraction lay to the old pagan culture and philosophy. He formally apostatised from the Faith. He supplanted his cousin Constantius as Emperor. Then on the eve of

a great battle between the two cousins, Constantius died and Julian became undisputed Emperor. That was in the year 361.

Julian entered on his reign as an avowed and enthusiastic pagan. The restoration of the pagan worship was to be the great aim and controlling principle of his government. He viciously attacked and persecuted Christianity. As part of his systematic plan for overturning Christianity, he determined to re-build the Temple at Jerusalem. In this he afforded fine example of the fact that error is always inconsistent. Because in reality he hated the Jewish religion as much as he hated Christianity, but he saw in the re-building of the Temple a means of falsifying Christianity. He considered that the re-constitution of Judaism with all its ceremonial in the Temple, would give the lie to the prophets and to Jesus himself who had insisted that the Temple would not rise again. Julian laughed at these prophesies, calling them ravings and the canting gossip of old women. So in the year 636 he stepped into the shoes of Solomon and aimed to restore the Temple in all its magnificence. This constituted a double danger to the Church. In the first place, it had in particular view the falsifying of the prophesies and of Our Lord's words. Secondly, it represented the first step towards open conflict with the Christians, and one step of that kind inevitably leads on to another. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* believes that his attitude would have been succeeded by one of drastic persecution and then by civil war.

In these circumstances, the whole world looked on at his amazing experiment with a painful curiosity. The Christians declared that he would not be able to fulfil his intentions; that Our Lord and the prophets would have their way. Nevertheless they must have been in an agony

and viewing with trepidation Julian's vast preparations for the re-building.

Julian turned this operation into an Empire project of the first order. Immense sums were provided from the Exchequer. Alypius, a close friend of Julian, was set over the work; he was a most competent organiser. The Jews were worked up to a pitch of frantic enthusiasm in regard to the restoration. They aided with a vast collection of materials and a host of workmen. The result of all these advantages was that the work was undertaken in the spirit of a crusade. The enthusiasm was unbounded. It is said that the very spades were made of silver in order to re-produce the atmosphere of Solomon's Temple. Women and children aided and the earth was removed in expensive containers, and even in silk mantles.

Let us try to imagine that dramatic setting. For all their faith the Christians must have felt themselves reduced to the depths. All human recourse had failed them. The whole power of the Empire seemed to be mobilised against them. What happened?

What I recount is attested to by every authority including Julian himself. I follow in the main the account given by Ammianus Marcellinus, the authentic historian of the reign, who was a friend, admirer and companion in arms of Julian, a man of affairs, learned, candid, impartial, according to all estimates of his character.

That enthusiastic host of workers, egged on by the supreme authority, entered upon their labours. Both sexes and all ranks took part. They swarmed in on the ruins, cleared away the rubbish and laid bare the old foundations.

Then suddenly Heaven declared itself. I quote from Cardinal Newman's description:

The work was interrupted by a violent whirlwind, says Theodoret, which scattered about vast quantities of lime, sand and other loose materials collected for the building. A storm of thunder and lightning followed; fire fell, says Socrates; and the workmen's tools, the spades, the axes and the saws were melted down. Then came an earthquake, which threw up the stones of the old foundations of the Temple, says Socrates; filled up the excavations, says Theodoret, which had been made for the new foundations; and, as Rufinus adds, threw down the buildings in the neighbourhood, and especially the public porticos, in which were numbers of the Jews who had been aiding the undertaking, and who were buried in the ruins. When the earthquake ceased, the workmen returned to their work; but from the recesses which had been laid open by the earthquake, balls of fire burst out, says Ammianus; and that began again and again, so often as they renewed the attempt. The fiery mass, says Rufinus, ranged up and down the streets for hours; and St Gregory says that when some fled to a neighbouring church for safety, the fire met them at the door, and forced them back with the loss either of life or their extremities. At length the commotion ceased; a calm succeeded; and, as St Gregory adds, in the sky appeared a luminous cross surrounded by a circle. Nay, upon the garments and upon the bodies of the persons present crosses were impressed, says St Gregory; which were luminous by night, says Rufinus; and at other times of a dark colour, says Theodoret; and would not wash out, adds Socrates. In consequence, the attempt was abandoned.²

2 John Henry Newman, *Essays on Miracles*, Essay II, 5, §7, 334.

Jesus and his prophets had the last word. The Emperor Julian himself writes most peculiarly about that event, admitting that he had failed and talking in a raving sort of way about the destructive properties of fire. But that did not finish the tale of Julian's failure; in the same year, on 26 June, 363, he was mortally wounded in battle. We know the legend to the effect that as he lay upon the ground after receiving his wound, he cried out: 'Thou hast conquered, O Galilean.' Indeed so utterly had the Galilean conquered that the final effect of Julian's attempt was that even the stones of the old foundations of the Temple were uprooted, so that the prophecies were made to apply even to them.

My second episode concerns even a more perilous position. The greatest heresy in the history of the Catholic Church was that of Arianism. Arius was a priest of Alexandria who taught that the Son was not the equal of the Father, not true God, therein denying the doctrine of the Trinity. Arius taught that Our Lord was merely a creature, much more perfect than other creatures, who was used by God. In other words he placed Jesus where we place Mary. This heresy spread throughout the Catholic world and at times seemed to be triumphant. The great figure raised up by God to oppose Arianism was St Athanasius, and it was formally condemned at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. But that condemnation did not finish it, for it entered on a period of immense prosperity which lasted some six hundred years.

Indeed the year after Nicaea provided the very peak of peril. Because in that year Constantine, the Roman Emperor, was won over by the adherents of Arianism and gave orders that Arius was to be received back into the Church. Whatever that must have looked to the people

of the time, it would to us possess an awful aspect. It is evident that to reverse the condemnation of the council, and to re-introduce Arius into the Church without any recantation by him of his doctrine, would really involve the destruction of the Church. It would be the same as if Luther and Calvin were to have been taken back on their own terms, for that very same thing did menace in the case of Arius.

Constantine summoned Arius to Constantinople, the new capital of the Empire which had been inaugurated in the year 330 and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He required the Bishop of that See, St Alexander who was then 97 years of age, to restore Arius to the bosom of the Church.

The bishop was utterly dismayed, seeing only too clearly the implications of such an act. Destructive on the one hand would be such a condoning of heresy. Then on the other hand what would be the consequences of defying the Emperor? The favour of the Emperor at that time seemed to be pivotal to Christianity. Not only had he relieved it from its grievous condition of persecution but he had turned the Empire into a means of propagation of religion. To lose him at such a time appeared to be equal to the pulling of the foundations from under a building, so that the prospect was quite appalling. How was such an impasse to be resolved?

A certain Sunday was appointed for the receiving of Arius back into the Church. In the week which preceded that day, the bishop and his people betook themselves to prayer and fasting. Alexander shut himself up in the church and devoted day and night to supplication. Then on the Saturday he was summoned before Constantine and ordered to comply with the Emperor's wish. Alexander

refused whereupon Constantine flew into a furious rage. Alexander departed from his presence in a state of mind which can well be imagined.

He fell on his face before the altar and implored Our Lord to deliver the Church from the danger and disgrace which threatened it. The following is the formal petition which he spoke in agony and which is transmitted to us by Macarius who heard it and by St Athanasius: 'If Arius communicates tomorrow, then let thy servant depart and destroy not the righteous with the wicked. But if thou wilt spare it, have respect unto the words of the Eusebians and give not thy heritage unto ruin and reproach. Take Arius away, lest if he enter into the Church his heresy seem to enter with him and henceforth religion be counted as irreligion.'

This prayer was offered about 3 p.m. on the Saturday. On that very evening Arius was walking in the great Square of Constantinople when he suddenly became ill. Going indoors, he was overtaken by the fate of Judas. In other words he burst open and his entrails were diffused. The building in which that happened became a record of it to future times. The historian Socrates tells us that it 'rendered the manner of Arius' death ever memorable, because all passers-by pointed the finger at it.

All of that is pure history and completely authenticated. It all took place in the presence of the highest and hostile power which was awed by it and altered its policy. The Church was saved from having to complicate itself with heresy, that is to say it was saved from destruction. The situation seemed to be beyond hope and beyond solution, but God declared himself, supplying the solution and affording glowing hope to the infant Church.

The incurable unbeliever, Edward Gibbon, says that the occurrence either represented a complete miracle or else

was done by the administration of poison. You will see how completely he grants that the event took place in the form attributed to it. With regard to his typical and unworthy suggestion that poison was at work, it is to be noted that everything took place in an Arian city and court and in the face of powerful and quick-sighted adversaries. That suggestion was never then made and would in fact have been a complete impossibility; one might as well claim that Judas owed his fate to poison also.

In connection with this reluctance to believe anything which tells in favour of religion and which is willing to believe the greatest absurdity which is alleged against religion, let me quote some words from a current personality, Malcolm Muggeridge: 'Towards any kind of scientific mumbo-jumbo we display a credulity which must be the envy of African witch doctors. While we shy away with scorn from the account of the Creation in the Book of Genesis, we are probably ready to assent to any rigmarole by a Professor Hoyle about how matter came to be, provided it is dished up in the requisite jargon and associated, however obliquely, with what we conceive to be facts.'

As I myself have always been contending, if we do not receive religion, we will soon be found in the grip of superstition. If we reject the miraculous, we will inevitably be found declaring the absurd.

Those two episodes which I have recounted stand there to reinforce our confidence. Perhaps the Church in the present crisis is not in as great danger as in those times which I have been describing and therefore it may be allowed to work through under its own steam. But we can be sure of it that if the peril were as great as in those other times, and if all human aid were to be lacking, then God

would once again declare himself in unmistakable signs and restore the position of the Church.

I must not leave you without drawing a moral from the foregoing on the subject of Our Blessed Lady.

The most important administrative act of the Roman Empire after it became Christian was the transfer of its capital from Rome to Constantinople and its solemn inauguration in the year 330. It is supremely significant that the new capital was then dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. It sheds revealing light on her role in the primitive Church, the Church of the Catacombs from which it had just emerged. The anti-Marians have ordinarily contended that what they call Mariolatry began after the Council of Ephesus in 431. That itself is early enough, goodness knows! But here, a whole century earlier, there is conclusive, absolute proof of what the first Christians thought of her. She is shown as receiving from Church and State the identical sort of veneration which the most Catholic people would give her today.

The Nun's Vocation

All holiness must be based on a principle. It may not be strictly necessary that the fullness of that principle be understood. Otherwise ignorant people could not aspire to sanctity. But certainly where the capacity to understand exists, it should be at work. Other things being equal, the greater the appreciation of that principle, the greater the grace which will flow.

The broad principle on which the Christian life stands is the doctrine of the Mystical Body. The influence which an understanding of that doctrine can produce is notably exemplified by the Legionaries of Mary. These do not engage in their apostolate as a mere doing of good in a pious frame of mind. They see their role in the Mystical Body and try to act up to it. Result: grace flows abundantly through feeble human channels.

The legionary role as they see it is that of being an active member of the body, appreciative of Mary's motherhood of the body and anxious to be associated to her maternal role.

To seek high levels, what is the role of the priest in the Mystical Body? As I have been proposing elsewhere, it

which he considered was destined to perform that service to her. He became a priest. Later on in Rome he was summoned home, naturally or supernaturally, in time to give her the Last Rites.

She was the mother of 13,000 nuns. She died between 521 and 523 which would make her about 72. She was buried at the right of the high altar in Kildare. St Conleth, her coadjutor at the other side; and there she lay for three-and-a-half-centuries. About the year 830 the Danes began to ravish that part of Ireland so St Brigid's relics were brought to Downpatrick. The whereabouts of her grave were for a long time unknown, but in 1185 St Malachy, then Bishop of Down and Conor, prayed for that knowledge and a miraculous light shone on the spot where she lay along with St Patrick and Columcille. In 1186 in the presence of a Papal Legate, Mgr Vivian and fifteen other bishops, the remains of her body were solemnly honoured, but later the tomb was destroyed by the Protestant Reformers. The head of St Brigid was said to have been taken to Neustadt in Austria and eventually to Lisbon.

All the ancient buildings of Kildare have disappeared with the exception of the noble round tower which is still there, and which has a height of 136 feet. In it the celebrated falcon of St Brigid is alleged to have lived until the twelfth century, being killed in the time of King John.

Throughout Scotland memorials of her are numerous, but it is unhappily the case of a name without knowledge. The saints of the Scottish Gael are Columba, Brigid and St Michael.

is analogous to the head. The priest is a partaker of the headship of Christ. If he discerns this fully and seeks to put it into full operation, then the power of Christ himself is poured out through him. But it must be insisted that all the consequences be put into execution. One, which is not appreciated in its entirety, is that his chief duty is to build up the body, as insisted on in the Epistle to the Ephesians (4:12) and in the legislation of Vatican II. It would commonly be thought that the building is satisfactorily accomplished by the saying of Mass, the administration of the sacraments and preaching. Usually the people who do not present themselves for those services are not sought out. Too often there is no effort to develop those who are availing of the ordinary services of the Church. For example, most priests do not interest themselves in the lay apostolate and thus leave the people in a state of inactivity, half alive from the spiritual point of view.

Thereby has the position come about that ninety per cent of the Catholic fold is non-practising; that unbelief is not approached; that the Church's percentage of the population of the world threatens to fall to five per cent within this century.

Applying the analogy of the human body, the head that has not attended to the condition of the body will find itself reduced to the condition of that body, drawing its nourishment from it and sharing its fate.

Now we come to the nun. What is her special function in the Mystical Body? I suggest that it is that of a total association to the office of Mary our mother. I do not think it sufficiently defines the role of the nun to state that it is one of spiritual maternity, because the role of every active Christian is that of spiritual maternity. Moreover it is vital that we make it plain that the idea be

linked to Mary because in fact that motherhood is only an extension of hers.

When thinking of Mary's motherhood, it must not be supposed that it is only a picturesque expression. It is on the contrary a reality of the most positive sort. It is in the same order as the Mystical Body itself, being a part thereof.

But even if it were no more than an image, it could be vastly helpful. An image can make clear to us what has been a complicated proposition. Take the image of the Mystical Body itself. It presents as a familiar conception what would otherwise be hard to describe, that is the relation of Jesus to the Church, and of the unity, infinite variety, and interdependence of all the functions in the Church. Of course it is because of this effectiveness that St Paul has chosen that image.

For long I did not realise that the Mystical Body represented a real union. I regarded it as a metaphorical idea. I only connected it with that text of St Matthew (25:47-50) where Our Lord declares that what is done to the afflicted ones is done to him. In my apostolic efforts I found that idea stimulating, even though I imparted to the text no more significance than that Our Lord so loved those latter ones that he accepted as if done to himself what was done to them. I was misled in part by the fact that only the pitiable classes are mentioned. I incorrectly inferred that the better circumstanced were not in the same category, whereas of course the more respectable and holier the person the more he is in the Lord. I was simply overwhelmed when the fullness of the truth dawned upon me.

In the Mystical Body there are the innumerable diversities of function that the image of the human body

can only inadequately point to. But the human roles are immeasurably exceeded in the Mystical Body. For we see that the diversity as between persons is greater by far than the diversity between the parts of the human body.

After this little ramble around the doctrine of the Mystical Body, let us get back to the question of the nun's distinctive place or office in it. There are three passages in scripture in which Our Lord speaks of his disciples as being also his mother and his brethren. By reason of the importance of this idea I quote them to you:

- St Matthew 12:49-50: 'And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said "behold my mother and my brethren, for whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in Heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother".'
- St Mark 3:35: 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.'
- St Luke 8:20-21: 'And it was told him; thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. Who answering said to them: "My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it".'

Strange to say, those passages are seized upon by Protestants as being derogatory to Mary and as showing that Jesus regarded her as less than his disciples. Incidentally this shows how much the Blessed Virgin and the Mystical Body are linked together. It is an interesting fact that those who do not understand her are also found in a state of incomprehension of the Mystical Body.

The principle enunciation in those texts is that the spiritual bond counts for more than that of the flesh. The Christians were closer to Our Lord than his own people, the Jews, and even than his own close relations. It is a

drastic example of this that if Mary herself had not been a believer, she would have been less close to him than any Christian. The merely maternal bond is surpassed by the ties of the Mystical Body. But among those ties in the Mystical Body, Mary's with Our Lord are supreme and unique. She meant more to him than all other men who would ever live on earth put together. Then add to that spiritual exaltation, the human mothering of him.

Now I touch on the application of all that. We can understand that we are his brother and sister. But how can we be his mother? Surely that is something special to Mary and un-shareable by any other person? No, there is a peculiarity about Mary's motherhood which enables it to be shared by us all. Mary was more the mother of Jesus in the spiritual order than she was in the physical. And it is certain that in the degree in which we are apostolic we are made part of her spiritual motherhood, because apostleship is truly a spiritual mothering of Jesus. Therefore it is mixed up with and made one with her motherhood of Jesus.

This again fits in with that conception of our associating ourselves with the maternal office of Mary towards souls, working in closest union with her and in her spirit, and viewing all those for whom we work as Jesus himself.

This affords an extraordinary contemplation. It seems to offer to us the extreme heights of holiness. If we can really set ourselves deep in Mary's motherhood, it would be the highest sort of destiny. The question may be asked how does it compare to the priesthood? Well, if a priest had no apostolic spirit he would not be intimately united to the motherhood of Mary, so that those who are united to it would be on a higher plane than he. But suppose that a priest and a nun and a lay person were all equally united

to Jesus and Mary in motherhood, virtue and spirit, then the priest by virtue of his higher office would rank highest, and the nun would come next.

All this seems to bear most intimately upon the nun. Those spiritual texts, which teach that a true kinship with Jesus and even motherhood of him can belong to his disciples, afford the charter so to speak of her state. They are vital to her vocation and in fact constitute it.

I am going to establish the idea of the nun's vocation as being in the first place a mothering of Christ according to those texts. Her degree of association to Christ, her quality as disciple, is intense; in form as complete as she can make it. She has given herself to him by solemn vows and in a whole-time capacity. For him she has left father and mother, and brother and sister. She has sublimated the fundamental instinct for marriage, home and children in order to adhere to him. She has submitted to a difficult discipline which determines her actions and movements. All this amounts to an advanced degree of dedication and even to immolation.

If this framework be filled in by a corresponding degree of spirituality and effort, something portentous exists. It represents a close degree of approximation to Christ, unquestionably establishing the nun in that kinship to himself referred to in those texts, that is of mother, brother and sister.

I have drawn a distinction above as between the framework of a life and the spirit which fills it. Obviously it is that spirit which turns the framework of a living thing. Might we compare that framework to a kinship of flesh with Our Lord which he subordinated to the kinship of faith and love? It would be possible for one's spiritual life to flicker low within that framework, in which the

religious life would have failed in its purpose. In which case, it would transform itself from an aid to a load and a harmful responsibility. See the current case of so many priests. After having begun well in as much as they left the world in their youth and went no doubt worthily through the period of preparation, they have gone off steam and finished sadly. Many of them cast the priesthood from them, and it is well. Without life in it, that framework would only have been a hurt both to themselves and to the people. Remarkable to say, that decay first exhibits itself in anti-Marian attitudes.

My next point is of equal importance. As I have above distinguished between that framework and what fills it, now I make distinctions in regard to the grade or quality of the spirituality itself. It may stop short of the due point. One can contribute in various quantities and in different quality. One's contribution can be high in quantity and in emotional quality, but can be insufficient in the finer point of faith. For instance, if we did not understand the doctrine of the Mystical Body, then our offering would lack its proper roots and therefore be defective. To give some homely comparisons, gold and silver of the same weight are of very different values. Again, if the voltage of an electric current be too low it will not accomplish its purpose even though it be unlimited in quantity.

Now I go on to a further necessary degree of this quality. In order that our contribution possesses the worth equivalent to that gold or to that adequate voltage, it must be what can truly be called Marian. In certain circles it is the spirit of the day to downgrade Mary. 'For that, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Ignorance may excuse but it does not give the value of the genuine. If our appreciation of the function of Mary in grace is deficient,

it most gravely impairs the worth of what we offer. For that full understanding of Mary and co-operation with her is a vital, indispensable element. I do not fully develop this theme because it is a department in itself. The Mystical Body, correctly understood, comprises Mary.

Now this is where I would place the vocation of the nun. In the Mystical Body she is in a special way mother of Jesus. The priest is especially analogous to the head who is Jesus, not that this detaches him from Mary or allows him to be forgetful of her.

The nun's role is analogous to Mary's, but this does not separate her from the Mystical Head. On the contrary, Mary establishes that union and maintains it.

The central idea is that her vocation calls her to be a mother in Mary of Jesus and all his members. That seems to me to be the doctrinal basis of your state as nun. If Legionaries of Mary have attracted to themselves such graces by conforming their will, thought and action to that sharing in Mary's motherhood of souls, what is not being offered to the nun in her intense giving in that direction?

Granted an equivalent degree of effort on her part, she can completely unite herself with Mary the Mother, and thereby enjoy the very influence of her who is the spouse of the Holy Spirit and decked with his power.

Now we must discuss the mechanics of all this, because the source of power must be effectively linked up with the objectives. United to the motherhood of Mary, the nun must yearn after the salvation of every man. For practical purposes this boils down to those whom she can actually contact. But she must stretch out in sympathy towards all others. Her missionary vocation opens up to her those more distant, over-ripe fields.

Each person must be for her the occasion of an operation of the Mystical Body; that is the serving of Jesus by Mary. This service will first concern itself with the soul and will then overflow on to the temporal in every shape. As it is part of Mary's tending of her son, it must logically call for devotedness carried to its furthest limits; in it every quality must be displayed. The nun's motive and ever-present thought must be the looking at each item of her work through Mary's eyes. She must seek to fill herself with sentiments which she would regard as being appropriate to Mary. Let me apply to the nun the phrase of St Paul in regard to Our Lord: 'Have the mind of Mary' (1 Cor 2:16). Remember that devotion to Mary is virtually certain to include a proper devotion to Jesus. But attention to him may not include a proper attitude to Mary, as shown by the recent attempts to diminish her.

Whether your duties are manual or directed towards people, that approach in Mary must be the heart of the matter. 'I am doing this as Mary for Jesus, so I must do it in her spirit.' Of course it is both impractical and unnecessary to maintain that conscious intention. The task in hand occupies the forefront of the mind. But that initial inclination is enough. Having thrown the mind into that groove, it will subconsciously stay in it according to the law of intention. Even psychologically this will apply to a large extent in as much as that initial stress will inevitably affect the progress of the action.

The vocations of the priest and the nun tally closely. The priest possesses the sacramental office. That accepted, their vocations are surely identical. Here are some words from Chapter 12 of the Epistle to the Ephesians: 'He made some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the perfection of the people of

God, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ; so that we all shall at last attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood measured by nothing else than the full stature of Christ ...We must grow fully in Christ' (Eph 4:11-15).

No less on the nun than on the priest does that obligation lie of bringing people to maturity in Christ and building up his body to its full stature. So with the most complete sense of responsibility the nun must set herself to that work. Often the nun lets her horizons be limited to her own particular assignment, that is working in a school or hospital. This would put her into much the same category as what is called a sacristy priest. This latter formula does not build the body but leaves it infantile and underdeveloped. As an automatic consequence there would recoil on her that inert condition of the body which she has helped to produce through her insufficient conception of her function.

So the nun must look out through the walls of her classroom or her hospital or her kitchen and devise ways and means of reaching the unbelieving and necessitous souls who are outside in number beyond count. One of these ways is the intensive utilisation of the Legion. It would be inconsistent to multiply our physical resources by machinery and to scorn effective machinery in the moral sphere. The latter is infinitely more important because our use of the human instruments develops them at the same time. At the expense of a couple of hours per week, the nun can send powerful evangelistic and charitable impulses moving through the people, the ultimate consequences of which no man can foresee.

Take the case of Fr Gracia, who is now in enjoyment of his reward. He started the Legion in the Philippines

about 40 years ago. At that time the islands were totally non-practising. Now they are practising, maturing into apostleship and the Church is a going concern. Moreover their eyes have been uplifted from the purely domestic necessities towards an infinite ambition, none other than the conversion of the Orient. What an issue from the exertions of one man! What man has done, man can do – or in this case, woman.

But it seems to be the law of God that one's mechanism must be reasonably right; that the Holy Spirit will not operate where major defectiveness exists in that department. May I point to some possible defects.

To each person the nun must aspire and endeavour to give the full stature of Christ according to that text of Ephesians. This must include the full stature of Mary whom Jesus has incorporated into his own mission and made a condition of his graces. The giving of Jesus and Mary to people contains and requires much more than the imparting to them of a certain knowledge of doctrine. Likewise it means more than a stirring up of piety in them. For neither the doctrine nor the piety will automatically overflow on to others in the form of apostleship. So apostleship has to be specifically aimed at and in practice through organisation. If the element of apostleship is missing, the divine circulation will penetrate through the body with difficulty. The body will not be built up and may languish unto death.

The special effort must be towards the establishment and exploiting of personal contacts with the purpose of giving to each person all that the nun herself possesses: knowledge, idealism, apostleship. Never let us pay ourselves the compliment of thinking that others are incapable of having what we have. When this process of

passing out our own treasures is entered upon it will be found that, like a sacred contagion, it extends itself from one to another.

The process is not simply a plan of perfection but of necessity. The economy of the Mystical Body requires that circulation. We are nourished by what we receive and we pass it on, not depleted as in the natural order, but with increment by reason of the fact that each one is divinely intended to make his own contribution. This is the idea of Redemption; that we are not merely saved but as a result give some sort of worthwhile return. Some do this in princely style. Others do not pass on anything.

This forms an arresting thought: that what we throw into the current act does not stop short at the building up of the body in general, but by virtue of that divine circulation of grace, helpfully comes back to ourselves again. So that we can be the happy subject of an unending cumulative process, possessing the almost infinite potentialities of the geometric ratio – but much more because the transaction is in the order of grace.