

'I Must Be About My Father's Business'

Lk 2:49

Somewhere off the coast of New England a submarine lay on the ocean bed, battered, broken, unable to resuscitate. In its hull five men were bravely waiting – their voices calm and devoid of fear. The talk reverberated from the metal shell which formed their prison.

LIEUTENANT: What time is it now, Skipper?

SKIPPER: 4.15am. You asked me that same question, Lieutenant, exactly six minutes ago.

1ST SAILOR: Whatcha kickin' about, Lieutenant?
Submarine's the whole wheeze – nothing to do but sit down and draw extra pay.

2ND SAILOR: Join the Navy and see the world – with buckets of dough to buy yourself a good time.

3RD SAILOR (grumpily): Yeah! What air? My ole lady got me into this business because she said them airypalanes was fallin' all the time. She sure has got me down about as far as I can go!

LIEUTENANT: My head's just bursting.

SKIPPER: Easy on, easy on, Lieutenant.

2ND SAILOR: It's all very well for you to talk, Skipper – you haven't a wife and kid to leave behind. I'll go mad thinking of her. I can see her face now, when she hears the news.

SKIPPER: It's a good job the lights didn't go when the tub cracked up.

LIEUTENANT: Yes. I'd have lost my nerve long ago in the dark. As it is, they are nearly gone. My head is bursting.

SKIPPER: Easy on – easy on, Lieutenant.

3RD SAILOR: The Coast Guard will get through.

2ND SAILOR: Not a hope, buddy – them blokes is too busy chasing dames!

1ST SAILOR: Bully for them! Wish I was chasin' one now.

2ND SAILOR: Yeah! And what about the brush-off you got from that last blonde you had?

1ST SAILOR: Gee, that baby was a hep-kitten – just my idea of a real classy dame!

SKIPPER: Dames! Dames! Dames! Do you guys ever think of anything else? I only wish we had Dinny and that mouth organ of his. It's the only time I ever really wanted to hear him play.

1ST SAILOR: He's playing the harp now in the other half of this tin-can. He was a great guy; always ready to slap a tune on top of our blues.

3RD SAILOR: That rescue party *must* get through.

2ND SAILOR: Aye! And so will the Marines.

(Three sailors chat in low tones together. Skipper and Lieutenant do likewise for a couple of seconds, the Lieutenant's voice rises)

LIEUTENANT: ... at the Gardiner's party in New London, Skipper. You must remember her – she wore the white dress with the red trimming.

SKIPPER: Oh! I remember her now. She had a brother there, didn't she? Surly cuss that played contract so well?

LIEUTENANT: That's the one. The last time I saw her was the night before I went away. There's something about that girl that makes it hard for me to go now.

SKIPPER: She is beautiful all right, but I think she is too old for you.

LIEUTENANT: It's the way she wears her hair. Funny thing, I was reading a letter of hers when this crash came. She's sweet, Skipper. Gosh! Just my rotten luck this should happen now.

2ND SAILOR: Any rum left, Skipper? My throat's awful parched.

1ST SAILOR: The only thing I want is a big glass of beer. Wasn't it a swell night we had before we put to sea! The booze runnin' like Niagara. And remember the singing! Wasn't Dinny hot on the mouth organ? We didn't think we'd never be on shore again.

2ND SAILOR: I wish the sea would bust these walls and wash away the pain in my poor dome. It's giving me gyp. (*He splutters.*)

LIEUTENANT: My head's cracking open, too. What time is it now, Skipper?

SKIPPER: It's half-past (*cough, cough*), half-past, past---

LIEUTENANT: Funny, too. Always fancied myself as a family man – when I got promotion (*cough*). Funny the way everything works down to dollars in the end!

SKIPPER: O.K. for some guys. Never chanced it myself. This air stinks.

1ST SAILOR: Heck, Skipper, here's the water in! Look! The little leak over there!

2ND SAILOR: Maybe it will wash the air – (*laughs hysterically*).

SKIPPER: Steady, you guys!

3RD SAILOR: Save the air! Save the air! Save the air! Save the air! (*in a rising hysterical crescendo*).

SKIPPER: Pipe down, Sonny, it makes no difference.

LIEUTENANT: Yes, Skipper, I intended my son should serve Uncle Sam in the Navy. Wonder what he would be like?

1ST SAILOR: What about that rum, Skipper?

2ND SAILOR: It'll make you sick.

3RD SAILOR: That rescue must get through. I know it will, do you hear!!! It'll get through (*slightly panicky*).

2ND SAILOR: Aye! And so will the Marines.

SKIPPER: No harm in hoping anyway.

LIEUTENANT: Skipper (*splutters*), my head is horrible (*raises his voice*). I just can't stand it.

SKIPPER: Hold on, son, hold on!

LIEUTENANT: OK. I'm better now.

2ND SAILOR: What day is it?

3RD SAILOR: Sunday, you dope.

2ND SAILOR: Me ole lady and the kid'll always do Central Park on a Sunday. Gee! I hope she won't let him join the Navy. Junior's a fine kid. Wonder if he'll miss me much (*He splutters*.) It can't be long now.

SKIPPER: Well, there'll be no one to mourn me. Can't remember my father. Mom passed over years ago. Wonder why I was so keen on the sea. Don't regret it though – it was a good life though tough in spots. Never keen on dames either, since a girl I was fond of gave me the hard knock.

1ST SAILOR: Water creepin' up, Skipper.

LIEUTENANT: Say, you guys, what about getting it over quickly when the water rises?

SKIPPER: Not for me, while there's life there's hope. Life to me is a series of sensations, some good and pleasant, others bad, but I don't mind whether they are good or bad. I just want to experience them; even this headache, for as long as possible; and so I would rather die a lingering death than be snuffed out at a moment's notice.

2ND SAILOR: Golly! What a slant on life you have, Skipper. Me! I don't want to live unless there's something good cookin'.

1ST SAILOR: Sure! Life's only worth living where there's plenty of dames and tin.

3RD SAILOR: Well, there ain't no dames here (*cough*).

LIEUTENANT: What time is it, Skipper?

SKIPPER: Well, Lieutenant, we'll never again know the time – my watch is stopped! It stopped at ... (*cough*).

(*All hands cough and splutter, and then there is silence.*)

* * *

What is the idea of the foregoing strange dialogue which rings so out of tune with what you are accustomed to in *Maria Legionis*? It portrays five men in a submarine on the ocean bed waiting for the coming of Death in grisly form. He is near: actually in the punctured, poison-filled 'tin-can' with them. Already his fingers touch them, probe their vitals.

The scene is adapted from a much longer episode in a current novel in which there are forty men instead of five. The necessary compression into much smaller compass squeezes out most of the characters and a lot of the colour and effectiveness of the original.

In the latter, all the forty men did some talking. They reacted in different ways but all reproduced the same general note as in our less vivid presentation – that is, not a single one spoke of God, and so far as the narrative gave any indication, no one was thinking of God, or of a hereafter.

Fervent meditations on Dames, Dollars and Drink forms a fantastic preparation for Death.

You say ‘Only a story!’ No – more than a story! It is the projection into print of the mind of the author, depicting men as he has seen, heard and known them. That is how he figures that men of his world would deliberately occupy their last few moments on earth. Admittedly – or at least we would insist so – his picture is not balanced. It does not mirror *our* world. But it does represent *his* world. As he is to some extent typical of other writers and other men, so to some extent is his picture typical of the real world. (Not that we need labour this point, for we all know how bad things are.) Therefore, it forms shocking contemplation. For if there be a gleam of faith, it would be fanned to flame in those decisive moments. If there be in the soul any fear or love of God, it would then betray itself. Certainly that would apply to the vast bulk of Catholics. But I have known a few who made their exit in the manner of the crew of the submarine – and worse!

Souls at Stake

Now transfer that process of thought to the world at large. Run the eye of your mind over the great cities. In each of them are multitudes living *that life*; in which God has no part; which no ray of faith or hope or true charity illumines. They are born into the great adventure of life and their pilgrimage towards eternity proceeds. But

according to what principles? Nothing better, nothing else than the principles of the moth facing a line of candles. Dames, Dollars and Drink are all they know about or care about. Then enters Death, and here in charity we must refrain from adding a fifth alliterative link.

Surely someone is to blame? Surely we are not intended to be spectators of that spiritual chaos in the same helpless way that we would eye the mad churnings of the ocean? Those multitudes are typified by the five poor souls whom the above paragraphs have staged for us. Their spiritual darkness is more intense than that of the ocean bed outside that wrecked machine. Either they have never been taught to know Christ; or if they once were taught, they have not been re-taught or re-warmed. If they were sought out, they would be terrifically different; for even the slightest contact of grace works hidden wonders, and may mean the difference between a soul's loss and its salvation. But they have not been sought out with intent to affect those things. They have been left forlornly to the process of action, interaction and reaction with other victims or agents of evil like themselves. And how right thoroughly that process does its work!

Excuses for Inaction

If people knew of that submarine's plight, what frantic efforts would be made to help it. In a flash the whole world would be aware of the tragedy and in a sort of agony would follow its developments. Every material aid would be mobilised and men innumerable would be willing to place their own lives in jeopardy by desperate attempts at rescue. But when it is only souls that are at stake, what a different tale there is to tell! Most people, even the good Christian, appear to feel for souls at large no

sense of responsibility whatever. Or if they do admit some responsibility, they then proceed, by pleading difficulties and special circumstances, to dilute that responsibility to such an extent that it ceases to be a real one at all. Obviously, responsibility must not mean something which is the opposite to responsibility. Neither must it terminate in mere feelings, study, writing, reading, radioing, or that sort of 'preparation' which never gets down to the job. The approach to souls must not be made so scientific a technique as to be generally impracticable, or so indirect as to by-pass its objective, or so gradual as never to reach it. Approach must be nothing less than the sort of straightforward, wholesale going to souls which the pages of the Gospel picture for us. For, despite surface appearances, the conditions of today are much the same as those of the Gospel times, and the Gospel is not otherwise out-of-date.

Anything to do with us? In words well known to you, St John Chrysostom asserts it has everything to do with us: 'Christians, you will render an account not of your own souls alone, but of the souls of the whole world.' What a shock for us if we were to take that seriously? But perhaps the saint meant it to be taken seriously, as reflecting the mind of the Lord and echoing his words. For that is precisely what the Gospel seems to say: that on the shoulders of other men, jointly and severally, lies the responsibility for each of those almost infinitely numerous poor folk like the five – or forty – who are now living their godless lives and who will in due course pass through the Dread Portals in that 'tin-can' spirit.

Those sailors are far from being the worst in those great populations. (Though possibly one or two in the submarine may be as bad as they come – real bad!). But mainly their sins are those of ignorance and passion –

which does not, however, alter the fact that those sins, like a reeking deluge, cover the face of the earth. And their sort of wrong-doing shades into worse. There are the multitudes whose motive-power is malice; the perpetrators of enormities, the exponents of the Black Mass and other dealers in the Black Art; villains whose villainy has paid them; those who would commit a murder for a modest sum; the doers of wholesale cruelties and injustices which would make blood and tears run in rivers.

Then there is the uncountable world of those who are respectable but who have not faith – which is to be worse off than the greatest criminal who has in him some spark of the supernatural.

Then the others who have some faith, but not The Faith; no Mass, no sacraments. By comparison with those other grimmer specimens, this class looks good and we even find ourselves applying the word 'holy' to many among them. But do not ignore that 'hard saying' of Our Lord's which includes such persons: 'Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you' (Jn 6:54).

In many places over the world, the foregoing categories would comprise as much as 95 per cent of the population.

Even to us, with our blunted sensibilities, all that is painful to visualise. What must it have been like to our beloved Lord – who saw all and felt fully – when he allowed that same awful contemplation to overwhelm him in the Garden of Olives. 'A very appreciable time passed before he could subdue the instinct of holy horror and submit himself to his Father's will. All the tragedy of the Agony is summed up in this desperate struggle. Sin was about to close with him. He foresaw the hideous hand-to-hand fight, and he was afraid. Presently, as soon

as the abominable contact is brought about, the strife will be so cruel and the effort to resist the embrace of evil so frightful that he will sweat drops of blood. Then, vanquished, outflanked, invaded, steeped to the very marrow in the infamous torrent, he will bow his head in the shame and unbearable disgust of his condition.' (Bolo: *Tragedy of Calvary*).

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Now suppose St John Chrysostom – and the gospel – are right! And that we arrived at the Bar of Eternal Justice, are accused in respect of the distressing manner in which those poor sailors, and the millions whom they typify, spend their last moments?

What are we going to reply to that terrifying interrogation? Should we try boldly bluffing it out: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' That cry sounded fine during life, and all the hardboiled ones mouthed it and acted it. But if we do, it will not serve us. For the answer will be simply, 'Yes,' stripping away all presence and defence and leaving us without a word to say. For all the time we knew in our hearts what the saint has put into words. We were aware that Our Lord depended on us, who had him, to bear him to those who did not have him. Without the ministry of one man, he is not given to another. So that indifference and inactivity on our part ends inevitably in that Submarine Cameo and its like.

But perhaps we are able to give a more respectable account of ourselves: 'Those things constitute an impossible situation. I deplore it. But what more can I do about it? I am working for souls in my own place, and thus through the "machinery" of the Mystical Body I am reaching out to the souls who are inaccessible to me!'

That is better. It admits responsibility and shows willingness to shoulder it. But is that degree of shouldering sufficient? How can it be? For if it were, it would sanction a localising of faith and Christian efforts to the places that already possess those things. It would mean the leaving of the more needy places for ever in their existing state.

Prayer Prelude to Action

Then there is that other rejoinder: 'What can I do but pray for those unhappy places and people, and that I do.' You assume that such praying completely discharges your responsibility because of the difficulty or – as you would put it – the impossibility of reaching farther out. But I suggest that you cannot thus emancipate yourself – and for two reasons one practical and minor, the other of vital principle. The former is: How much prayer? For do not speak of prayer at all in this connection unless you mean something serious. Prayer is commonly treated as a soft way out of a duty. 'Let us pray' is either a pious formula – not meaning recourse to prayer at all; or else it is a disproportionate, insignificant contribution. But even if it be substantial, does it discharge your responsibility? Except that you are specially consecrated to the life of prayer, I do not think it does. For that, again, leads logically to the standing off from physical contact with those places and problems, an attitude very different to that of the Gospel, which is essentially an attitude of *going* and *doing*. Our tendency – almost irresistible – is to fight shy of that physical contact because it can be so difficult, or as we tell ourselves – so impossible.

Prayer must never represent escapism. Prayer is not supposed to be an excuse, or something into which we relax. It is the prelude to and necessary accompaniment to

action. It is the dynamism behind action. If rightly used, it will lead to action and bring action to fruitfulness. It is like the electric current which is made operative through a mechanism. But action is that mechanism. Action in human affairs might be compared to the necessary place of water in Baptism or of bread in the Eucharist. So, action no less than prayer, is due to all those problems. We are human beings, made of body and soul; and both body and soul must strain toward those sinful, necessitous souls. Prayer is the operation of part of our being. The remainder of our being must co-operate appropriately. There must be some tangible act or touch that can be called physical, between us and those Christ-starved souls. Naturally, that action must be pitched to maximum intensity and display itself in effective ways. But in the event that effective action does not appear to be possible, then some action is called for, in the last resort even a feeble gesture, even an unconnected or in itself futile physical reaching-out, or such a symbolic act as the preaching of St Francis to the birds and fishes.

Symbolic Action

Does this seem utterly ridiculous? Possibly it does. But there is method in its madness. Because it will save us from what would otherwise happen in almost every case, i.e. total and largely inexcusable inaction. For, having established it as a first principle that we must do something, our sense of the prudent and economical will shape our action into effective forms; so that we will not have to continue for long that type of action which I call 'symbolic'.

It is not enough that all the confessionals and altar rails should be open to all Catholics, and that the tough

ones have a chance of being dealt with in prisons and hospitals. That is only thinking in terms of the Catholics. Moreover, it is but the minimum approach to the latter, and rather amounts to their approaching us. To encounter us, they have to come to our territory; whereas the essence of approach is that we go to theirs, and there seek them out one and all; into the depths and the dangerous dens, even into their more inaccessible places, such as into their palaces.

Oh! But all that is rank impossibility in this modern world! Impossible! In saying so you forget to speak and perhaps even to think as a Christian. Our attitude to the 'impossible' must be conditioned by the following: Firstly, the spiritual, which tells us that '*with God no word shall be impossible,*' and that by faith and effort we can reverse the natural impossibility. Secondly, the psychological, which would teach us that if we grade something as impossible, we virtually make it impossible. The third consideration is that the divine command to seek out every soul was not limited by a sub-clause about their welcoming us or being amenable.

So the idea is *approach* on any terms, at any cost. If we leave any loophole, even though it be smaller far than the proverbial eye of the needle, our ingenious weakness will enable us to wriggle out through it. So there must be no loophole – which means that even in the face of situations which seem genuinely hopeless, that action which I call 'symbolic' must be staged. When that step, which seems so futile, is taken, it will place a more effective one within our reach. And then another one. Just as each new peak which the climber scales shows him a higher one; until the ultimate one stands up ready for conquest.

Marian Action

But I must not take one ingredient of action so much for granted as to omit its mention. For it is essential; it is the Marian element. Without this latter, it is possible to act prayerfully and energetically and yet to accomplish nothing of worth. For Our Lady is part of the principle of fruitfulness. Our Lord does not please to be fruitful by himself. He did not come on earth without Mary. Likewise he insists on her action as the condition of his revolutionary entry into souls. Without Mary, accordingly, the greatest strivings will only end in sterility. With her, on the other hand, every effort brings its due fruit; while heroic acts effect the miraculous and therefore can reach out to and solve the pitiful things that the Submarine Cameo stands for.

The foregoing statement of dry principle calls for the refreshing oasis of a real example. So I give you one – not indeed instancing action of the symbolic type, but very definitely action of a type which normally would not be forthcoming; and which was used by Providence to plant the Legion in a new continent.

Example of Symbolic Action

In November 1930, two legionaries went to Paris in the first effort to achieve the long-desired starting of the Legion in that influential centre. Arriving at First Vespers of the Feast – actually the centenary – of the Miraculous Medal, they naturally went straight to the Convent of the Apparition in the Rue du Bac. That evening, and on some other occasions during their stay, they met Ma Soeur Reeves, an American, and discussed the Legion with her.

Some months after their departure, there came to France for a Chapter of his Congregation, the Rev. Dr Joseph P. Donovan, CM, Kenrick Seminary, Webster

Groves, Missouri, USA. The Chapter finished, he took a holiday in England and Ireland during which – strange to say – he never heard the name of the Legion mentioned. Then, a week before the date of his sailing for America on a French steamer, he returned to Paris. On his first day there, he called to see his compatriot, Ma Soeur Reeves, who spoke to him about the Legion and give him a copy of the handbook.

Let us ask ourselves: What would ordinarily happen at that stage? I think that – at best – the handbook would be carefully placed among the ‘for use on the voyage’ luggage, and then read attentively as the liner nosed its way westward through the Atlantic breakers.

But no. Dr Donovan read it right away! He tells us his impressions: Is this a real organisation? Or is it merely a resplendent ideal set down on paper? The fact that people had indeed been so silent about it seemed to point to the latter. But if it were real, what then? Nothing less, he argued to himself, than that the long-awaited Church society had arrived.

At this stage, let us again put the question: What might we now expect Dr Donovan to do? In all but the case of the millionth man, the handbook would be studied during the voyage, and after settling down at home, a correspondence would be entered on with a view to settling the problem. Reality or Dream? And the equally vexed question of the suitability of the society to American conditions.

Such would be the conduct of the million, of the ordinary man; and we may fear that it would end – as usually ends the conduct of the ordinary man – in pretty, minor achievement.

Dr Donovan was travel-weary. He wanted to relax mind and body in a deck-chair. He wanted to get home.

But what did he do? He acted dynamically. Without a moment's delay, he repacked his bag. He took the train and then the boat and then the train – back all those weary miles he had so recently travelled – back to Dublin. And there he stayed until the last moment compatible with getting back to France in time to catch the liner. During that time he went around inspecting branches and works, and putting innumerable questions. By a happy 'coincidence' the President of the Legion in England, Philippa Szczepanowska, was in Dublin and was interrogated by him.

Then all those miles again from Dublin to France.

Symbolic Action Took the Legion to America

When Dr Donovan was finally back in Kenrick he put down his thoughts on paper and sent them to the *American Ecclesiastical Review*. Soon after, the article appeared under the title: 'Is this the long-awaited Church society?' For the third time I ask: 'What would normally happen at that stage?' I answer with another question: What is the usual fate of articles in magazines? – a little swirl of interest; then no more!

Wrong again! The article created quite a sensation. From very many and widely scattered places (speaking well for the circulation of the *Review*), there poured in requests for information about the Legion. The sequel followed soon; the first branch of the Legion in the New World. It was started at Raton, New Mexico, by Fr Nicholas Schaal. The date of that important event was the 27 November, 1931 – the Feast of the Miraculous Medal, a fact not adverted to by those Raton legionaries. Observe the significant 'coincidence': it was the first anniversary of the visit of those two legionaries to Ma Soeur Reeves in the Rue du

Bac – an act which was symbolic and futile in the sense that it was to fail in its objective, which was the starting of the Legion in France; but yet was made supremely fruitful. Who can doubt that the 'coincidence' represented in fact a delicate compliment paid by the Queen of Heaven to Dr Donovan and to the other members of the human chain who one and all acted their due parts.

Now, one further pointing of the moral! If Dr Donovan had *not* gone back to Dublin, but *had* read and prayed on the ship, and then had written that identical article for the *Ecclesiastical Review*, would all that solid interest have been enkindled? Would Raton have followed, and the subsequent great growth of the Legion in America? I venture to think those things would not have happened: in other words, that they came out of the dynamic *action* of Dr Donovan – which had asserted itself against a cramped time-table, against bodily and mental weariness, and against the temptation to take the easy way out – in other words against such an assembly of natural reluctances and valid excuses as to constitute what men would dub an impossibility.

‘The Apostle Takes Her to His Own’

Jn 19:27

In the handbook it has been stressed that we cannot pick and choose in Christ; but that we cannot receive the Christ of glory without at the same time bringing into our lives the Christ of pain and persecution; because there is but one Christ who cannot be divided. We have to take him as he is. If we go to him seeking peace and happiness, we may find that we have nailed ourselves to the Cross. The opposites are mixed up and cannot be separated; no pain, no palm; no thorn, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown. We reach out for the one and find we have got the other with it.

And of course the same law applies to Our Blessed Lady. Neither can she be divided up into compartments as between which we may pick and choose what seems to suit us. We cannot join her in her joys without finding that presently our hearts are riven with her sufferings.

Adequate Devotion Means Union

If we want, like St John the beloved disciple, to take her to our own (Jn 19:27), it must be in her completeness. If we are willing to accept only a phase of her being, we may hardly receive her at all. Obviously devotion to her must attend to and try to reproduce every aspect of her personality and mission. It must not chiefly concern itself with what is not the most important. For instance, it is valuable to regard her as our exquisite model whose virtues we must draw into ourselves. But to do that and to do no more would be a partial and indeed a petty devotion to her. Neither is it enough to pray to her, even though it be in considerable quantity. Nor is it enough to know and rejoice at the innumerable and startling ways in which the Three Divine Persons have encompassed her and built upon her and caused her to reflect their own attributes. All these tributes of respect are due to her and must be given to her, but they are no more than parts of the whole. Adequate devotion to her is only achieved by union with her. Union necessarily means community of life with her; and life does not consist mainly in the claiming of admiration but in the communicating of grace.

Motherhood – Mary's destiny

Her whole life and destiny have been motherhood, first of Christ and then of men; for she was prepared and brought into existence by the Holy Trinity after an eternal deliberation (as St Augustine remarks). On the day of the Annunciation she entered on her wondrous work, and ever since she has been the busy mother attending to her household duties. For a while these were contained in Nazareth, but soon the little house became the whole

wide world, and her son expanded into mankind. And so it has continued; all the time her domestic work goes on and nothing in that Nazareth-grown-big can be performed without her. Any caring of the Lord's Body is only supplemental to her care; the apostle only adds himself to her maternal occupations; and in that sense Our Lady might declare: 'I am Apostleship,' almost as she said: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.'

That motherhood of souls being her essential function and her very life, it follows that without participation in it there can be no real union with her. Therefore, let the position be stated once again: true devotion to Mary must comprise the service of souls. Mary without motherhood and the Christian without apostleship, would be analogous ideas. Both the one and the other would be incomplete, unreal, unsubstantial and false to the divine intention.

Devotion to Mary Means Apostleship

Accordingly, the Legion is not built, as some suppose, upon two principles, i.e. Mary and apostleship, but upon the single principle of Mary, which principle embraces apostleship and (rightly understood) the entire Christian life.

Wishful thinking is proverbially an empty process. A mere verbal offering of our services to Mary can be as empty. It is not to be thought that apostolic duties will descend from Heaven on those who content themselves with waiting passively for that to happen. It is rather to be feared that those idle ones will continue in their state of unemployment. The only effective method of offering ourselves as apostles is to undertake apostleship. That step taken, at once Mary embraces our activity and incorporates it in her motherhood.

Moreover, Mary cannot do without that help. But surely this suggestion goes too far? How could the Virgin so powerful be dependent on the aid of persons so weak? But indeed such is the case. It is a part of the divine arrangement which requires our co-operation and which does not save man otherwise than through man. It is true that Mary's treasury of grace is superabundant, but she cannot spend from it without our help. If she could use her power according to her heart alone, the world would be converted in the twinkling of an eye. But she has to wait till the human agencies are available to her. Deprived of them, she cannot fulfil her motherhood and souls starve and die. So she welcomes eagerly any who will really place themselves at her disposal, and she will utilise them, one and all; not only the holy and the fit, but likewise the infirm and the unfit. So needed are they all that none will be rejected. Even the least can transmit much of the power of Mary; while through those that are better she can put forth her might. Bear in mind how the sunlight streams dazzlingly through a clean window and struggles through a dirty one.

The Mystical Home of Nazareth

A particular application of the doctrine of the Mystical Body may be made to the Legion meetings, especially to the praesidium meeting which forms the heart of the Legion system.

‘Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Mt 18:20). These words of Our Lord assure us that his influential presence in the members of his Mystical Body is intensified according to the number in which they unite to serve him. He specifies number as a condition for the complete displaying of his power. Possibly this is a consequence of our individual defectiveness, the virtues of each being so limited as to permit Christ to show himself only partially through that one. A simple natural image may illustrate how this may be. A coloured glass will transmit only its own shade of light, obstructing all the other shades. But when glasses of all the different colours jointly project their shades, these unite to make the fullness of light.

Similarly, when Christians in some number combine for the purposes of the Lord, their qualities supplementing each other, he is enabled through them to manifest his perfection and his power more fully.

So when legionaries gather together in the praesidium in his name and for his work, he is present in that potent way; it has been made evident that power goes out from him there (Mk 5:30).

The Legion Meeting – Home of Nazareth

Also with Jesus in that little Legion family are his Mother and St Joseph, who have towards the praesidium the same relations that they had to him; which permits us to look on the praesidium as a projection of the Home of Nazareth and this not as a mere devotional exercise but as something based on reality. 'We are obliged,' says Berulle, 'to treat the things and mysteries of Jesus not as things past and dead, but as things living and present and even eternal.' Likewise we may piously identify the premises and equipment of the praesidium with the fabric and furniture of the Holy House and we may regard the behaviour of the legionaries towards those adjuncts of the praesidium as a test of their appreciation of the truth that Christ lives in us and works through us, necessarily availing of the things that we are utilising.

This thought provides a sweet and compelling motive for the bestowing of a careful attention upon the things that surround the praesidium and form its home.

Legionaries may have limited control over the room in which they meet, but other accessories of the meeting are more fully in their charge, such as the table, chairs, altar and books. How are the legionaries enabling the Mother of the praesidium Home of Nazareth to reproduce in it

the devoted housekeeping which she started long ago in Galilee? Their aid is necessary to her. They can deny it to her, or they can give it negligently – thus perverting her work for the Mystical Christ. Faced with this idea, let legionaries try to image how Mary kept her home.

Mary, Model of Care

Poor it was and the furniture far from elaborate. Yet it must have been most beautiful, for among the wives and mothers of all time this one was unique, gifted with exquisite taste and refinement, which could not but show themselves in every item of her home. Each simple detail must, somehow, have possessed loveliness, each common thing a charm. For she loved – as only she could love – all those things because of him who made them and who now made human use of them. She cared them and cleaned them and polished them and tried to make them nice; for they had to be quite perfect in their way. We may be certain that there was not one jarring note in all that domicile. There could not possibly be. For that little house was like no other. It was the cradle for the Redemption, the frame for the Lord of the world. Everything in it served strangely to mould him who had made all things. Therefore everything had to be fit to serve that sublime purpose; and fit it was by the order, cleanliness, brightness and indefinable quality which Mary contrived to impart to it.

In its own fashion everything about the praesidium plays its part in moulding the member and therefore should reflect those characteristics of the Holy Home, just as the legionaries themselves should reflect Jesus and Mary.

A French author has written a book entitled *A Journey Around my Room*. Make such a thoughtful journey around

your praesidium and analyse most critically everything that strikes the eye and ear; the floor and walls and windows; the furniture; the components of the altar, in particular the statue which represents the pivot of the home, its Mother. Above all, observe the demeanour of the members and the methods of conducting the meeting.

If the sum total of what is seen and heard is unattuned to the Home of Nazareth, then it is not likely that the spirit of Nazareth abides in that praesidium. But without that spirit the praesidium is worse than dead.

The Duties of Officers

Sometimes officers, like worthless parents, pervert those entrusted to their care. Nearly always the shortcomings of praesidia can be traced back to the officers. If members are unpunctual and irregular in their attendance, doing insufficient work and doing it imperfectly, failing in their attitude at the meeting, it is because that defective behaviour is being accepted from them, because they are not being taught any better. They are being warped by the training they are receiving from their officers.

Contrast all that inadequacy with the Home of Nazareth. Imagine Our Lady being thus neglectful about details and order, giving that disfiguring sort of training to her child! Try – it is difficult, but try – to think of her as slatternly, weak, unreliable, indifferent, letting the Holy House to go wrack and ruin, so that it is the contemptuous talk of the neighbours! Of course, the very idea is fantastic. Yet more than a few Legion officers let things drift thus shamefully in the praesidium Home of Nazareth which they profess to be administering as the very embodiments of Our Lady.

But if, on the other hand, all those things by their perfection prove the praesidium devotion, then we may

know that Our Lord is there in that fullness indicated by his words. The spirit of the Holy Family was not confined by the Holy House, nor by Nazareth, nor by Judea, nor by any boundary. Neither, therefore, can the spirit of the praesidium be confined.