

*Maria Legionis*



# Maria Legionis

The Voice of the Legion of Mary

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THE JOY OF THE NEW YEAR - <i>Fr. Cornelius Nwaogwugwu CM</i>	3
I MUST BE ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS - <i>Frank Duff</i>	4
LEGION LEGENDS: MATT LALOR - <i>Frank Duff</i>	17
GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS	22
THE SERVANT OF GOD, ALFIE LAMBE - <i>Fr. Martin Halpin</i>	23
PRAISES OF MARY	27
FRANK DUFF NEVER GAVE UP ON A SOUL - <i>Marie Dunleavy</i>	28
VISAKHAPATNAM COMITIUM, INDIA	30
WORLD NEWS	34
PRAYER TO THE HOLY FAMILY	40

## The Conversion of St. Paul

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

- Acts 9:3-9, NIV



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THE VINCENTIANS IN SAINT PETER'S CHURCH  
PHIBSBOROUGH, DUBLIN 7, IRELAND  
WISH YOU

# THE JOY OF THE NEW YEAR

FATHER CORNELIUS NWAOGWUGWU CM *writes*



## *Joy to the world the Lord is come*

I hope you all have celebrated Jesus' birth in thanksgiving and joy. January 1<sup>st</sup> is the feastday of the Mother of God and is a powerful beginning for all her children because Jesus said to John before he died for all our sins on Calvary 'Behold your Mother' proclaiming Mary, mother of the whole human race, the new Eve. The Resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday and Ascension into heaven are what our Catholic faith celebrates, with the help of the seven Sacraments.

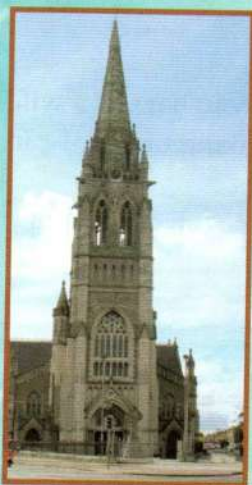
The first apostles were afraid until Jesus told them he would not leave them orphans. He would send them the Holy Spirit to give them courage and power and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help proclaim all the Word of God to all people. We have received this Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. He dwells within our souls; all we have to do is call in prayer.

God our Father has allowed Mary to come on earth to give us hope and guidance. She invites us to change our sinful ways and turn back to God in prayer and Confession. Pope Francis asked all catholics to return to the Sacraments, especially Confession and get back to the joy of living life God's way.

God our Father always sends help in times of trials. He sent our Blessed Mary, our Mother to Knock in County Mayo, Ireland on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1879 when the population was being ravaged by hunger and disease.

So let us all go in joy and thanksgiving with the Lord into 2017.

*Sing a new song to the Lord,  
Sing to the Lord all the earth,  
Sing to the Lord bless his name,  
Proclaim to the nations, God is King,  
Alleluia, alleluia.*



The Voice of the Legion of Mary



# I MUST BE ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

by The Servant of God, Frank Duff



{Somewhere off the coast of New England a submarine lay on the ocean bed, battered, broken, unable to reascend. 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: 4.15 a.m. 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!



## MY FATHERS BUSINESS

- 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: O.K. 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! 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 some one 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 effect 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.

*"Christians, you will render an account not of your own souls alone, but of the souls of the whole world."*



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 straight-forward, 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.



St. John Chrysostom

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" (St. John vi. 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 end 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 IN 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.

*"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"*

(St. John vi. 54)



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 cooperate 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

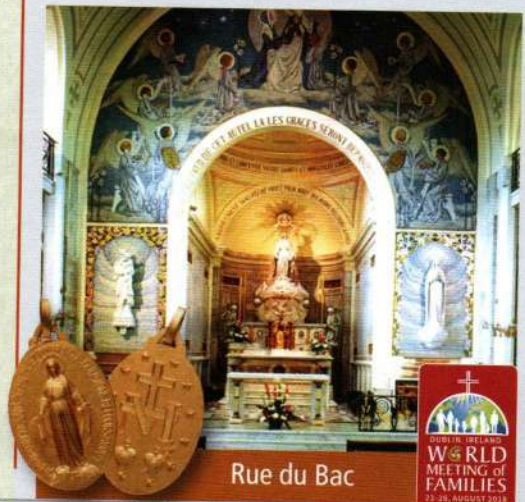
But I must not take one ingredient of Action so much for granted as to omit its mention. For it is essential; it is the Marian element. Without this latter, it is possible to act prayerfully and energetically and yet to accomplish nothing of worth. For Our Lady is part of the principle of fruitfulness. 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.

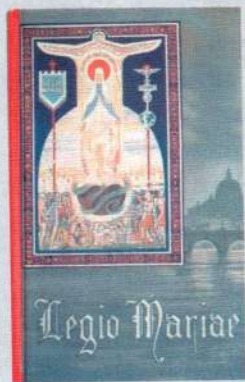
The foregoing statement of dry principle calls for the refreshing oasis of a real example. So I give you one – not indeed instancing action of the symbolic type, but very definitely action of a type which normally would not be forthcoming; and which was used by Providence to plant the Legion in a new 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, C.M., Kenrick Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri, U.S.A. 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 Father Nicholas Schaal. The date of that important event was the 27th 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.

*Frank Duff*





# MATTHEW R LALOR

by Frank Duff



Now in this Christmas series of my talks at reunions I have already discussed a couple of illustrious figures who were part of the ground work of the Legion but who, such is the passing character of memory, are in danger of oblivion. And that in their cases would be a shame so I do my little best to rescue them from that fate, apart altogether from the fact that the knowledge is necessary legion knowledge to you.

On this general point of forgetfulness, one is driven to ask oneself how does history work? On what basis does it pick people for record, for better or for worse? Certainly it works along strange lines. Kill one man and you are a murderer. Kill a million and you are a hero and conqueror and you are enshrined in history. In the end the poet has said that the psalm of fame rose better on the battlefield than in the garden of peace and it is sadly true.

Today I am going to recall among you, at least by words, another noble figure who plays an eminent part in Legion fortunes, and who ranks as a laureate member of the Legion. It is Matthew R. Lalor. My account, which necessarily has to be brief, therefore has to be scrappy. A big book would be necessary to cover the important subject and

therefore I have to jump about to touch on aspects. No more can be done.

My first encounter with Mr. Lalor was through Tom Fallon, another great actor in the part, who brought me out to Mr. Lalor's house. Mr. Lalor lived in No. 6 Prince Edward Terrace, Blackrock in Bachelor's quarters, and in those quarters along with him were Tom Woods, and P.J. O'Hanlon, the latter being still among us – he has been working as Parish Priest in England for a long time.

Now ever after that momentous day on which I went out to see him first, I had lunch there every Sunday. That would not nowadays be possible for me because Sunday is my most busy day, but it was then. After tea I returned to the city for the evening's work.



Now after lunch and his extraordinary black coffee we would be sitting around the fire most of the time discussing things. Various other figures would drop in, Frank Sweeney, Christopher Glennon, sometimes Fr. Toher and Fr. Creehan, and sometimes Mr. Lalor and I would be alone in which case we would go out for a walk between lunch and tea.

Now that Sunday session was a complete turning point for me, in fact, I suppose I might go further and say it was a restorer of life. The atmosphere was holy and calm in that home. Wisdom and experience were on tap and how those things were needed by me. You will recall that those were the great pioneering days. Earlier events were moving steadily towards the Legion which began in 1921, the Sancta Maria 1922, the Morning Star 1927, the Regina Coeli 1930, and then the Encyclical by Pius XI in 1931. It was a time of internal stress and turmoil and I went out sometimes half demented. He was able to pour oil on the troubled waters of the mind. It can be said that every crisis and bigger situation of the Legion was discussed in his house and the right decision would always issue.

He had a special part in the establishment of the Morning Star. Years before that actual event, I went to him with the very first of the plans. A little man called Eddie Quill who had ambitions to enter the Franciscan Brothers was running an upper high class lodging house in Dean Swifts' Court off Francis Street. And he offered this to me for the tremendous sum of £500.

I put it to Mr. Lalor and suggested that the St. Vincent de Paul Society would adopt this work. To talk of any new work which meant help for people in any shape or form to Mr. Lalor was just automatically to enlist his interest. So encouragement was given and backing at the St. Vincent de Paul council of Dublin.

The enterprise was adopted and a fairly large sum of money was offered for it. It fell through, not through fault on our side. Then long searching took place ending in the offer of the premises which the hostel now holds.

In all these delicate negotiations with the government and others, Mr. Lalor took part and to make a great big wide jump over all sorts of happenings, the hostel was launched and he and I were named as trustees of the hostels by the government which will just show the part he had in the transaction. Actually Mr. Lalor in spite of his tremendous interest only visited the hostel on a couple of occasions. And one of those occasions was rather suitable because he had been hearing from me of the certain distressing features attached to the work and he encountered on that particular evening the worst case that ever passed through that building.

As a special treat to them I occasionally brought others out to lunch and for the day to Mr. Lalor. I didn't venture to do it too often because it was his house and not mine. Those persons found it a rich experience, one which they did not forget, for to know Mr. Lalor, as has been said of some distinguished figure or another, was a liberal education.



Mostly our conversations were on religious topics especially varying upon our joint interests – The St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Legion.

His appreciation of the Legion was an astounding business. For someone who was not in it! You could call it a total appreciation. He eagerly listened to every item which I brought him out each week. In sympathy and in spirit he took part in every thing it was doing. And as a consequence he shared in all our trials and suffered more than coldness that was our fate. As a result his later years were passed in a sort of shadow.

Now I must give you some notion of his character and life. First his appearance! I have a little picture here which I took down from the wall of the Morning Star before coming to you because you want to know what he looked like. Those of you that cannot see it by reason of distance or defected by sight can approach more closely afterwards. He was born according to my estimate in the year 1853. Therefore he was over 60 when I met him first. I regarded him as very old, but even so, I saw nothing of age in his mind. That mind was as young as the mind of a boy; it was enterprising and enthusiastic.

There was in him no place of mere conservatism. He would be received by young people as of their own vintage. He was born in Castledermot, which is in Co. Carlow. He lived with an uncle who kept a shop and Mr. Lalor one time told me that that shop was what we would call in our day haunted. That is to say, when the family retired to bed at night in the upper regions of the house,

all the business of the day was re-enacted down below by sound – the opening and shutting of doors. All the sounds that had been carried on during the day were restaged down below. Amazing but you can take it as absolute gospel because Mr. Lalor told me so.

He was an apprentice to the drapery trade and he served his time in Switzers and even the men of this era still know it is there. But he had his own ideas. All the time he was looking around and taking stock of the situation and so when the time came for setting up it was not in the drapery business but in an exceedingly different line. It was in the high-class tobacco trade. Dublin was at that time a Garrison town. The Vice Regal Lodge held its sunny royal occasion, you were presented at court, and all the young ladies of fashion aimed at that experience. The city was thronged with officers, army officers and government officials and apparently they were likely to have more money than the rest.

So he opened a shop in Pearse Street then known as Great Brunswick Street which specialised in cigars. It was an immediate success. The quality of Dublin flowed in upon it. But there was a misadventure not too long after his successful opening. There was a shop beside his own and it was vacant. Alas it became a vegetable establishment and the owner of the vegetables did not at all agree with the delicate aroma of his cigars and the customers used to make jokes about how happy he was to have his raw material so close at hand, they were referring to the cabbage leaves.

So he was a man of quick decision. He did not allow a situation to drift which he believed to be a difficult one and so he transferred to Westland Row, and a little later on, he opened an extra shop in Nassau Street and that shop stands there today – over its window is its legend Lalor, L-A-L-O-R.

He prospered greatly and what a use he made of his prosperity. No one could catalogue his benefactions. Mr. O'Callaghan, another of the characters of the time said that his own effort as an investigator showed that Mr. Lalor had given away £100,000 in three years, and £100,000 would be a big sum of money even today, and what it was worth then I'll just ask you to calculate.

There was a Vincentian Priest at that time called Fr. O'Boyle who used to specialise in accumulating funds for the native Chinese for the priesthood and one day I was looking through some of Mr. Lalors' effects and I found a series of Seminarian pictures and on the back of three of them were the numbers 99,100,101. And when I questioned him about that I found that that represented the number of vocations that he had funded. For that particular purpose it wasn't a tremendous expense at the time, £100 a head, but multiply a 100 by 100 and you have a good sum of money and it must be remembered that that particular charity was far from being the only one he had an interest in, he was interested in absolutely everything.

Strange, he did not bestow any money on the Legion although our earlier

needs were great. And I often wondered over that. Of course if I had asked him for it, it would have been at once forthcoming generously. I never asked him. And I often thought that it was as if he had some sort of supernatural insight that we would plough through and it was best for us so.

When he died he left his business to the Mexican religious order which Tom Fallon had left us to join. But Mr. Lalor had left his bank account white. There were no cash assets. The business was there, a good earning business but he had not let any money accumulate.

Now I go back to his earlier days. He was a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Blackrock. There he met Frank Sweeney, another of the giants of the past. This encounter between them was momentous though it has not come down in history like the encounter of Stanley and Livingstone. Very momentous because after its foundation in Ireland the St. Vincent de Paul Society produced many branches. It was perhaps too much absorbed in the social side and in regard to that we must recall that these were days of tragic poverty in Ireland so the society began to exhibit weakness, what looked like a touch of decay entered in.

Frank Sweeney entered into the situation as a germ of a new life. He had studied everything about the Society which could be found and he understood its true spirit. Recognising in Mr Lalor a kindred soul, he induced him to come with him on bicycle rides on Sunday and in the course of



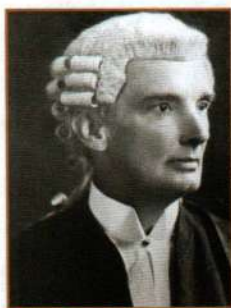
those he explained the real Society. Mr. Lalor was utterly receptive so a plan was soon arrived at. They picked on a conference and they both joined it. I wasn't able to recall what particular one it was, it will come back to me, but you are not going to get the benefit of that. I think it was St. Michael and Johns. And they found on joining that it was little better than a relieving society. They proposed the true motive and not always were their efforts at a better state received favourably. But with their patient method new life began to show and at a certain stage when they reckoned that it had caught they moved on to another weak conference.

As they went they picked up others who were ready for the message such as Tom McCabe, Tom Fallon, Dick Durcan, Joe Rush, Dick Corish, and others too numerous to mention. And so a new order was ushered in. The society began a new and vigorous life. Frank Sweeney became vice president of the council of Ireland and Mr. Lalor became president of the council of Dublin.

Another link with the Legion was forged in the following way. I joined the conference of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Whitefriar Street in October 1913. It caught my interest and soon I doubled up my membership by joining St. Nicholas of Myra, Francis Street as well. Frank Sweeney came into the conference as President. It was a providential appointment for him because the owner of Myra House, Francis St., Mrs. Keogh, gave him that house as a personal gift. It would not have been given I think to anybody else. And that house became the centre to many things.

I became president of a new conference named after our mighty patron St. Patrick and out of this sprang the things which finally took shape as the Legion. Mr. Lalor had travelled extensively in Europe prior to my acquaintance with him, by then his real travelling days were over but we did a little journeying together. He brought me on some Vincent de Paul missions. And in 1928 we had a memorable experience together.

It was in April 1928 I went off to start the Legion in Glasgow after which I moved through a number of the other towns in Scotland then down to Newcastle upon Tyne in the north of England and to London where I was received by Cardinal Bourne and he sanctioned the start of the Legion. Mr. Lalor came over to London and joined me there. I went about with him on his business rounds.



Frank Sweeney



Mrs. Keogh



Fr. Michael Toher



Fr. Michael Creedon

He was buying cigars and other forms of tobacco and I picked up a certain amount of technical knowledge of the trade at the time which I confess has not been very much use to me. I remember one thing in particular, he discovered a Cuban cigar which was able to be sold for 6 pence retail and this was a marvellous bargain and he did great business out of it afterwards. Then immediately followed a rich experience.

The two of us went down to a monastery for a three day retreat. We were the only ones there. We had four lectures every day by the guest master Don Pascall Geoffreys who I might mention was descended in an unbroken line from the Catholics of old England. Now never had there been a break in the Catholic line. Those lectures were astounding businesses because the twelve of them were exclusively on the subject of Our Lady. You will agree that no such retreat is ordinarily given. Perhaps it is a good thought I am putting to you. Those lectures were held as the time of the day dictated. Weather was beautiful so some of them were in the garden, some of them were in the greenhouse, and some of them in the evening were in the parlour.

Mr. Lalor and I did not speak one word to each other in those days even though we sat in front of each other at our meals. Fr. Pascal had asked me on arrival in the holy place what were my leanings. Well of course my leaning was Our Lady but I didn't say that to him. I thought perhaps that was some sort of weakness because I thought that as an Englishman he wouldn't be too keen on that and I didn't want anything said

which wouldn't be nice or enthusiastic about Her so I said that I thought one of my inclinations was towards the liturgy. His answer was drastic. No, no, no he said you must know Our Lady before anything else because she is the foundation of all Christian understanding and spirit. If she's left out you are bankrupt, nothing else will come to you, and you wouldn't be able to understand anything else.

His lectures were purely theological by which I do not mean complex. They aimed at giving the reason as to why we must be completely devoted to her. It was a revelation to me in any case. What was Mr. Lalor's attitude to Our Lady even before that? Before I ever met him he practised the True Devotion. I would fancy that it was Tom Fallon that gave it to him. Mr. Lalor distributed many copies of the book and sought to interest people widely, but it was not he who stirred me up but Tom Fallon.

Where and when again will we encounter the like of Mr. Lalor? He was a unique personality with a unique role. A man before his time, a gentle reformer, a practical visionary, lover of everything good and a friend of everyone in need. Devoted to his own Society but capable of including the Legion as a first love so that he could be called a foundation stone of it. He was an amazing mixture of strength and gentleness. Every inch of him was a Christian gentleman. We are not supposed to bandy around the word saint, especially when it would be an unreal description but my words seem to have been painting one. He died in 1937.



*God works in mysterious ways,  
even through a PLIERS.*



**M**ichael Hough from Lisseycasey, in County Clare, Ireland worked with the Electricity Supply Board (ESB); a colleague who was ill asked him to take over his work route for a day or two. So he and another ESB man set off for Corofin, not too far away, to repair a fault in a house. While there, they met Paddy a brother of the householder, did the job and left for their next assignment.

En route it was discovered a pliers had been left behind, which was the property of the man who was ill and so had to be retrieved. Following a phone call it was agreed that Michael would call to Paddy's house at lunch time the following day and collect it.

Michael called as promised and was invited in for a for the legendary cup of tea.

While chatting Paddy mentioned he was a member of the Legion of Mary and speculated that it would be great if a praesidium could be established in Lisseycasey. Michael agreed but couldn't participate as he was about to go to Missionvale on the outskirts of Port Elisabeth for a month to help set up a Hospice for Sister Elisabeth Normoyle. However they swapped

phone numbers and promised to keep in touch.

Upon his return Michael and Paddy got together and with the permission of the Parish Priest Father Hourigan set up a praesidium - Our Lady of Lourdes on February 11<sup>th</sup> a most significant date. They were joined by a number of local people and assisted initially by Una Doyle, a legionary from West Clare Curia.

Shortly thereafter, Micheal retired from work and he and his wife Bridget volunteered for Peregrinatio pro Christo work and indeed both have participated in 25 PPC projects in the past 8 years.



Very level headed people, they have reared a family, work a small farm and care for their young grandchildren when needed but their whole spirit is evangelical working for Jesus through Mary.

THE SERVANT OF GOD

# ALFIE LAMBE

*Fr. Martin Halpin*

Martin Halpin PP Ballinabrackey  
Kinnegad, Co. Meath. 28<sup>th</sup> February 2016



It is nice to be here in the Church Of the three Patrons here in Rathgar, named after St. Patrick, St. Brigid and St. Columba.

For members of the Legion of Mary there is a nice symmetry in this because they have three people who you call their Patrons i.e Frank Duff who founded the Legion of Mary here in Dublin in 1921, Edel Quinn their envoy to Africa and Alfie Lambe their envoy to South America. It is hoped that one day all three will be canonised by the Church as Saints.

A former Bishop of Meath Diocese Dr. John McCormack who was a big fan of Frank Duff expressed the thought that one of the handicaps he would have to overcome was that he lived to be too old. He must have felt the challenges of old age which he was coping with would militate against sainthood.

Alfie Lambe who we remember here today does not suffer from that disadvantage. He joined the Legion of Mary in Tullamore after being frustrated due to health matters in his attempt to become a Christian Brother. He became a very active member of the Legion of Mary and when he set out for South America on the 16th July 1953 he was very well formed for the task of being a Lay Missionary for the Church.

He was 21 years of age and he would die before he was 27 years of age.



Alfie Lambe

Edel Quinn

Frank Duff





Alfie Lambe would have liked to be a teacher in a classroom but God's providence had plans for him to be a Teacher in a bigger theatre of operations namely the continent of South America.

The Legion of Mary through its weekly meetings and pastoral work of visitation provides its members with an on-going formation system so that over time some people can have a level of formation comparable to a number of years in a Seminary learning Theology and other subjects. The Legion of Mary might even have some advantages in that the theology learned is applied regularly in on-going pastoral work. Alfie Lambe would have preferred the Seminary training of the Christian Brothers but he was well suited like many others, to this day, to ongoing formation of the Legion of Mary.

As I understand it, the Founder of The Legion of Mary, Frank Duff saw that in some areas of pastoral work lay people could go where it was not possible for a Priest or Religious to go. Even today in regard to reaching out to lapsed Catholics or people who

have no religious faith or belief the role of the Priest or religious is limited.

As a Priest I cannot easily approach a person about their religious faith or practice without coming across as a representative of an institution The Church, even if I say the Church is the People of God.

On the other hand if someone calls to see me as a priest about a faith or belief that is another matter. Then I am responding to their questions but I have to say with the great fall off in the practice of regular confessions that does not happen very often.

A Lay person either through their ordinary work or by belonging to a group like the Legion of Mary has much more scope. To make up a simple example. A person you work with or you are in regular contact with does not go to Mass. They know that you do and ask you a question about faith, you might know the answer yourself, you might say I will ask a Priest about that or I will enquire when is the best time for you to call to the Priest about that. You might come back with an answer which gives the enquirer the guidance they are looking for. In this way you are the agent of evangelisation in a way the Priest is not able to be for that person at least in the first instant. Lay people have many opportunities to be agents of evangelisation in the modern world but like in most areas of life people need training and support for such an undertaking.



In the life of Alfie Lambe we see the possibilities of the fully trained Legion of Mary member.

He was a fully trained lay evangeliser working with the Legion of Mary system. Of course I am talking as if the Legion of Mary is just a name for a human system but for Frank Duff the founder and the members of the Legion of Mary the role of The Holy Spirit and Our Lady is crucial to the way God works through the Legion of Mary and its members in the world.

The prayers to Our Lady like the Rosary and the invocation of the Holy Spirit along with spiritual reading and the work reports are the source of life and strength for all the Legion of Mary hopes to achieve in the world.

Among the places that the Legion of Mary has achieved a great deal for the Church is of course in South America through people like Alfie Lambe. One of the countries in South America that Alfie Lambe worked in, in the early part of his time there, was Ecuador.

As the name suggest it is country on the equator with a climate which I imagine would be very challenging for anybody from this part of the world. He was told that Ecuador was a country going through a lot of political upheaval and that there was a big Communist problem in the country. In the 1950's during the Cold War the Communist System without any mention of God seemed to offer more than other systems, at least in theory. Also a lot of people in Ecuador

had only minimal contact with the Church due to the low level of Mass attendance. For someone like Alfie Lambe he saw the challenging times in Ecuador as an opportunity and not a crisis. He said Ecuador did not have a Communist problem it had a Catholic problem. The problem for the Catholic Church was that nearly everybody was baptised but very few people had an awareness of their faith as a gift from God and a source of hope and strength in their life. Also most people were not well equipped to put their faith into words when met with proposals that non-belief in God and Communism had more to offer than what they believed in up to then. Alfie Lambe had become proficient in Spanish at this time and able to speak to the Priests and Bishops in Ecuador and he even addressed their Bishops' Conference.

They would have known something of the Legion of Mary already but Alfie Lambe was able to recommend its benefits for the formation of Lay People in their faith in order to meet the changes that were rapidly occurring in their country. Alfie Lambe was assisted in the tasks he undertook by Legion of Mary members from other countries like nearby Colombia so that in very short time all of the Bishops in Ecuador were enthusiastic supporters of the Legion of Mary. It was established in every Diocese in Ecuador when Alfie Lambe left there to go to some of the other countries in South America.



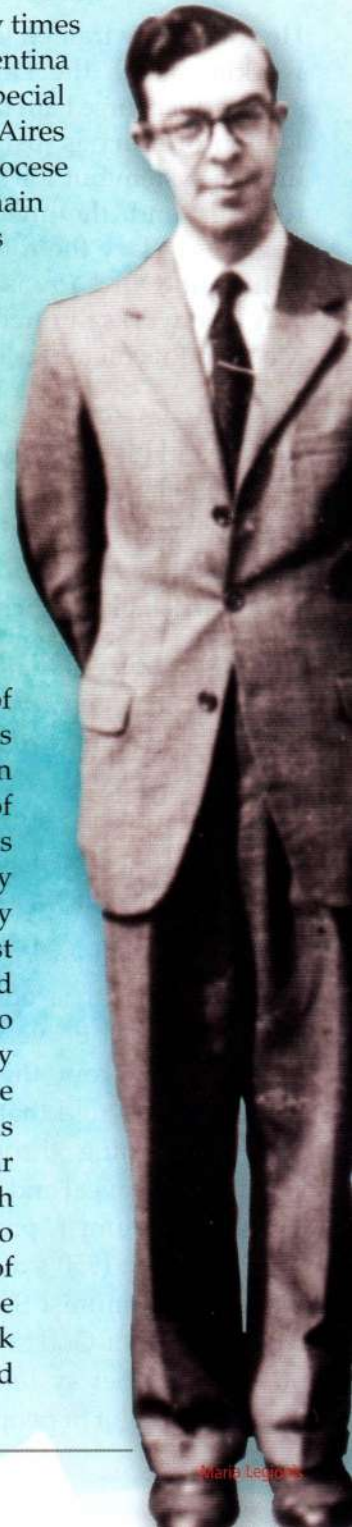
He encouraged what was there already and he often started off new Praesidia or branches of the Legion of Mary in many countries. In Ireland he visited many counties with the Legion of Mary and in South America it was countries and most of them were many times the size of Ireland. Many people in countries like Argentina have a great appreciation of Alfie Lambe as a very special and unique person. It was from the Diocese of Buenos Aires that his cause for sainthood was first started. (The Diocese which Pope Francis left to become Pope in 2013) The main gift that Alfie Lambe brought to South America was his baptismal faith but the combination of that gift of faith and the people of South America would bring about abundant fruits .

We sometimes talk of our faith as being symbolised by a lighted candle, a light that dispels and pushes back the darkness. Well in the case of Alfie Lambe that light became a star. He is a star, a hero of the Legion of Mary, and we thank the people of South America for taking him to their heart. Maybe the next Alfie Lambe or the next person like him will come from South America to Ireland. The present Pope



In matters of faith National boundaries act more as bridges than barriers. The Good News of our faith in Jesus Christ is not meant to be exclusively for any one country or any one group. In Jesus Christ no group is excluded and Jesus wants that message to reach every part of every country in the world. The Good News is that God is with us in all our

endeavours and and Jesus Christ calls on us to be with each other. Many people in South America were able to hear that message more clearly due the fruitful work of Alfie Lambe and the Legion of Mary, and for that we give thanks to God. May God continue to bless the work of the Legion of Mary and its members in Ireland and throughout the world.





# Praises of Mary

One who says his Rosary alone only gains the merit of one Rosary; but if he says it with thirty other people he gains the merit of thirty Rosaries. This is the law of public prayer. How profitable, how advantageous this is!

*St. Louis Marie de Montfort*

True devotion to our Lady is holy, that is, it leads us to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of Mary. Her ten principal virtues are: deep humility, lively faith, blind obedience, unceasing prayer, constant self-denial, surpassing purity, ardent love, heroic patience, angelic kindness and heavenly wisdom.

*St. Louis Marie de Montfort*

All the gifts, graces, virtues of the Holy Spirit are distributed by the hands of Mary, to whom she wills, when she wills, as she wills, and in the measure she wills.

*St. Bernardine*

Mary has two sons, the one a God-man, the other, mere man. She is mother of the first corporally and of the second spiritually.

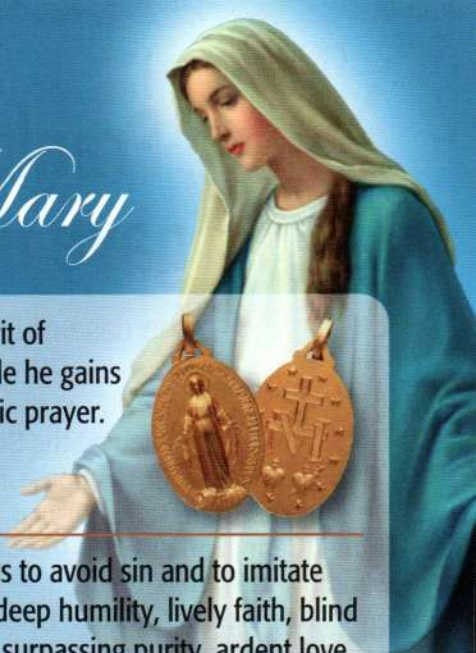
*St. Bonaventure and Origen*

This is the will of God who willed that we should have all things through Mary. If then, we possess any hope or grace or gift of salvation, let us acknowledge that it comes to us through her.

*St. Bernard*

We must do everything with Mary, that is to say, in all our actions we must look upon Mary, although a simple human being, as the perfect model of every virtue and perfection, fashioned by the Holy Spirit for us to imitate, as far as our limited capacity allows. In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it if she were in our place. For this reason, we must examine and meditate on the great virtues she practised during her life.

*St. Louis Marie de Montfort*



# Frank Duff never gave up on a soul

The case of Dom Robert Nicholl OSB

by Marie Dunleavy



Frank Duff first joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as a member of the Conference of Our Lady of Mount Carmel attached to the Carmelite Church in Whitefriars Street, Dublin on 22nd October 1913. Three and a half years later, on 2nd February 1917, he was installed as the first President of the new Conference of St. Patrick on its inauguration day. It met in Myra House, Francis Street, on the opposite side of the street from St. Nicholas of Myra Church. It was here some 10 years later that Frank was first introduced to a young student from Trinity College named Brian Nicholl who had recently converted to Catholicism and was now about to put his newfound faith into zealous practice. Frank, up to that point, had regarded most Protestants as unconvertible so the presence of Brian Nicholl in the Conference made him think and soon enough, he had other evidence through the work of his SVP Brothers and his newly founded Legion that conversion was a possibility and the seeking of conversions a positive duty.

and activities of the Legion. It must surely have been Frank who invited him to share in a group visit to Mount Melleray Cistercian Abbey on the slopes of Knockmealdown Mountain in Co. Waterford. Here he would undoubtedly have got that deeper appreciation of religious life lived in community which led him shortly after to become a Benedictine monk at Buckfast Abbey in Devon, taking the name Robert in religion, and be ordained to the Priesthood. When World War II broke out in 1939, he volunteered as an Army Chaplain and was assigned to Europe and North Africa. Tending to wounded soldiers, he found that those in danger of death were always anxious to have the last rites and always seemed at peace once they were so attended to. He thought to himself "If that is faith, I don't have it" and withdrew his name from the chaplaincy list, electing instead to serve as a common soldier. He was soon assigned officer rank and served out the war on active duty.

When the Legion was founded (also in Myra House) and was subsequently authorised to extend membership to men as well as women, Brian Nicholl entered wholeheartedly into the spirit



Dom Robert Nicholl OSB - 2nd from left

Brian Nicholl is bottom row, 2nd from left and Frank is on extreme right standing

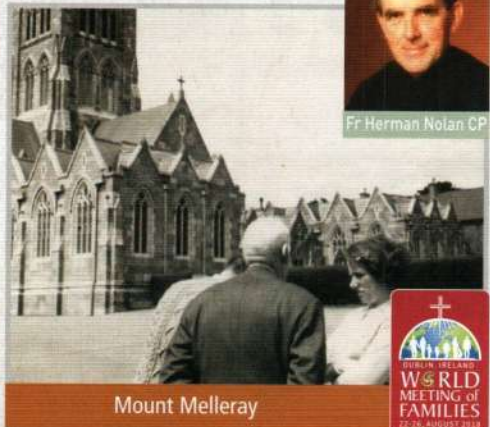


Mount Melleray - Conference of St. Patrick

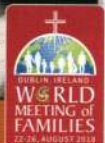
When the war ended, he found himself in Borneo and offered his talents to the local administration, ending up as Senior Advisor and Education Administrator to the Sultan of Brunei. Even to-day Brunei seems to have one of the best developed education systems in that part of the world. Frank Duff kept in touch with Robert Nicholl until he (Frank) died, answering his letters and inviting him to come and visit whenever he came home to England. He never upbraided him for abandoning the practice of the faith. When he (Frank) was at the final session of the Vatican Council in Rome, he met the Bishops of North Borneo and asked them if they knew Robert Nicholl. Their faces lit up. "Robert Nicholl" they said "is the man who can and does get us everything we want". He had never married and was admired for his honesty with people. Although Frank had let Robert know that he would not wish to pass from this life without having heard of his return to the fold, that did not happen. However, some time after Frank died, his close friend, Fr. Herman Nolan CP, was telling the story to his confreres at Mount Argus when one of them said "Why don't you ring Buckfast?" He did and a

voice answered "Ah! Robert. He passed away recently. He was serving in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton!" Evidently, having left the priesthood without laicisation because he no longer believed in the Church, Robert was able to resume priestly duties when his faith came flooding back. Frank more than once had put it "When God puts a fish on your line, you have to play the fish until the moment comes when you can land it." Who doubts but that Frank never ceased his intercession for his friend even amid the wonders of the great beyond.

I had the pleasure of being introduced to Robert on one of his visits to Frank and the memory of that brief encounter stimulated me to set down the earlier and later details that I came to know as an allocutio for the members of my praesidium. So why not also pass it on to the Editor and hopefully the readers of "Maria Legionis" especially as Dom Robert himself once contributed a stimulating article on "The Shepherds" (of Bethlehem) to an early issue (*No. 4 of 1937* - just 80 years ago!) and had his photo published as a youth with the Melleray group mentioned above (*No. 1 of 1939*)!



Fr Herman Nolan CP



# VISAKHAPATNAM COMITIUM, INDIA



COMITIUM OFFICE BEARERS -  
HANDING OVER WORK REPORT TO CHIEF GUEST FR REDDY



Special Guest at the celebrations:  
Very Rev. Fr. Pentareddy Chinnappa Reddy  
The Provincial designate for the province of Visakhapatnam.



SOME OF THE VISAKHAPATNAM COMITIUM IN ATTENDANCE



ENJOYING SONG AND DANCE AT THE CELEBRATION





SALURA CURIA



PARVATHIPURAM CURIA



GAJUWAKA CURIA





BELGAM CURIA



MEMBERS OF KHAMAM CURIA



**THIS COUNCIL IS ON ITS WAY TO HIGHER THINGS**





## SOUTH AMERICA

**ARGENTINA:** In spite of intense heat a huge crowd was present for most of the day at the Alfie Lambe graveside commemoration, organised by **Buenos Aires Senatus**, some legionaries travelling great distances. All Councils include in their reports establishment of new praesidia and the restarting of praesidia. Most reports mention junior and young adult praesidia, of which there are many. A praesidium in **Cordoba Senatus** visits homes and businesses with a statue of Our Lady. Legionaries in **Salta Senatus** go into dangerous areas to contact young people who are addicted to drugs. Prayers are said with them. Many give up the vice and one former addict became an active member of the local praesidium. Legionaries from one Curia in **Corrientes Regia** help in a Refuge for Young Drug Addicts; legionaries from another Curia went to the Women's Prison and prayed the Rosary with the inmates. A person with a terminal illness was instructed in the faith and received the Sacraments. A Curia of nine praesidia carry out street contact in an activity called "Pesca Milagrosa" (Miraculous Fishing). Each year the **Rosario Regia** has a big attendance of active and auxiliary members at the Anniversary celebrations in September. This year the juniors did a little play called 'Praesidium in Heaven', and dressed up in the clothes of 1921.

**BRAZIL:** A Curia in **Belem Senatus** reported ten returns to Mass along with several conversions of members of various sects. Because of Legion apostolate two Churches have been reopened. Legionaries have been studying the True Devotion to Mary. The return of eight families to the Church, who are now all engaged in Church activities, was reported from **Belo Horizonte Senatus**. Contacts are made in the parks and markets. 103 Enthronements of the Sacred Heart took place in homes. Among works undertaken in **Fortaleza Senatus** were visits to non-Catholics, the elderly and prisoners. 56 children were prepared for First Holy Communion and 17 young people received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The **Ponta Grossa Senatus** coordinated the fifth Meeting of Legion Spiritual Directors at national level. It was attended by 64 priests, 11 deacons, nine religious and two Bishops: Bishop Sérgio Arthur Braschi of Ponta Grossa and Bishop Edson de Castro Homem of Iguatu, representative of the Bishops' Conference. Tadhg McMahon was also present from Concilium. **Recife Senatus** reported that the Archbishop of Recife, Dom Fernando Saburido O.S.B., along with 900 legionaries, took part in the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the founding of the Legion in Recife. The Regia of Alagoas held a three-day Conference of young legionaries which had an attendance of 400. In addition to its four Regiae, nine Comitiae and seven Curiae in its own area, the **Rio de Janeiro Senatus** has ten Curiae with 122 praesidia in the western Amazonian region. In **Salvador Senatus**, the attached Aracaju Regia set up two new praesidia and organised a Congress for young legionaries. The attached

Regia of Vitória da Conquista helped 308 people to return to the Sacraments. In an effort to promote Praetorian membership the **Santa Maria Senatus** arranged for a talk on the Divine Office. 23 members of the Senatus took part in a Peregrinatio pro Christo project in Uruguay. Reports from **São Luis Senatus** show 17,390 visits and 10,254 revisits to families with problems, non-Catholics, the bereaved, the sick at home, the elderly, children, single mothers, widows, people on drugs, and an apostolate to street girls and prisoners. Many people were prepared for the Sacraments: In January 2017, the **São Paulo Senatus** hosted a meeting in the Frank Duff House of Formation in Mogi das Cruzes, of officers of Senatus and Regiae in Brazil. Four Concilium correspondents were present also. Following the meeting, the dedication of the Church of Our Lady of Graces in the House of Formation, was carried out by Bishop Dom Pedro Luiz, of Mogi das Cruzes. Bishop Dom Edson de Castro Homem concelebrated the Mass. In **Brasilia Regia** catechesis was given to 32 pupils, six of whom were prepared for Holy Communion. The elderly were visited. A new junior Curia was set up in the interior city of Araguatins.

## OCEANIA

**AUSTRALIA:** In **Sydney Senatus** most of the parish praesidia undertake a wide variety of apostolates and are warmly welcomed on home visitation. The Korean Curia holds Catechism classes for those interested in the Catholic faith. Teaching catechism resulted in 17 being baptised at Easter in the Indonesian community. A Parish Priest was very impressed with the returns to the Sacraments following an Exploratio Dominicalis project. **Melbourne Senatus** reported there was an attendance of 300 at the November Mass for the Servant of God Frank Duff. The Cathedral praesidium in Adelaide Comitium made street contact in the City Market, distributing Miraculous Medals and Mass times. Works reported from **Brisbane Comitium** were visits to nursing homes, home visitation, and teaching Catechism in schools with the view to introducing the Rosary. Street contact at a shopping centre and a book stand gained two new members. The Korean Curia has nine praesidia. Through home visitation an estranged Catholic was reconciled on his death bed.

**NEW ZEALAND:** **Auckland Senatus** reported that at a three-day Eucharistic Convention two slots of 40 minutes were allocated to the Legion. Much interest was shown and many enquiries made about starting a praesidium. A praesidium prepared eleven Maori students for the Sacraments. Juniors are very active in Auckland. Exploratio Dominicalis featured in most reports.

**PACIFIC ISLANDS:** The Sydney Senatus caretakes the Solomon Islands and East Timor. Bishop Paul in Kiribati sent good wishes to the Melbourne Senatus for their continued support. Melsisi Comitium in Vanuata has five Curiae and 47 praesidia. Noumea Comitium (New Caledonia) has nine Curiae. Wallis Curia has six praesidia and Futuna Island has two praesidia attached to Wallis Curia. Three members from Auckland Senatus, New Zealand, visited Samoa where there are 5 Comitia, 11 Curiae, 58 praesidia and two junior Curiae.



## AFRICA

**ANGOLA:** Legionaries from **Luanda Senatus** visited the Republic of São Tomé e Príncipe and established a Curia in the Cathedral Parish with seven praesidia, four of which had been set up about a year before on a previous visit by legionaries from the Senatus. Two legionaries represented the Legion at a National Bishop's Conference on Street Pastoral Care organised by a Commission for Pastoral Care for Migrants and Travellers, which also invited the Legion to be represented at a workshop on Human Trafficking. On 31 January, 2016, the new Regia of Lobito, attached to the **Benguela Senatus**, was inaugurated with Mass concelebrated by the Bishop Emeritus of Benguela, Dom Oscar Braga, and five priests. Over 1,700 legionaries attended. As part of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, 1,851 legionaries from the Benguela Senatus area, passed through the Door of Mercy on a Pilgrimage to Cubal with members of other Marian Apostolic groups.

**BENIN REPUBLIC:** Reports to the **Cotonou Regia** show sustained outreach through visitation to all religions, one praesidium reporting 12 adult baptisms. Frank Duff youth clubs are conducted in a number of parishes. The Regia caretakes the Curia of Niamey, Republic of Niger, and the Comitium of Libreville in the Republic of Gabon, visiting both countries at intervals.

**BURKINA FASO:** Ouagadougou Comitium has 23 Curiae. A committee is working on translation of the Handbook into the local language. Sr. Odette Dié, former President of Abidjan Comitium (Ivory Coast) who went to the second city, Bobo-Dioulasso, to reorganise the Comitium there at the request of the Bishop reports that the re-constituted Comitium is progressing well.

**BURUNDI:** Reports to the **Senatus of Gitega** showed continued satisfaction with the development of the Legion in the schools from Primary to Secondary and University level. Work is done in houses and in the fields to help the sick and infirm with no aspect of the apostolate neglected. The affiliated Regia in the capital Bujumbura reported the setting up of six new Comitia last year to bring their total to 30 Comitia.

**CAMEROON:** **Douala Senatus** reports many baptised and visitation of orphanages, handicapped and Leper Centres. Bertoua Regia has the Legion of Mary in every parish and the aim is that every senior praesidium have a junior praesidium. Many Councils are reporting prison visitation and some have set up praesidia in prisons. Yokadouma Bamenda Comitium reported 19 conversions and 46 conversions were reported from Limbe Comitium. A junior Curia reported that thanks to a young legionary, a whole family of Jehovah Witnesses embraced the Catholic Church.

**CAPE VERDE:** Curiae and Comitia constantly encourage *Exploratio Dominicalis*; some praesidia carry out two projects during the year. Results included getting 54 children and 2 adults for Baptism and enrolling 14 children in catechism classes. Two Curiae from the distant island of Sao Vicente reported special efforts to promote catechism classes for children. Also on that island a Curia reported that more than a third of active members are Praetorians. A Holy Door visit was arranged to a parish

on the most distant island, Santo Antao where legionaries were warmly welcomed by the Parish Priest and the whole local community were invited.

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC:** We express our sympathy to the **Senatus of Bangui** on the death, after a very brief illness, of the Senatus President, Bro. Jean Ouagaza. May his soul rest in peace. Bro. Ouagaza restored stability to the Senatus at a time when the country was in turmoil. Many of the population, including legionaries had to move to safer areas. This meant that the Senatus was unable to meet for a time, but meetings have recently resumed. Reports indicate that the area is emerging from the trauma of unrest. Reports include a litany of conversions with news of events beginning to flow in again from attached Councils. Our congratulations to Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, C.S.Sp, of Bangui, who has been appointed a Cardinal by the Holy Father.

**REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:** During a four month period, **Brazzaville Senatus** received reports from two Regiae, 10 Comitua, nine Curiae and two praesidia showing over 200,000 contacts with 336 returns to the Sacraments and 592 enrolled for catechesis. Works included visiting the sick at home and in hospital, prisoners, the poor, widows, orphans, street contact and home visitation. Thanks to visitation by legionaries an elderly lady received Baptism and First Holy Communion in her home at the age of 85.

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:** A Comitium in **Lubumbashi Regia** organised a cultural youth day which had an attendance of 850 youths. Another Comitium organised a general visit to a prison with 800 prisoners, starting with prayers and an evangelisation session. **Senatus of Butembo:** Reports on works from Comitua, Regiae and praesidia include Baptism ministry, reconciliations of married couples, visitation of the sick and elderly, prisoners and marginalised, contact with refugees. Many returns to Mass and the Sacraments were reported. Four abortions were prevented. Eight Protestants were converted to the Catholic Church. Much emphasis is placed on respect for women. The **Senatus of Bukavu** has a membership of 32,504 members. Works include, visitation of widows and orphans, family reconciliations, Catechesis and re-introduction to the Sacraments. 1,850 prisoners were visited and helped in the prisons of Bukavu, Kabare and Walungu. The 25th anniversary celebration of founding of the Legion in the Regia of Goma took place in Notre Dame de l'Afrique in Kaitoy. There are difficulties in communication due to bad road conditions and in some cases armed conflict. Reports from the recently inaugurated **Kisangani Senatus** showed 140 Baptisms took place and 232 bereaved families were consoled. Spiritual aid was given to 201 prisoners and there were converts from other faiths. 118 families were reconciled, 108 couples married in Church, 495 persons baptised and 20 Confirmed. The **Kananga Senatus**, otherwise known as the Senatus of Kasai, governs the Legion in West and East Kasai. The Spiritual Director of the Senatus, Abbé Pierre Tchimbombo Mudiba, celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood on 5th of July at St. Peter and Paul Church, Biancky. Our congratulations to Abbé Pierre. The affiliated Regia of Mbuji-Mayi reported nine new praesidia.



**EGYPT:** The **Senatus of Egypt** celebrated 75 years of the Legion in Egypt at the end of September 2016. Members of the Senatus met with the Chaplain regarding organising visits to prisoners and their families.

**GHANA:** Following the National Youth Congress at Tamale University two of the Accra Senatus officers had a good meeting with 50 seminarians at the Major Seminary Kumasi. Extension efforts from June to October yielded seven new praesidia and 'Mirror of Justice Curia' was inaugurated on 2nd October 2016. The Curia has grown to over 100 members. Three legionaries from Tema Curia were ordained SVD (Society of Divine Word) priests. The Senatus has requested members to become more involved and active in the promotion of the Cause of the Servant of God Frank Duff, asking them to organise events and activities in their parishes and to invite the general public. The Senatus is setting up a Committee to look after the Promotion of the Cause and to report any favours received. A Spiritual Directors' Conference was organised. The Legion was well represented at the funeral of Most Rev. Thomas Kwaku Mensah, Archbishop Emeritus of Kumasi, he was a wonderful supporter of the Legion, may he rest in peace.

**GUINEA EQUATORIAL:** Big numbers of members of the sects are met on Legion work and some of them have returned to the Catholic Church. A new Curia reported setting up four praesidia. Two other Curiae with 16 and 21 praesidia reported; one has set up the first junior praesidium with 20 young persons.

**IVORY COAST:** In the Abidjan Senatus, reports from one Regia, five Comitua, two Curiae and four praesidia show a combined membership of: 13,391 active members of whom 1,390 are Praetorians; 3,492 probationers; 1,670 Auxiliaries, of whom 268 are Adjutorians. They made 294,103 visits to homes, hospitals, markets, workshops and many other locations. They made 1,694,315 contacts of whom 577,456 were Catholic, the remainder being Methodist, Muslim, members of sects and people of no religion. The fruits of this work were: 686 families reconciled, 548 marriages regularised, 1,068 returns to Mass, 3,153 Catechumens recruited, bringing the total Catechumenate to 9,309; 1,767 Baptisms, 1,477 Confirmations, 959 Sacrament of Reconciliation and 444 Sacrament of the Sick.

**LESOTHO:** A three-day Retreat was held for the legionaries in **Lesotho Senatus**. Home visitation is undertaken and there are many returns to the Sacraments. There is good contact with non-Catholics. A praesidium reports the visitation of alcoholics and drug addicts.

**MADAGASCAR:** Legionaries from Reunion have been making great strides in their caretakership of Madagascar, where they succeeded in founding a new Curia last August, following an Extension Drive. At present they are training three young legionaries from Madagascar to return home and organise the Legion on a strong footing.

**MAURITIUS:** The **Regia of Mauritius** comprises two Comitua, nine Curiae, 87 praesidia, 682 active legionaries, and 311 Auxiliaries. This includes one junior Curia, which has six praesidia. Works include organising Retreats for children, teaching Catechism to children, and helping with various parish activities. The Regia caretakes the Legion on the island of Rodrigues, which has a Comitium with four Curiae, and 24 praesidia, including two junior. Our congratulations to Archbishop Maurice Evenor Piat, C.S.Sp. of Port Louis on being appointed a Cardinal by the Holy Father.

**REUNION:** The **Comitium of Reunion** is now affiliated to the newly formed Paris Senatus as Reunion is a French Département. The Comitium has two Curiae including a junior Curia and 16 praesidia. Works include: catechesis, visits to the sick and aged, accompanying priests for Confession and Last Sacraments, leading Stations of the Cross during Lent, organising Family Rosary groups, and praying with the bereaved in mortuaries. They report many miracles of grace through prayer. The Comitium caretakes the Legion in Madagascar.

**RWANDA:** The Legion is present in all nine Dioceses, with a total of 26 Comitua attached to the **Senatus of Kigali**. There is a very high membership of both seniors and juniors. Auxiliary, prison, hospital and orphanage visitation are among the works reported on as well as contacts with schools and higher educational establishments. Reports show also contact with street children who have addictions, street girls and prisoners. The Kabgayi Comitium has 28 directly attached praesidia, 20 Curiae and 126 junior praesidia. They have ten praesidia in secondary schools. The Diocese of Kabgayi has four Comitua.

**SENEGAL:** The **Dakar Comitium** has two Curiae and 17 directly attached praesidia. Two new praesidia were started, one in St. Louis and another in the University Parish.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** In **Johannesburg Senatus**, membership in praesidia is good and legionaries undertake home, hospital and prison visitation. Great contacts were made with non-Catholics. In the course of street contact, one Curia reported contacting 313 non-Catholics. There was great joy in Cape Town Senatus when the new Comitium in Uptington, Northern Cape, was set up in September. The Senatus is making plans to visit the Legion in Namibia.

**TOGO:** **Lomé Senatus** undertook a Peregrinatio Pro Christo to Ghana with 55 legionaries taking part. Two people aged 85 and 95 were mentioned among the conversions; there were also several returns to the Sacraments and abortions prevented. A 75 year old man died shortly after receiving Baptism. His wife also converted to the Catholic Church. Most Councils report on having juniors or are in the process of setting up junior praesidia. The Legion is present in all seven Dioceses with every Diocese having at least one Comitium. 190 of the 215 parishes countrywide have the Legion.



# PRAYER TO THE HOLY FAMILY

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
in you we contemplate the splendour of true love,  
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that our families too may be places  
of communion and prayer, authentic schools of  
the Gospel and small domestic Churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
may families never again experience violence,  
rejection and division: may all who have been hurt  
or scandalised find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
make us once more mindful of the sacredness and  
inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.

Amen.

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