

Each Soul

*'Each soul, if it would live, must pour itself
into another soul'*

Church or Chaplaincy

It seems to me that the chief need of the day is to bring home to every Catholic that on him rests the positive duty of going out and seeking conversions to the Church.

What is the Church? The Church is a society in which Jesus Christ lives, and which exists for the purpose of bringing him to all men. If in any place the Church were not leading that life, then it would be untrue to its mission. Were the Church in any place to do no more than to minister to those already in its own ranks, it would only be in partial being there. It would have turned itself into a chaplaincy; and Christ never intended his Church to be a mere chaplaincy.

But the Church is made up of its members; can only operate through them; and stands or falls in them. It follows that *from each individual member* the Church requires responsibility for and co-operation in its work.

But one cannot say that such is being given in that primary department of the Church's action, the winning of converts. It is not realised by the rank and file that it is their bounden duty to bring the Faith to everyone – without exception – who does not possess it. That conviction of imperative duty being absent; and the difficulties – interior and external, natural and supernatural – being many and great, what can result but deadly inertia?

It would be a terrible thing, if from the successes we have had we were to gain the impression that we really have greatly advanced; because we have not. What has been done is only beautiful because of the hope it affords, not because of the actual achievement. Admittedly the fact that 110 non-Catholics attended our last retreat¹ is a wonderful thing if viewed from the standpoint of seven years ago, or from the angle of complete inaction. But viewed in the light of the vast number of non-Catholics around us, it is only a notch above nothing. Therefore, this evening is not to be a time of self-satisfaction, but a consolidation of our gains, of taking stock, of planning a further advance which will in the end encompass all those who are outside the fold.

Causes of Inertia

That inertia of which I speak does not necessarily mean indifference. Actually it can be found co-existing with real, downright anxiety to win people to the Church, just as in the heart of a paralysed man may be found an ardent anxiety for action which the physical restrictions withhold from him. In many cases that inertia springs from a natural cause. If you study people, you will find what an extraordinary severance can be between the powers of cogitation and those of action, so that the most terrific action may take place in

the mental department without ever being translated into physical action. That gap exists in everybody. It is narrow in what we would call the man of action. It is pretty wide in the average man. In a certain proportion of people it is a yawning, almost unbridgeable chasm.

Inertia can proceed from other causes – the fact, for instance, that people require to be shown the path, require each other's support. One may realise the need for action; one may be capable of that action; and yet not know the way to go about it.

Remedy for Inertia

The remedy for that inertia lies in the application of organisation. In other words, you set up a system which bridges that gap and which pushes people over that bridge. The Legion itself represents an example of the effectiveness of such organisation. Before we came into the Legion we were all of us (except perhaps the superman or superwoman amongst us, who were few) doing nothing. We would have persevered in that inglorious condition. But Fate operated to bring us into an organisation which held a certain idealism and which subjected us to a sweet pressure. Then in the measure that we submitted ourselves to that pressure we found ourselves doing things. The results that have come are heartening, because they seem to prove that it is possible to organise the entire community, and any community, in the same way and to get no less results. Consequently, the horizon of hope which stretches before us is illimitable.

Excuses for Inertia

Even inside such an organisation itself we can take an incorrect view of our duty. You saw little signs of that

cropping up amongst yourselves during the day – a certain lack of understanding of where duty lies. Considering that you have been in an apostolic mould and in a stimulating atmosphere for a considerable time, and if – in spite of that – there is hesitancy, what of these who have not had your advantages? I fear we can take it as an unfortunate fact that the ordinary run of unorganised Catholics do not recognise themselves as having any duty in this particular direction. In fact, some people go very violently into reverse and conceive it even to be an incorrect thing to do anything. They make a virtue of inaction. They clothe it in sugared phrases: 'We must not unsettle other people!' 'If they are in good faith, let us leave them so!' 'We must respect the beliefs of others!' And so forth. This phraseology is familiar to us all. In practice its effect is deadly. What does it mean but that we are to try to convert nobody except those who convert themselves? - Which is what is called an 'Irish bull'. And like the same animal in the proverbial china-shop, that virtuous inaction wreaks havoc in the Church. It tones down its mission. It perverts its meaning. It turns to mere domestic purposes the infinite ocean of grace which is meant to irrigate the universal desert of unbelief. Then – extra tragedy! – that domestic stream tends to dry up. Actual experience proves that we do not hold even our own members. They slip away between our fingers. And what else could happen? Our practical indifference towards those arid souls outside had earned disaster for ourselves.

Prayer no Substitute for Action

There is another phrase which many use to soothe the holy pang which they may feel from hearing those repeated references to the reaching of all men. They say: 'We pray for those outside the Church.' We pray for them!

Of course that is to the good, if we do pray for them. Sometimes that is no more than a conventional phrase. But even when it means something, I wonder who told those people that their prayer alone suffices? We are in the world, and action is called for from us. And to the extent that we do not act along with prayer, we do not get results. Again, what do those persons who talk about praying mean exactly? How much prayer do they mean? Are they going to spread two or three hours of an evening praying just as you have to spend two or three hours in your laborious legionary efforts? No, those people mean a Pater and Ave – perhaps only an Ave!

Qualifications for Action

Then there is that other plausible but crippling thought which whispers that you are not qualified to make an approach to others, and accordingly that you are exempt from trying. But who is qualified? The priests, of course, are. But they are the very class which is the most cut off from the non-Catholic. But surely knowledge, ability to argue, etc. are essential? Here you must distinguish between the instructing of converts and the seeking of them. The former demands knowledge; the latter only zeal. Read what your handbook says on this subject. Also recall what happened in the early Church. If this is going too far back for you, reflect on what took place last year in Nairobi – where our native legionaries brought in 1,000 catechumens.

So beware of those opium-like sayings which pull with inertia instead of against it, and which neutralise the programme of action which fell from divine lips. I do not say that those cautious phrases are always wrong. Sometimes they may refine your action. But doubt them when they tend to paralyse it. Remember, too, that even

a fine plan of action may cause inaction. For the ideal may not immediately be practicable. Then we piously hold ourselves excused from doing anything, instead of working bravely at the second-best – which would eventually bring us to the best. As has been said, the ideal is often the enemy of the good.

Effort is Paramount

Action is paramount. You may challenge this and say that Grace is paramount; and, of course, it is, inasmuch as absolutely nothing can be accomplished without Grace. That is a fact about which we in the Legion have no illusions whatsoever. We realise fully that everything depends upon the Lord. But in a sense, too, it does not; because that grace will always be given if it be properly sought; then its action is automatic; we can take the gift of it for granted. What is in doubt is our own co-operation, not God's. Thus we can hark back to what I have already said and once again urge on you – that effort is paramount. Simple effort must come first; after that, supreme effort, after that – and only after that – enlightened, artistic, brilliant, genius-like effort. Nothing is expected of anybody except what he has got. A man who is not a genius cannot elicit qualities that are proper to genius. Nevertheless, his misdirected, clumsy, stupid effort will be equal to the effort of the genius, if it is all that he can give, and if he does not fall below the genius in the faith and love he puts into it.

Grace Follows Effort

If the maximum of effort is forthcoming, then grace will come; overflowing, conquering, miraculous grace, like any of the highlights of the past. We have a current example

of that in the case of an air-raid shelter in Liverpool where legionaries were saying the Rosary. A land-mine fell beside the densely-packed shelter; yet in circumstances that were patently miraculous the people all escaped unscathed. The legionaries had finished the fourth decade of the Rosary when the mine dropped. Then when they pulled themselves together and realised that they were still on earth, their first thought was to give out the fifth decade in thanksgiving. The sequel was that twenty persons handed in their names for instruction. I suppose many believe mass conversions to be impossible at the present day. Not so. Make the proper claim on the Lord and He will respond with big things.

The Gospel to Every Living Creature

Another principle is that the number of your contacts should be the main consideration, and not the emphasising of quality or promise. This sounds very odd, I know, but it is logical. It seems to me that the concentrating on quality and on alleged promising people is a dangerous mirage which will lead you astray. Who are we to judge as to who are the promising? Sometimes things work out very differently indeed to what they promise – sometimes the very opposite. The eligible and the promising never fructify, while the unpromising often yields rich fruit. A multitude of eminent cases attest to that. Only the Lord can judge the heart. None of us should venture to do so. Our job is to seek out all, and to bestow on all unbounded, heroic effort.

I repeat the following examples which history records of unlikely-looking people who entered Christ's Church:

- The Thief on the Cross,
- W.H. Mallock,
- Oscar Wilde.

On the other hand, there are rather notable examples like Gladstone, or the late Lord Halifax, who stood on the border and appeared to be about to come in, and yet who died outside the Church.

Moreover, the Morning Star men, or the Sancta Maria women, would not appear to represent the most promising of material. Yet – without having worked out figures, but with a certain degree of confidence – I venture to assert that they exhibit a higher ratio of conversion to the Church than other sections of the population. Another striking case: Some time ago an able young Mahommedan Indian stated at a meeting of the Overseas Club that the remedy for the divisions and antagonisms of India was to take a leaf out of the Russian book and to atheise the country. I reflected to myself that of all who were there, he afforded the very least prospect of conversion. Now consider this: He was the first of all that body to come into the Church! So much for human judgments!

And here is another example: A group of us were the other evening discussing a distinguished man. He had come to us labelled, so to speak, by a person of great discernment, as an outstanding soul who was very near to the Church. Our group could discern very little of the spiritual in him at all. Who was right? It only shows how impossible it is to form an accurate judgment of people's qualities – let alone of their souls. Therefore, we should be slow to indulge in that sort of classification.

The Church Must Reach Every Soul

The more numerous the contacts, the more numerous will be the conversions. There is a mathematical ring about that, but it will work out true. But there is a higher principle than that which requires the multiplication of

your contacts. It is the one I have already mentioned – that through you the Church must reach every soul. So it is a case of the carrying out of a mission, not the following up of anything that may seem promising. And even if those contacts seem vain and worthless and barren, and even if by some prophetic glance you knew them to be vain, still you are to follow them up. Why? Because God has said so. I was much impressed once by an account which I read of a French Missionary in China. He had been a very distinguished layman in France. He left all, became a priest, and went out on the Mission to China. Apparently he was working in a bad spot. He did not accomplish much during all his time there. Somebody asked him if he were getting results. He said, 'No'. And the inquirer with an eye on his past brilliant career, suggested to him that he was wasting his talents and that he should seek a more promising field of labour. His answer was: 'I am not here because of past success, nor because of prospective success. I am here because of the command that the gospel be preached to every creature.' That noble remark contains a lesson for all. Incidentally, it puts the mission of the Church in a nutshell. Clutch that nutshell to yourselves, and note that when that commission was originally given by Our Lord, there was no suggestion of any process of selection, or of promising contacts, or of non-approach to those who had beliefs. The commission was made comprehensive. Approach was to be to all.

Casting the Net

If still you have any misgivings regarding those to whom you are to go, or the way in which you are to go, and if you find yourself thinking in terms of selection and circumspection, then think of that other command: 'Go

out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, into the highways and hedges, and compel those you find to enter in.' There is not much of the element of discrimination there. We would be topical in calling it a 'mopping-up operation'. Furthermore, there is even the note of capture and compelling. Where are the niceties in all that? There are none. What is painted for you is someone burning with zeal for the Lord's Kingdom going out into all sorts of places, getting after all sorts of people – many of them queer enough, and with a gentle insistence inducing them to come in.

And again, the image of the Church that is put before us in the gospel is that of a ship. It is a fisherman's craft and the fishing is done by nets – not by rod and line; nor is it directed to the princely salmon or trout alone. That casting of a net is the indiscriminating gesture that the Church must always make, and that we, as units of the Church must imitate. The net is cast, regardless of what is going to be brought up in it – big, little, good or bad. We must even throw it out where there is little or no prospect of anything coming in; for you will remember the incident in the gospel which is commended to us – the casting of the net in faith where all previous castings had been fruitless. You know the sequel. The net was filled to breaking-point with great fish.

Endnotes

- 1 The retreats for non-Catholics, inaugurated by the Legion of Mary in Dublin, set a pattern which has since been copied in many parts of the world.

Christ Liveth in Me

*'For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I
may
live to God with Christ I am nailed to the cross.
And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And
that
I live now in the flesh; I live in the faith of the Son
of God
who loved me, and delivered himself for me.' (Gal
2:20)*

The handbook insists that the legionary must be always on duty. Those of us who have been in circulation around the country as sorts of legionary tourists, visiting functions and having to talk there, have amplified this general statement by the explanation that the time of the legionary meeting and work is only a sort of school-time; that its purpose is to educate you for the non-school hours; that is not at all for itself that it exists but for the general run of your life. That is a supremely important conception for you. Because it means that if you are only a

legionary during your legionary time, you are a legionary failure, even though you may be working heroically and performing valuable work during those three or four hours per week.

The purpose of the Legion is that you shall learn in your legionary hours the ideal of living, and that you will then go forth and apply that ideal to the everyday hours.

What is that ideal which you have to learn?

Christ Lives Through Us

The life of the Church is the life of Christ continued. In a measure the same can be said of each unit of the Church, each one of us. We poor, weak creatures are only able to reproduce that life in parts – in broken fragments, I might say. But the main idea remains the same: that it is our mission to carry on in the world that life of Christ, making him live again in our own days and circumstances.

Of what kind was the life of Christ which the Church is intended to continue in the world? It was a lowly, very hard life, a frustrated life, contradicted even unto persecution – carried to the extreme limit. But we must not for one moment think that there was no other side to it. There was. Taken as a whole, his life was one of confident strength, and its lowliness and sufferings only served to set off that fact more brilliantly. It was a life full of colour and character; so dazzling as almost to overwhelm the people about him; so striking that many to whom he spoke but a sentence left all and followed him; so compelling that even second-hand - by which I mean through mere written accounts and at a great distance of time – the very thought of him had been able to drive people to follow him and to suffer grievous things even as he did and merely because he did.

The Power of Christ

That is the note I want to stress this evening: the note of power in his life. The essential feature of his life was power. He dominated the elements, made the dead to live again, and in every other way rose superior to the impossible. Even his mild speech thrilled with that same tone of power – The scriptures quote for us the bystanders' comment: 'He speaks as one having authority.' To use a word which seems foolish applied to him, he was devout – wrapped all the time in prayer. But side by side with that, he was dynamic in the fullest sense of that misused word; he radiated force. Everything about him possessed character. You cannot read a word about him without realising what an abyss yawned between him and any other person – which of course, is only what we should expect. His influence made itself felt in every way; by his personal magnetism and by the shock of his miracles. He drew the eyes of all to him; He impelled them to listen to him, to follow him about in great numbers. Men simply could not be indifferent. They had to take sides one way or the other – for or against him. Certain we can be – beyond anything else – that in the whole history of mankind no other man ever made such a personal impression upon the people around him. To use the modern phrase, no one ever made such a hit as Christ. No other man ever will or could. Call up before the parade of memory any of the great figures of history, and you will realise that all of them have feet of clay. There is a saying that no man is hero to his valet; but Christ was a hero to his valets. He had no feet of clay.

Christ's Power in His Church

If my original contention is true – that the mission of the Church reproduces the life of Christ in all its phases, then

obviously we must find the dynamic, note pervading, dominant in the life of the Church. Disguised, no doubt it will be by reason of the fact that there is diffused among a great body of people, and with much base admixture, what he held united in his own person. But even though disguised or dimmed by human weakness, the qualities of Christ must shine forth in his people if he is really living in them. Therefore it would be a very bad sign if the Church in any place were living practically unnoticed or not bothered about, too colourless even to attract disfavour or persecution. Obviously there would be something deplorably wrong there.

But you may retort: 'What about the lowly and obscure life of Christ?' I answer that we must look upon the life of the Church – just as we must take the life of Christ – as a whole, even in each individual place. Just as we see that the grand and the challenging was the dominant characteristic of the life of Christ, so must it be in the life of the Church, and that in each place, and in each community of the faithful. That sheerly dynamic note simply must be present in some form or another.

The Church Lives Through Us

It would be a tragic thing, if, in any place, the actions of its members toned down the Church to such an extent that men looking at it could discern nothing of the characteristics of Christ; nothing virile, appealing, inspiring, conquering, grand; nothing but a slave of its environment, something that has made terms with the world. That would be a fatal thing for us as a body and for each one of us; for we grow weak with the Church. We are the organs of the Church, the cells of the Church; it lives through us. For better or worse we contribute to its life.

That is a breath-taking responsibility. How unutterably dreadful it would be if those acts of ours, which are supposed to have such a great purpose, were to cause men to see nothing of might or beauty in the Church, so that they judge it to have fallen below even worldly levels. Woe, woe to us then! For in that day and place the Church would have ceased to attract, and even its own people, those born in the fold and nurtured in the sacraments, would fall away from it like needles fall away from a de-electrified magnet.

Stuck in the Trenches?

Recently a discussion took place about a certain large body of people who are educated, intelligent, idealistic and Catholic, but who could not be described as interested in, still less enthusiastic for the Church. Their attitude was rightly described as one of cynicism; and that cynicism was analysed as being a compromise between faith and contempt. Those people had the faith, and the natural inclination to practise it. Yet they had in their hearts conceived the idea that the Church was a stodgy, rather weak product; stuck in the trenches, so to speak, and without a solution for any of the great problems. We know that to be the opposite of the truth; and we are reminded of Chesterton's classical remark that Christianity had been found difficult and not even tried. But still the position becomes distressing and dangerous if such an idea tends to gain a foothold, especially at the present time when ACTION is idealised and idolised, and when great things are being dared and done for purely worldly ends. That sort of balance between accepting the Faith and rejecting it cannot last very long – only about one generation, I would opine. Inevitably the next stage would be that of non-practice.

Action and Holiness

But is not that miserable attitude all too common in the world today? Look and you will find that irreverence towards the Church most terribly in evidence inside as well as outside the fold. In his encyclical, '*Mit brennender Sorge*,' that doughy, mighty man, Pius XI, refers to it and prescribes the remedy – none other, he insists, but 'the closest union of apostolate and personal sanctification for those to whose hands is committed the keeping and increase of the kingdom of God. Only in this way can it be proved to the present generation, and especially to the adversaries of the Church, that the salt of the earth had not become stale, but is capable and ready to bring to the people of today who are caught in doubt and error, in indifference and perplexity, in weariness in believing and in separation from God, the spiritual renewal and rejuvenation, of which they stand, whether they admit it or not, in greater need than ever before. A Christianity in which all members watch over themselves, that strips off all mere outward show and worldliness, that takes the commandments of God seriously, and proves itself in love of God and active love of one's neighbour, can and must be the pattern and leader to a world sick to its very heart and seeking for support and guidance, if unspeakable misfortune and a cataclysm far beyond all imagination is not to burst over it.'

Charter for Legionaries

How every word of that should echo responsively in your minds, because it is only what the Legion of Mary has been saying to you all the time. Your sacred duty, mark his words (for he places such as you legionaries in the sublime classification of those who keep and increase the

Kingdom of God) is that you must prove to this cynical, unbelieving world that the salt had not lost its savour nor the leaven become stale. This is your charter.

I repeat that the Church only had its existence through you its members. Without you it is only an abstraction. Only through you can religion be shown forth as the dominating, captivating thing it really is. Religion is Christ and than that, no more beautiful thing can be dreamt of. Yet it is only by you it can be realised. Therefore, each one must show some line or part or feature of the living Christ; so that, together, you may - like a cinema projector - cast that radiant thing on to the screen of life.

Hence you must rise superior to your environment, no matter what its difficulties may be. You must dominate it - if necessary and by his help - by the sheerest miracles; and we need not fear that even those will be lacking, if needed. You must make men look upon religion. You must make them wonder; you must make them admire; you must break through that cynicism of theirs, so that those who had been scoffing will set themselves to pray.

When you find people cynical do not be over-hasty to condemn them. Rather reason out the 'Why'. The answer to that 'Why' may form a condemnation of ourselves. For cynicism is not altogether an unworthy product. In its essence it is disgust, despair, disillusionment. Any idealist who is disappointed may become a cynic, but the idealism has not been destroyed. It is merely submerged. It can be brought to light again.

Lopsided Devotion

Similarly, criticisms of religion often have their roots in disappointment or misunderstanding. There are many headlines of devotion in evidence which are false and

ugly, and which prejudice people against religion. Take one for instance - that conception of religion which is known by the expressive term 'Chapel-hunting'. Those who denounce the latter are not necessarily - as many of you possibly imagine - making an attack on religion in general. In reality they are attacking a libel of religion.

What exactly is this 'chapel-hunting'? It is a form of piety which is divorced from the love and service of our neighbour, and even from the details of everyday personal duty and honour. Look around and you will see the type to which that opprobrious title can fairly be applied. There they go, visiting the churches and apparently assiduously praying there, but justifying themselves in no other department of life. That lopsided tribe is not uncommon. In some places (especially in rural areas), for want of anything better it is generally supposed to represent the authentic, 'stream-lined' model of advanced religion. As a natural result the popular mind is biased against the whole idea of devotion; so much so that when it calls a person a saint it is to imply something not pleasant. Thereby the status of religion is impaired; its standards are lowered and falsified; with the inevitable consequence that the standards of the world hold unchallenged sway. That is disastrous. It must not be. Those low false ideals must be replaced by a Christianity which - as Pius XI says - 'takes the Commandments of God seriously and proves itself in love of God and active love of one's neighbour'.

Make the Church Attract Idealism

This can only be done by over-shadowing what is there at present. As Christians, you must rise far above the merely respectable, the worthy, the ordinary. You must in your own life exhibit the true standards of religion.

That manifesting of the Faith in its lustre and its might must embrace every department of human existence from Pontiff to Caesar. Every day of your life you must challenge the world in its every interest; and every faculty and energy you possess must be mobilised in that clash. You must outvie the world, outpace it, outlove it, in everything – in science, in art, in business, in sport, in achievement of every kind. If you do not, you are not transmitting the spirit of Catholicism. You have to overpower, to overwhelm, to overmaster by sheer quality. If you do this, you will make the Church shine in the world as Christ shone among men. You will make the current standards look drab, cowardly, mean, miserable; so that the Church will attract idealism, and men will turn to the Church with all their hearts, just as men were drawn to Christ in the days of his earthly career.

Legion Time is School Time

It is that wider life, which is in view when one talks about Legion-time being but a school-time. In your Legion-time you must learn to live superbly in order that you may live superbly in the other hours. I think that legionaries – even the comparative newcomers – do far from badly in their legionary employments. It is impressive to see what they are prepared to do and to endure in their various tasks. Plainly they have caught the legionary ideal of serving Christ in those they work for, even when those persons are of vile behaviour and disfigured by repulsive qualities. Furthermore they have grasped the secondary idea of working with Our Lady, so that it is she rather than they who minister to her son. This they do sweetly, often super-humanly, as witnessed the other day, when a fierce attack by drink-crazed residents of a Legion hostel

felt legionaries strewn around like the wounded on a battlefield. But do we hear of the work being thereby abandoned, or of any less tenderness being subsequently lavished on the delinquents?

With that spirit of sweet strength the legionaries fill their Legion hours. But do they in practice remember that those hours are only a school time and that the spirit of those hours must then flow into and fill the other hours of their lives, so that Christ can use them to live in?

Christ Works in Us

And there is not merely a question of harnessing the best that is in you in the service of the Church. There is far more at stake than that. It is this. When you thus place the best that is in you at his disposal, Our Lord takes hold of what you give. He lives in it, and he exhibits himself by it, and he will use it divinely for his purposes; and by divinely I mean out of all proportion. He does not merely *utilise* that contribution of yours, which at best is feeble. I have said he lives in it himself. It is not you who work, but Christ who worketh in you. To use Fr Faber's phrase, he mixes himself up with you. He magnifies your petty efforts to strange dimensions; and ordinary, well-meaning persons find to their amazement that they have been grasped by his power, and availed of for his own most vital purposes; so that the fate of persons and continents, ay of generations, is made to hinge on their activities.

Of that your own society forms an interesting example. Consider the group of everyday persons who formed the nucleus of the Legion. In an unpretending way they came together and proceeded to give to God the tiny best that was in them. See what happened. The world vibrates under the spiritual progeny of that little band. And who

knows what part the Legion has yet to play! It is only a question of wholesale, selfless offering. Granted that, God will continue to regard his handmaid.

Building with Mary

But have I been forgetting something? In all this talk about our destiny in Christ, I have only used the name of her who is, as St Thomas says, more Christian than all other Christians put together. But of course she is to be inferred in every word that I have ever spoken. By God's arrangement she is vital to that Christian destiny. She is inseparable from everything that belongs to religion. No grace is gained or given other than through her. In all our work and in all our plans we must be mindful that he who builds without her builds in vain. She is not the foundation of the building, but she is an essential part of it. She is not the complete mixture of holiness, but she is a necessary ingredient. Devotion to her does not exempt us in any way from virtue or effort, or from anything else that we should be contributing. But without her, all your thoughts and effort and planning and everything else will be sterile. Not Christ, but the spirit of the world, will live in you.

Crowds

The Gospel to Every Soul

Apostleship is a special note of the Church, inseparable from Catholicism, inseparable not merely in the life of the Church as a body, but in the life of each individual member of the Church. You cannot be a true Catholic without being an apostle. Legionaries, accordingly, far from occupying any exalted position in the flock, do no more than carry out their ordinary Christian duty.

Apostleship, moreover, views bringing the full riches of the Church to men; therefore, logically, to everyone among them - to *every* person. That means that we have to seek out the person in the top-back room and try to bring to him or her all the spirituality that you would find in an advanced book on the subject. But you object that this is fantastic - a rushing to extremes. Admittedly it is, in the sense that a great deal of such spirituality will not be understood by or accepted by the people to whom you would bear it. But how can we decide how much and by whom? At least it must be tendered. Each person has a right to be *offered* the fullness of Christian heritage.

If we are going to essay a task like that, it is plain that there is a lot of work waiting for somebody! Indeed it is a superhuman task. We are talking in terms of the impossible. If we but set about the task in the reasonably right way and with a reasonably right degree of effort and fidelity, then something beyond natural expectation must happen; because it is the work of the Lord and no mere work of our own that we do. The fact, moreover, that a work is beyond our power forms no excuse for not attempting it. If we only attempt what we can complete, where exactly does God come in?

Personal Contact Vital

The quasi-impossibility of the above programme of spiritualising everybody is due to the fact that you cannot spiritualise men in bulk. The basis of this work must be the individual and persevering touch of one warm soul on another soul, what we call by the technical name of 'contact'. Each person is a separate and distinct problem; yet we are obsessed by the contrary idea. All the time we think along mass-production lines, and look on it as a fine thing to get people into crowds so that we can deluge them with oratory or printed matter. It is not realised that in the measure that the personal 'contact' weakens, so does real influence. Accordingly, as men become a crowd, they escape from us. Here is a beautiful expression of that truth, said by G.K. Chesterton in writing of St Francis of Assisi: 'He saw the image of God multiplied but never monotonous. To St Francis, a man was always a man. An individual - he did not disappear in a crowd any more than in a desert.' But there lies the trouble today. We allow people to disappear into the crowd. We allow the crowd to keep us from the person. That is my theme. I want to

talk about crowds. What sort of crowds? Any sort of crowd at all. In the street, or gathered together in any place. It matters not if they be passing by, watching, or waiting. I just want you to think of people gathered together in crowds. The uninterested eye flickers over these crowds – unreflectively; but in the mind of St Francis of Assisi or of any other apostle, these crowds are no mere mass of faces and bodies; they are made up of individuals, each one representing a priceless soul.

Crowds – Assemblies of Souls

Here as in many other ways, the children of light are less expert than the world. The politician sees no mere mob. He sees individual voters, each one of whom he has to cultivate. He studies the characteristics of each person, for the sake of exploiting him. What about the three-card-man on the race course? We know well that he sees no mob either. He searches the faces of each person that passes, trying to pick out the suckers. For him the crowd has disappeared and individuals are there instead.

Similarly, to the interested Catholic eye - to the legionary - no crowd should be only a crowd. It is an assembly of souls - each one of them (no matter what brings them together, no matter what type they are) needing mothering. Every single one is a problem, not alone in time, but stretching into Eternity. Most of them, though, as you watch them, are just drifting along, doing nothing in particular, while plenty of them are more or less destructive. Yet each is a world in himself, greater by far than the material universe in which we live. Each one is a supreme masterpiece, because God has brought forth the soul directly by an effort of his creative power. Hence, we can be positively certain that no soul is ever just like

any other soul. Reflect that the tiny corrugations on the tips of your fingers are unlike those of any other living person. Now if such is the conduct of God in relation to a thing like a fingertip (which is a thing of little consequence and which God did not produce directly but through the ministry of one's parents) of what is to be imagined of the human soul?

So, what a tragedy it would be if we were to forget that a mob of one thousand people is in reality one thousand souls, each one with immeasurable possibilities for good and evil, for itself and for others. Each one is a seed of power without limits, with the capacity to build and the capacity to ruin, and unfortunately more inclined to fulfil the latter role than the former.

Crowds Dodging the Church

There they are in a crowd, vitally, peremptorily, in need of this mothering of which I speak. But where, oh, where is the apostle who will try to make the personal contact with them which would germinate those seeds and stimulate them to an infinite flowering?

Just think of them—any crowd; think of its lack of spiritual development. Most of the individuals in that crowd have no more than a child's knowledge of religion - and that much half forgotten. For at the age of fourteen, remember, the vast majority of them sever their connection with the process of education. Whatever amount of religious knowledge had been painfully drilled into them by that age represented for only too many of them a high water mark; and the tide has been going out ever since. What are most of them doing so far as religion is concerned? Probably Mass on Sunday and monthly Communion. In what way is that Mass heard? The great majority assist without the

slightest advertence to what it is. To them it is merely a ceremony. Sometimes, no Mass even. They may say brief morning and evening prayers. They never hear a sermon; and the fact that sermon was added to a Mass would mean that they would make a point of hearing Mass elsewhere. Then, after that exhausting spiritual exercise on a Sunday, the world reigns supreme in their lives for the rest of the week. They never read a spiritual book. You could say in truth that they were trying to dodge the Church for the greater part of their lives.

From Crowds to Individuals

Of course there is a counterpoise, and that is their homes. Each member of that crowd has his or her private life. There, various good influences touch them; amongst these your visitation. But how many members of that family are always missing when the home is visited? They seem to be always getting the exercise and amusement which they have earned. They are not there when the priest goes and they are not there when you go. For a great number of those who form the crowds that we have been considering, their homes are merely dormitories; just places where they sleep. The rest of the time they are – in crowds.

While they are in these crowds we cannot get at them, and yet eternal things depend on our establishing contact with them. Every day the cord of life of some amongst them is severed. Out of this world they pass into eternity. We trust it is to a happy eternity; but certainly it possesses little of the fullness it should have, because the great majority of them are not going into eternity as saints. That much is certain, and the tragedy of it is (as someone has said) that to the mind of God, the saint – and not the ordinary person – represents normality. In other words,

anybody who is not a saint is sub-normal. Fr Faber says that a saint is worth a million ordinary people. By that arithmetic, many a big crowd is worth only a thousand parts of what God would regard as *a normal person*. That vast army of souls are realising but a fraction of their possibilities. Each one a potential world - yet only playing the part of a clod of earth!

The heart of St Francis of Assisi, or of any other apostle, could not look with equanimity on that spectacle of great numbers dodging their divine destiny. And - more than any apostle! - how must Our Blessed Lady look on those crowds! She is the mother of each individual soul comprised in them. She must be in anguish at their necessities, and her heart must yearn for someone to help her in her work of mothering them. Be sure of this much - that if anyone volunteers to help her in a whole-hearted way, she will fill his efforts with her power. Let us offer ourselves in that whole-hearted way. Let us study these crowds ... Let us try to evolve a technique which will turn those crowds into individuals and thus enable us to establish contact with their souls.

For instance, the cinema crowds? This very evening if you walk along the central streets, you will see a long queue stretching out from every picture house; every picture house will be packed to the doors. Think of the football crowds, the boxing crowds, the race going crowds, the crowds at the dogs, the fancy fair crowds, the dancing crowds and the non-Catholic crowds. What about all of these? What about the public house crowds; and the sort of crowd that seems to be doing nothing at all except lounging about, loitering along, just putting in the few hours between that moment and the time they have to go to bed?

Devising Ways And Means

These are great problems. But somewhere among you there is the answer to them all; if only you will think; and then have the self-confidence to propound the thoughts which will rise up in your minds. Among you are many who have already shaped the course of the Legion of Mary, because one day they shyly came forward with some new suggestion. Encouragement, facilities and man-power was given to them – just as the seed is supplemented by the soil. Then that timid idea took root and flourished and bore fruit sixty-fold and a hundred-fold. Such has been the genesis of nearly all of our great works.

Example, they say, speaks louder than exhortation, so I give you an example: Once a legionary presented himself at his headquarters and said that he was busy constructing a book barrow. With permission, he intended to place this barrow on the public streets. In due course the article was completed, rolled out and stationed on the pitch at Cathedral Street, where ever since it has been a conspicuous landmark. That was a notable contribution to the problem of the crowd! Thousands upon thousands of people have been drawn to that barrow and to its fellows, like a moth to the light; and we hope that those human moths have been duly singed. Many spiritual words have been spoken to them, and many religious books have been politely forced upon them; and if they thought upon the former and read even a small portion of the latter, vast good was thereby done. In addition, those that did not stop must have been stirred to think.

You know the story of the fool who spent a long time gazing at a wheelbarrow, and then exclaimed: 'It's wonderful the works of a wheel-barrow!' With greater accuracy and with reverence, I apply the same words

to that Cathedral Street barrow, which ushered in a new legionary work, widened legionary technique and disintegrated an impervious crowd into its vulnerable human atoms.

Then let us take the Protestant crowds. Once upon a time, not so very long ago, those crowds were just crowds. They were the Protestants going to church or coming from church, or in some way or other assembled together in such a way as caused one to say: 'A Protestant crowd'. They were nothing more. We never gave them further thought. Then one day a little Legion group gathered together and decided that they were going to make an attempt to get in touch with them. Question: 'How?' Answer: 'We know not – we have not an idea as to what we are going to do, but we have got to do something. Let us form a *praesidium*¹ and let us take a step or two in the dark, trusting to Our Lady to lead us along the unknown, unseen road.' That was a very foolish proceeding, you will agree, to start off and rush blindly into inevitable trouble. But as events have demonstrated, it was only another example of that true wisdom which acts on the belief that if we give all we can towards a work for souls, then God will play his part and being that humanly impossible enterprise to a divine success.

Upon a time, too, the Medical Mission² crowd was just a crowd to eye and wonder at. A sordid, horrid crowd of traitorous Catholics pressing into one of those wretched institutions where they compromise their faith for the proverbial mess of pottage - only in this case it is medicine. One day a few legionaries determined that something must be done about it. They were convinced that their efforts would be fruitless - that no one would pay attention to them. 'But,' they said, 'we will at least stand there and to

every person going in we will protest against his action.' You know the result? Numbers reduced to a fraction of what they used to be and then the closing down of the institution! Reflect what that has meant in the saving of souls. Yet once it was *only a crowd*, viewed like the other crowds, that is a body without a soul; for a crowd has no soul. No one has got down to its real problem, which was the souls of those who composed it.

Seek and You Shall Find

You must not let a crowd conceal that problem from you. Neither let it intimidate you by its seeming toughness, nor by its size - even though it be very great while you are few, or even one lone visionary. The difficulties may be such as definitely to place the task outside your compass. But so much the better. 'Hopeless' is a hallmark if looked from the proper angle. Through our slight - but none the less necessary - co-operation, God will show his inexhaustible ingenuity and power. So that if we knock, the door of inspiration shall be opened to us, and then if we seek a way, we shall find it. Of this I am certain, just as I am certain that God wills that the infinite riches of his heart be brought to all people everywhere. He will walk with you and fill your hands heavily with those treasures of his, if only you will prove your willingness to distribute them.

But if, on the other hand, you start off by passing a vote of No Confidence in yourself, you shall not seek; you shall not knock and the door will remain closed.

Endnotes

- 1 The praesidium is the local unit of the Legion of Mary.
- 2 Medical Missions are established by Protestants in Dublin as centres of proselytism. Catholics are tempted to deny their faith in order to receive free medicine. The Legion has from its inception picketed these institutions with remarkable success.

Nerves

I begin by quoting to you something from the handbook which gives the keynote to my subject. That is the pair of sentences which appear over the name of the French writer, Duhamel, and which are as follows: 'The majority of people seem to suffer from a sense of neglect. They are unhappy because nobody takes them in hand, because nobody is ready to accept the confidences they offer.'

Those words are true. They might be said to be tragically true; for they specify the ailment from which the whole human race is suffering – lack of sympathy, insufficiency of understanding. It is accordingly, a supreme charity to respond to that imperative need of the human heart. Thereby, you pour a refreshing, Christ-like balm, and you may cure even more than you intended. For this sort of isolation in which so many people live, produces of itself a great number of troubles, many of them serious.

What is Charity?

What is charity? It seems to me that we have come to this strange pass that we do not really understand what charity

means. For instance, charity to our neighbour is almost universally conceived to mean the assuaging of material ills. It is a curious thing that even in the biographies of the saints, there is an over-stressing of that side of things. You find that when people turned to God, it was at once a case of seeking out the poor and lavishing care and affection upon them. You could easily get the impression that it was the thing that counted most. And of course the modern world goes further and exalts that narrow conception of charity to the point of excluding any other.

Therefore, it is a good thing that the Legion takes up a radically different line and resolutely puts forward spiritual charity as being mainly its domain. In doing this – you will remember – the Legion is very careful not to slight the other form of charity. It would be a rash and wrong thing indeed for anyone to do so. But at the same time it is necessary to stress a principle if there is a danger of its being obscured. For this reason, if there were no other reason, it is in the general interest for the Legion to turn its vision from the field of material relief and concentrate on the field of spiritual aid. For the truer charity has tended to be overshadowed by its mere satellite – as if in a quaint manner the moon were eclipsing the sun. Charity, the supreme charity, is really the care of other people's souls. Moreover, this is the form of charity which is chiefly required in the present day world. Only a small percentage of humanity is in need of material relief, while *everybody* is in need of assistance in the moral order. There is the legionary mission. With our vision and then with our work, we must take in the whole of the communities of which we form part, and eventually in great daring reach out to the entire world. We must see in each person a problem

of love, an object on whom is to be lavished through our poor instrumentality the radiant love of God.

Repair of Religious Neglect Not the Legion's Main Work

In the Legion you hear until you are almost weary of it, that you are supposed to be always on duty for souls. The same is the lesson to be drawn from Père Plus' trenchant definition of a Christian as one to whom God has entrusted his fellow men. You must try to discharge that trust in respect of every person without distinction. It would be a crippling error to think that your work is mainly the repair of religious neglect. With all embracing gesture you must take in every heartbeat of the human race and – I emphasise – in its heartbreaks too. It was not for nothing that the first branch of the Legion bore the name of Our Lady of Mercy. Like so many of the other things in the Legion, which was without doubt planned from on high; those who thought they chose the title did not really choose it at all. That title should express the Legion's attitude towards the world and should be deemed to have special application to the sores of the soul and mind, of whatever sort.

Legionaries will every place find material for such a mission of mercy. They will discover it among their own fellow members. They will find it among those to whom the Legion sends them; but strange to say, less among the poor than among the better circumstanced; it would almost seem that as a matter of compensation for their privations, the poor have been spared sufferings which are really worse. But most of all, legionaries will encounter these cases in what I might be inclined to call the non-legionary hours – but for the fact that there are no such hours.

Minds on The Rack

I would aver that every legionary knows somebody whose soul or mind is somehow on the rack. I then go on and say: 'there is your responsibility legionary'. Should any legionary say that such is no concern of his because that person is not a legionary 'case,' he does but confess himself ill taught, for in his Legion 'first-book' it is written that the whole wide world is the legionary case and concern.

Of course those trials of soul and mind are infinite in number and type. To each and every one the Legion will reach out in Catholic sympathy. But here I propose to single out a special and grievous sort of trouble, known to the scientific ones as 'neurosis,' and to you and me as 'nerves'. This trouble is a product of our complicated age, with its excessive pleasure, excessive smoking, excessive drinking, excessive everything – including the whole question of sex let loose, which is perhaps the greatest danger of them all. Out of this conglomeration issues a weird brew – this problem of nerves. It forms a baffling, bewildering study. It represents a sort of world inside our own world. That sub-world is inhabited by people who are nerve-ridden; subject to phobias of one kind or another; in the grip of queer and evil habits; devoured by fears and scruples, by awful temptations and by fierce hatreds, antipathies and burning grievances. So much so that from my own limited contact with that class I am led to believe that it forms a fair proportion of the population. The souls of these sufferers are veritable battlegrounds or torture chambers. So harassed are some of them that they regard themselves as mad, or going mad, or even as possessed by the devil.

Trouble Shared Shrinks

You will realise that for a person who is thus afflicted, it is most difficult to be faithful to religious duties. So usually he puts aside what would have helped him the most. So far so bad! But that same is doubly complicated and aggravated by the fact that these victims tend to seal up everything inside their own hearts. Further consequences are inevitable. If you lock up matter in the body, it will fester inside, multiplying ills there; and it may cause death. If you lock up poisoned thoughts in your mind, they will make a fatal merry-go-round of it, they may ruin your life. So it is absolutely necessary that sufferers should find someone to whom they can talk with utter freedom. If they can thus give their confidence, the result is sometimes striking – even though there is nothing extraordinary about it; for it is an elementary principle of psychology that a trouble shared shrinks. Indeed – by reason of the fact that some of these troubles are largely unreal – they may actually die away altogether when talked over.

Inspiring Trust

But there lies the difficulty – to get these poor distracted ones to confide in anybody! The circumstances of their cases may be very peculiar, very disgraceful (as they may think), incredible or ridiculous; and so they may feel it to be shameful to disclose their secret. Certainly they will not do it to anybody unless they sense that person to be very specially receptive, completely sympathetic, completely understanding and completely trustworthy. They are repelled by any tincture of superiority or acidity, or by a tendency towards a critical tone. So that if any one of you aspire to receive these ultra-confidences of others,

you must by your ordinary attitude indicate that you are the type into whose ear they can safely and easily be poured. You may have the heart of a St Vincent de Paul, but if at the same time you have a severe air, people will not look any deeper down.

In their super-sensitiveness, they will turn away from you who really have the remedy they stand so much in need of. There are few who inspire the right type of trust and so these poor folk go along through life keeping their torture thoughts to themselves; or else in sheer desperation, resorting to the charlatans who have risen up simultaneously with this nerve-ridden class. Those pests reap a golden harvest and take the money of their 'clients' in exchange for weird and often disastrous advice. I know of one person recently who paid £46 to one such rogue for advice which could only be described as diabolical.

Dangers of Psycho-analysis

Psycho-analysis is the latest stunt. It has mesmerised the world with its jargon of mysterious sounding learned looking words. Multitudes of its practitioners are now at work with crowds flocking to them. So far that system has unquestionably done more harm than good. If it has brought benefit to some individuals, it has done harm to the populace as a whole, by convincing the more unthinking ones that all these nervous disorders arise from 'inhibitions' and 'repressions' – words which are generally understood to mean moral discipline and restraint of all sorts. Thereby psycho-analysis has tended to reverse moral values. Thus it causes indiscipline and excesses on a wide scale, which in turn germinate the very nervous disorders which it professes to set out to cure.

Work for The Legion

So large and 'distressful' does this field of nerves appear to be that it has been suggested that we should set up regular Legion machinery – say a praesidium – to deal with such cases. That praesidium would include in its ranks experienced priests, doctors and legionaries, who between them would make study of each case and try to bring remedies to bear. Such a praesidium would form a sort of spiritual spider's web into which the flies would cast themselves, the word having circulated in their sub-world that the web was 'interested,' 'understanding,' 'easy to talk to'. Later on its attractiveness would be increased by some record of successes. Now some questions!

Question No. 1: On what broad lines would such cases be dealt with?

- a. I answer in a sentence: By a combination of the religious system of the Church, of medical science, of the Legion system and of a general system of common sense.

Question No. 2: What have doctors got to do with all this?

- a. In the first place it must be established that a case is merely 'neurotic' and not definitely 'mental'. In the second place, I have known a number of these cases where troubles died away under the influence of calcium or some other drug, or as a result of other forms of treatment. Troubles that appeared to be seated in the soul or mind were in reality the outcome of some physical maladjustment. Indeed this word 'maladjustment' (whether of soul, mind or body) might be said to be our keynote and to indicate the

raison d'être of our group. Upset the comparatively delicate human balance in any way and complications more or less grave result automatically. But just as surely you rectify these by a restoration of balance.

Question No. 3: Surely the process of remedying such complications is in itself most complicated, requiring deep knowledge of that pseudo-science, 'psycho-analysis,' or at least of psychology?

- a. I do not think so. Or rather I would say 'No' – that is in relation to the precise sort of experiment I have in mind. I am initially contemplating something far less intricate or expert than this question has in view. Legionary methods would primarily be related to the formulae of charity rather than to the theories and rules of science; though I do not exclude the possibility of our group accumulating much novel, even essential knowledge, as it goes along, and even possibly evolving a characteristic technique of its own. But this would represent a growth and an addition – even without which I am reckoning on great good being done to *every* case by the application of basically simple ideas. Note that whenever, for convenience sake, I say 'psychology' I am implying no more than these 'basically simple ideas'.

Question no. 4: What do you mean by basically simple ideas?

- a. I mean certain primary rules of health (spiritual, mental and physical) aiming in general at the imparting of right balance to lives that are acutely out of balance. The policy would be to operate from every possible direction at once, even though the preliminary

researches indicated that a particular defect was in question. This latter defect would of course receive chief attention, but effort would be made to tone up in all other ways as well, on the principle that a number of small things taken together often amounts to something portentous; that is they rather multiply up than add up. Indeed our capital principle may be thus stated: - an all-round attack, relying on the aforesaid 'multiplying' or cumulative process rather than on the virtue of one drastic stroke or brilliant diagnosis.

Some Basic Principles

Now here are some of the other 'basically simple ideas,' on which *as principles* the group would found its procedure:-

a. Sharing confidence

I have at the outset referred to the psychology of sharing confidence as a valuable asset. Add to this the tonic effects of sympathy and anxiety to help.

b. The power of new motives

Commonly the interior disorder has come from incorrect motives, or from a false standard of viewing quite a common trial. This results in a state of rebellion against the latter, with consequent embitterment, aggravation, etc. - in onion-like layers - so that the final product is out of all proportion to the original 'core'. If for instance, the victim in such a case could be reasonably induced to accept the view that this thing, which looks to be such a calamity or unbearable injustice, is a *necessary* part of union with Christ - that sufferer's part of Christ's Cross - then at once you have

radically changed the outlook (or inlook!) of that person. A new motive has been supplied which works interiorly but surely – as when an additional active ingredient is added to a chemical mixture.

Under the head of 'motives' I would include any consideration, natural or supernatural, big or little, which appeals to the reason and sets it against the disorder. Even when that new motive is not such as could be described as 'dynamic,' still it plays some part; and our main principle holds good, i.e. the creation of a tendency towards balance or adjustment. As insisted above, this tendency would be enhanced by each additional 'motive' or influence, however slight in itself.

c. Control of panic

Much of the trouble in these peculiar cases arises from sheer panic or desperation. Note that these latter are not part of the central deposit of trouble at all, but represent a fungus-like and fatal addition to it. The parent trouble might by itself have been capable of control, but panic came in and reason went out. Take an everyday example: it is ordeal enough trying to steer a speeding car which is skidding on a greasy surface, but it becomes impossible if under the strain one's nerves are hopeless and makes no effort to control them. Then anything may happen. Even minor ills can overmaster one if they are not fought against.

d. Remove fear of insanity

The special torture of many neurotics is that they fear themselves to be insane. Naturally enough, the mind seeing some of its processes unaccountable or

out of control, finds a ready explanation in insanity. Then panic enters in with other ingredients of mental turmoil in its train, producing a state which can counterfeit insanity, yet is only equivalent to the mental state of a swimmer overwhelmed and demoralised by a heavy sea. Here the only hope is the establishment of confidence in someone else and then the attempting to follow a set of rules. Thereby the chief disturber, panic, would be restrained and the sufferer stimulated and supported in the attempt to breast those emotional waves.

Left to ourselves in times of turmoil we are but poor judges as to our mental position. By what standards are we then to judge? Suppose, for instance, a person in such state were to be authoritatively assured that he was 50% abnormal. It is certain that the statement would cast him into despair. For it appears to certify that he is 'half mad'. Yet it does not do this at all. It but uselessly compares him with an *ideal* standard, without at the same time telling him how much the *average* falls short of that *ideal*. If the average mental integrity were denoted by the figure 100, then the falling short by 50 would – as amounting to half-insane – be grave in the extreme. But if in fact the average man was 25% abnormal – and it is certain that everyone is to some extent abnormal – then our victim is only 25% further down the scale. In other words, he is only 25% removed from average or practical normality. This is a very different problem for him to face to that of being 'half-mad'. Realisation of this has at once a steadying effect, panic and despair losing their stranglehold. Furthermore, it is probable that if such a person submitted wholeheartedly to a discipline of thought

and action, even that existing gap of 25% would be bridged and possibly in the end such schooling given to his life as to render him a more useful member of society than one who had originally possessed greater stability and who was accordingly satisfied to leave it unimproved upon.

e. Few cases are unique

Another aspect of the application of false standards lies in the idea that one's case is unique and one's sufferings special, when in reality, one may be little enough removed from the common categories of nerves. I gather that the general line adopted in handling such cases is to encourage them in their view that they are altogether singular. But I would imagine that this represents bad psychology. For one reason, as I have just said, it is not usually a fact. Another reason is that it is calculated to develop in them a perverted sense of vanity which then stands in the way of improvement.

The conventional routine in such cases is to delve into the past until some happening or circumstance is unearthed which can plausibly be related to the present aberration. Result: the sufferer is rooted in his notion that he is 'unique'. A unique case will feel that he is proof against everything and expect a unique remedy. This is logic, it seems to me. Then as the unique remedies are few and far between, similarly will the cures be rare. For the mind of such a person, settled in the conviction that his case is quite exceptional, will automatically take up an attitude of contempt and hence of resistance to the simple lines of treatment which in the end are those likely to be effective.

In fact few of these cases that hug the belief that they are 'unique' are really so. Abnormal they may be, but falling into broad enough classes of it – sufficiently broad to debar them from the title of unique. Once they are convinced to this latter effect, they are in a receptive state for treatment along common lines; and this is half the battle.

f. Insist on reasonable grounds for hope

It is obvious that in dealing with persons whose trials are being aggravated by despair, the note of hope must be consistently struck. Therefore, grounds for hope must be discovered and kept before the sufferer. But at the same time those reasons for hope should be not so magnified as to make them unreal. This is a mistake which is persistently made in such cases. Indeed one method of treating them lies in that very form of exaggeration i.e. various methods of auto-suggestion. In these many people are taught to assure themselves incessantly that there is nothing wrong with them whereas the fact is that there may be something quite seriously wrong with them. It seems to me that exaggerated methods of this kind are incorrect in principle. In the first place, there is the likelihood that the 'patient' will lose confidence in a guide who proceeds on lines of denying the existence of actual defects. In the second place you cannot cheat the intellect in that way. It is certain that the mind will instinctively reject this sort of verbal chaff, despite its profusion and will only absorb such assurances or auto-suggestions as it reasonably feels to approximate to the truth. The purpose of those 'grounds for hope' being to bring conviction to the

mind, they must therefore be essentially reasonable and unstrained. For the mind is attuned to the truth and responds naturally to it when it is stated. 'Great is the truth and it shall prevail.'

g. Antidote for introspection

Introspection – and the having on hands the time to indulge it – is a prominent element in nerve ailments, it follows that one antidote should be the effort to turn the mind outwards and preferably on to objectives of a 'neutralising character'. By this I mean that if these sufferers could be induced to minister unto other sorts of suffering (such as would be found in a cancer hospital, or in a Legion Hostel, or in other places where sorrow in grim shape will be met), it must have a counterbalancing influence – sometimes even a decisive one. In other words, if you could bring your neurosis subject into membership of the Legion or a kindred organisation, you would have brought him no small part of the road towards amelioration.

h. Ordering the day

Part of the same process would be the methodising by good works or prayer of a day which is formless. The taking on of some Office would have a force not only spiritual but psychological. Many lay folk could with little difficulty say at least part of the Divine Office. The sense of futility can exert a disintegrating effect on a day or on a life. Psychologically, a day will not be futile, which has included some major spiritual act (such as Mass, Holy Communion, or Office as aforesaid), even though that day was otherwise a waste, a woe, a sorrow, a despair.

i. Emphasis on the spiritual

Here where I have been suggesting the possibility of developing a sort of science, is likewise the place for issuing a warning and for a reiteration of legionary first principles. The Legion strikes for results that are super-normal. It appreciates that these are the gift of God through Our Lady. It tries to draw them down by giving to each task such effort and skill and finish as are in its power to give. It is from this combination and inter-dependence of the spiritual and the human forces that fruits will issue big and abundant – including the gracious fruit of interior health, peace, and balance. But ever the emphasis must be on the spiritual. Every legionary work must steer by this principle. No less than any other Legion workers, those must do so who would seek to navigate the tempestuous uncharted sea of nerves. So if legionaries should work out a technique which is good and of which they are justly proud, they have need to guard themselves against the natural tendency to lean on that technique as the real source of their confidence. True the better the system the choicer the offering it forms to God and therefore the more they may expect from him through it. But if they lean unduly on it, they will be left forlornly to the system for their results and then purely human results would be forthcoming.