

## Widening Our Horizons

Recently we were listening to the report of the Icelandic PPC Party which reached the usual impressive height. Incidentally they furnished a vivid picture of the dozen Incolae who had been on the island with Fr Bradshaw for various periods. These Incolae have been leading lives of great hardship and of utter devotedness. The only work available to them has been tasks which the ordinary population will not stoop to. These occupy them during the day, after which they betake themselves to their labour of love, the quest for souls. The peregrine, not having thus to earn their bread gave all their time to the said quest.

But it is not the heroism of that enterprise that I am now considering but the mental approach which has characterised it. During the three years which Fr Bradshaw and his team of Incolae have been operating, they have learned much and there has been an evolution of thought in regard to method. This is of such importance that it is necessary to analyse it and see what lessons it has for the Legion.

the proposition. Perhaps it was that Japan was regarding Christianity from too low an angle, seeing no more in it than the best human code, the loftiest ethic. Whereas it is the divine requirement that faith must make at least a modest entry into every converting transaction. However, the world is still young, and God fulfils himself in many ways. Like the blind man in the Gospel, Japan may yet cry out: Whereas I was blind, now I see. I recognise the Church as Jesus Christ. And the scheme that failed in the 1930s may triumph a century later.

In the 1950s China played similarly with its destiny. It flirted with religion on kindred principles. It was willing to introduce the Church on selfish, human guarded lines which would leave it a shadow of itself. And this was not enough. Faith, the vital ingredient was missing. But China is too big to be left permanently in that impoverishment.

Moreover there is life germinating in the Chinese soul which must appear one day. The old saying has it that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. We do not rightly know how many martyrs we provided there thirty years ago. But we dare to put it at some forty thousand who were deprived of their lives by violence or by the slower slaughter of the prison. All that treasury of merit is waiting to play its predestined part someday.

According to the principle of the Mystical Body, the human agency is necessary to bring Jesus and Mary to souls. Reflecting on the remarkable things which they have deigned to do through the Legion, our effort to place ourselves at their disposal should be superhuman. We must plan in terms of every place and every man and be ready to follow up on that planning.

I would claim that the Concilium is really doing its best in this department of thinking and planning, but its

powers to make this effective is limited. It has to rely on all its related governing bodies to be no less concerned and to urge on all those under their influence. For the Legion is still working only at a fraction of its potentiality. Too many praesidia are still confining themselves to comforting and consoling while souls are going to shipwreck around them. Even where branches are thoroughly good, they are not ambitious to do more.

In this connection I point to the absolute necessity of using the *Peregrinatio Pro Christo* and the *Exploratio Dominicalis*, both ingredients of heavenly value. They serve the double purpose of opening up new fields to the Legion and developing the Legion Spirit. Somehow or other every legionary must be made to think in terms of the whole world and of its grimmest problems.

### **Sighing for New Worlds to Conquer**

I have discussed Iceland, Japan and China. It is breathtaking to reflect that our simple Legion has been providentially assigned a dramatic part in their destinies. But can we not see that likewise we have in regard to every country in the world. In almost all of them we exist in various stages of growth. In respect of the few from which we are still excluded, we can at least say that we are doing our very best to implant ourselves there. Nearly all of them are the theatre of annual peregrination projects. Soon every country will be sending forth such groups. An inevitable consequence of this will be that the horizons of legionaries will be widened. It was said of the Emperor Alexander the Great that he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. If the Legion could become that much involved in the winning of souls, it is certain that the Holy Spirit would fill it with his power and perhaps convert the

world. Actually this is the petition with which the Legion prayers begin. Therefore it is not altogether as a joke that I suggest that an atlas of the world might be a companion document to the handbook.

So we should set our minds roving and try to picture to ourselves the innumerable places where the Lord's injunction to preach the gospel still remains unfulfilled. Add on the million other areas where it is being fulfilled in a partial way only.

We are just now in correspondence with a group of islands in the Pacific. It contains three hundred islands of which perhaps half are inhabited and in part by Catholics. The minority of these islands would be dealt with by priests who circulate through them. This would provide the more earnest Catholics with the Mass and the sacraments periodically. It could hardly be expected to build up a devout life, nor could it convert.

Just imagine the coming in to one of those islands of a dependable *Incola Mariae* who would move constantly through the people between the coming of the priest. The heroism of the proceeding could not fail to stir the islanders and to ensure a hearing. It is certain that the priest would find special work waiting for him inclusive of conversions. A new project would exist.

The roots of the present lie deep in the past, it is said. It will be of interest to mention that when Edel Quinn began to recover after her breakdown in Lilongwe in 1941, our minds turned to the idea of using her on the less arduous mission of moving through the South Sea Islands trying to get the Legion going there. This notion was pushed aside by her return to Nairobi.

*The Incolae*

*Incola Mariae* is a more recent edition to the Legion vocabulary. In Latin it means a person making a stay in a country not his own. The Legion uses it to designate a member who for a limited period, a year more or less, goes to a place of spiritual necessity, supports himself there, and devotes to the Legion a large proportion of his free time. The sacrificial aspect of this is very great. The idea is catching on and many places have already shown how fruitful it can be.

We are beginning to dream dreams in regard to the development of this choice band. But everything depends on the careful administration of the idea, which presumes a very superior quality on the part of the *Incola*. Going among a strange people and facing grave problems, it is imperative that the *Incola* be a dedicated legionary capable of standing up to difficult circumstances and of providing leadership. In normal circumstances the *Incola* should not be deprived of the opportunity to attend Mass daily. Should the nature of the enterprise be such that this is impossible, then obviously the *Incola* should be one to whom the ecclesiastical authority would be willing to grant the privilege of Minister of the Eucharist. The contemplation of an *Incola* armed with this office opens up an entrancing vista of benefit to souls. In dealing with Iceland we have seen that *Incolae* assigned to Akureyri in the north of the island have been given this privilege. It has made their mission tolerable and has been a priceless boon to the few Catholic around them.

But of course we must not limit our gaze to islands. Any priest-less or problem-ridden place would be as much in need.

What of that case of the remote Andean village in South America which had not received the visit of a priest for several years. A PPC team with a priest went there and in little more than a week accomplished wonders. But then they had to depart. In desperation they set up a praesidium to keep things going. Word about this has not yet come to us but it is hard to imagine such an uninstructed body surviving in those primitive circumstances. If an Incola were available, that would make all the difference.

But is this realistic thinking? Can the Legion offer persons of the calibre that such missions would require? Well, I have been speaking of the Incolae in Iceland. Many of them would be adequate for anything. It may be that an equal load has not been thrown on the Incolae elsewhere in the world. But it looks not unlikely from the performance of the latter that they could rise to what we would place before them. I cannot think of a downright failure among the number who have hitherto served as Incolae. Unquestionably the experience thus far gained has amounted to a showing of the green light in respect of the Incola; that is we must go ahead with all our energy. At the same time we must keep ever before our minds the supreme requirement of quality and dedication. Places thinking of sending Incolae on difficult assignments should discuss the matter with the Concilium.

### **Holy Father Would be Pleased**

An event of joy and significance took place some months ago. I am of course referring to the more than kindly reception given to the Concilium officers by His Holiness the Pope. Our three-quarters of an hour discussion with him equalled this talk in point of length. Likewise it covered much of the same ground. It was immediately evident

that His Holiness was completely informed in regard to everything in the Church, inclusive of the things which the Legion is handling. His whole attitude was gentle and approving. We could not but get the impression that he was unreservedly in agreement with our method. He urged us to remain ever true to our love of Our Blessed Lady. He insisted that it is the divine arrangement that victory comes through her. No difficulty of language entered in to lessen the sheer enjoyment of that audience. For the Pope's English was quite perfect in its quality.

I really believe that Pope John Paul would derive an immensity of pleasure from being among us at this conference. I think it would reflect his own mind as to what he would wish to see in the whole Church. I think your standards would satisfy him; your unreserved dependence on Our Blessed Mother, your reaching out to souls everywhere, your wonderful self-sacrifice, and your good humour. I am sure that he would feel in you a reflection of his own spirit. As all of you were able to judge from his visit to this country, his personality would not overwhelm you, but would on the contrary be a pure encouragement.