

Maria Legionis



Our Lady of the Rosary Pray for us.

Maria Legionis

The Voice of the Legion of Mary

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INVITATION The Editor and Board of Maria Legionis invite readers of Maria Legionis, and other legion members, to submit articles and other contributions with a view towards publication in future issues of the journal. Ideally, submissions should be made by e-mail attachments (Word Documents or jpg images) to: concilium@legion-of-mary.ie and marked 'Maria Legionis.'

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Allocutio

Given to Concilium, March 2024

By Fr. Paul Churchill,
Spiritual Director

(The Incarnation,
the Angelus, The Acies)



We cannot overlook ever the importance of the Incarnation. It is the great moment of history when God united himself to his Creation and dwelt among men, even among animals, living with a body made from the clay of the earth. The *Te Deum* of the Church puts it this way:

“When you took our nature to save mankind you did not shrink from birth in the virgin’s womb.”

That word “shrink” evokes the following thought in me. It is not easy for us to grasp what this step involved for God. Can I suggest as a possible current image that might scratch the surface of what this meant for God: if someone living a comfortable middle-class lifestyle in the 1st World

opted to live in Haiti or Gaza or Sudan. Do I see any hands up in those communities for such a step? What our Lord did, in coming among us to be so shamefully treated was to do an act even humbler than what a well-off person might do in moving to one of the poorest countries. But to show how committed he was he chose to be born in an animal shed and died on a Cross.

As St. Catherine of Siena commented:
“only a great love can explain someone taking such a step.”



The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in doing his Father's will, also had the help of the Third Person of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit of Love. That Spirit fashioned a place for the Second Person to land and connect. We know her as Mary.

As Frank Duff pointed out she is so close to the Holy Spirit of Love that, while remaining pure creature, she is the perfect expression of the Holy Spirit. In this way the Holy Spirit prepared in Mary the fitting place for the incoming God to have a soft landing and make his dwelling among men. She, by her welcome and love, made him feel at home, assisted of course by St. Joseph.



We celebrate this great event in the prayer we call the Angelus. It is the prayer which commemorates the great event in history; the moment God affirmed his Creation and us. In a way that is what we celebrate at Christmas: God among us. But the moment of sheer genius is the Incarnation; the greatest feat of engineering, the moment of the hypostatic union, when God connected to us and began sharing our journey.

For us lost sheep it has to be our redeeming moment. It gives us the firm anchor of faith and hope that God so loved the world that he sent Jesus to us. And the Angelus gives us a chance each day to reflect on it and to thank God for the gift he has offered us. I am not overlooking the death and Resurrection of Christ, but they follow on from that first step of Christ entering our world. That “Here I am Lord, I come to do your will” of Hebrews (10:5-10) begins radically in that descent from Heaven by the Second Person of the Trinity and continues through his whole mission. And with him in that mission, Creation adopts a similar disposition through her who represents Creation and Humanity: “Be it done unto me according to thy word.”

So, it is most fitting that we in the Legion also make our great act of commitment on that day, namely the Feast of the Incarnation, or as close to it as makes no difference.

The Acies, the great annual ceremony for all legionaries, gives us a chance to be united with Mary in her act of total co-operation with the incoming God. By uniting ourselves to her and identifying as best we can to her fiat, we too open ourselves to the incoming God so that he can take flesh in us. As St. Patrick, whom we celebrate today, would say: “Christ in all eyes that see me, in all ears that hear me, in all hearts that think of me!” The more we offer ourselves to Mary, the better will all that Christ means become a reality in our world.

“I am all yours my Queen and Mother, and all that I have is yours.” That is the disposition of all in the Legion of Mary. We allow her among us who knows best how to respond to God, to take our offering and use it to the glory of God. We go to her because we are, in a way, unworthy to go to God. We wish to imitate as best we can the humility of Mary. We know we have so little. But it is also fitting that we who are sinful members of the Creation should align with her, the sinless one of humanity, who, on all our behalf, said “Yes” to God. She who organised the servants in Cana, can take our offering of water and get her son to change it to finest wine.



So, I pray that you will all celebrate the Acies with the best of disposition and intentions. And even if you are aware of your less than perfect hearts, still, offer your service to her the refuge of sinners, because, after all, she is the one who enabled God to come among men and got Our Lord to change water into wine. She can do this for us all. *Amen.*

The New Poverty and How To Help the New Poor



By Cainneach Rua, Presentata Curia

There is a new poverty in modern society which has swept across the world like a plague and it is 1) the poverty of loneliness and 2) the poverty of faith.

Long ago poverty meant a dearth of food, shelter, clothing or medicine, but society has changed. Nowadays most people have a relatively good standard of living. They have food and can provide for their families (with exceptions of course) but generally speaking things are good. This new form of poverty is insidious because it is less visible and those who suffer do so in silence.

It is a tremendously difficult poverty to counteract because it's easy to give a hungry person bread, or a few pennies to a beggar, etc. but how do you help the person who is suffering alone, feeling disconnected from others and perhaps bitter or hurt? Clearly the issue is far more difficult to tackle. Add to that there is the whole stigma around loneliness and how ashamed people often feel if they are lonely. It is a sad fact but most people in modern society are indeed lonely; given the stigma surrounding loneliness most people keep it to themselves and

carry on bearing this heavy cross. Unfortunately, the brilliance of Steve Jobs (Apple) and the advent of the mobile phone has served only to disconnect people further and create more suffering in the world.

In the Gospel Christ told his disciples to love the poor and to help the suffering. Fair enough. But how can you love those who have everything? Most people in the Western World nowadays have food, shelter, clothing, etc. and live comfortably but still they are poor. This is the paradox. While having so much they yet have so little. The thing they lack is genuine community, fraternity and faith in God. The want of these things has made an unspoken crisis of poverty in modern society.

So, the question is: how can we love the poor as Christ commanded, the new poor who are invisible?





There are two methods we can all utilise to help them. 1) As members of the Legion of Mary we can pray for others, especially the lonely, the suffering and the depressed; 2) we can visit nursing homes, hospitals and those living alone.

We can offer companionship and social interaction; above all, as legionaries we can offer the consolation that they are not alone; that they are members of the Mystical Body of Christ and Our Blessed Lady is their spiritual mother who cares for them in a special way. We can practice the small virtues of kindness and courtesy, which can have a profound impact for the better of society. We will never know the great good a simple act of kindness can do for someone. It is not easy to be kind, especially since many people are generally miserable and stony-faced and as often as not you will be either ignored or derided for attempting to be nice. But let it be. The important thing is that you have tried to live the Gospel in a small way for love of Jesus

who looks at our efforts rather than our results.

The poverty of faith is very real and the evidence for it is everywhere. People have the universe at their fingertips with mobile phones and suddenly they no longer need God (or so they think). While it is upsetting, we must remember that the Church goes through eras of consolation and desolation interchangeably, and so while things are cold right now, they will become better again in time, for this has always occurred throughout history. God and his Church are going nowhere, despite the efforts of many. I believe society is a much darker place, in many ways, but it is also brighter than it ever has been in history, so we need not be discouraged. This new poverty is not an insurmountable challenge, or an unconquerable feat. No, it is eradicated slowly and prayerfully. In the words of St. Padre Pio: “the Rosary is the weapon for these times.” so as legionaries, let us be doing our Legion duties.

Herald of the Coming of the Reign of God, through Mary

By Paul Moran



St. Louis Marie Grignion De Montfort (1673-1716) was canonised on 20th July 1947. Each year his feastday is celebrated on 28th April.

In regards the mystery of the Blessed Mother it would seem that the Holy Spirit said to De Montfort: “I myself will give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict” (Luke 21:15). Certainly, that is the impression one gets from reading his three classical works: ‘The Secret of the Rosary,’ ‘The Secret of Mary.’ However, it was his more famous theological masterpiece ‘True Devotion to Mary’ that revolutionised authentic devotion to Mary in the modern world.

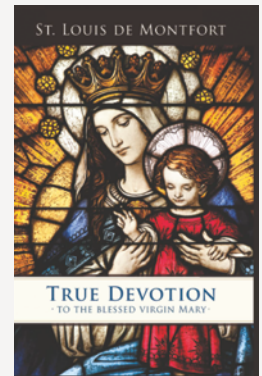
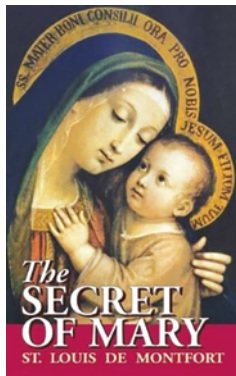
The following statement reveals De Montfort’s *modus operandi* for authentic devotion to Mary: ‘I feel more than ever inspired to believe and expect the complete fulfilment of the desire that is deeply engraved on my heart and what I have prayed to God for over many years, namely, that in the near or distant future the Blessed Virgin will have more children, servants, and slaves of love than ever before, and that through

them Jesus, my dear Lord, will reign more than ever in the hearts of men’ (True Devotion to Mary, paragraph 113).

In his other lesser-known classic, ‘Love of Eternal Wisdom’ he laments that, ‘Hardly anyone studies the supreme science of Jesus.’ Therefore, he wrote: ‘To know Jesus Christ is to know all we need. To presume to know everything and not know him is to know nothing at all.’ Like the Apostle Paul, he burned with holy desire for everyone to be filled with love for Christ Crucified. Quoting Saint John Chrysostom, he wrote: ‘Jesus Christ is everything that you can and should wish for. Long for him, seek him, because he is that unique and precious pearl for which you should be ready to sell everything.’ To sell everything is an oblique scriptural reference to consecration, that is, the giving of the gift of oneself, memory, will and understanding to Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom.

From that perspective he advocated consecration to the Immaculate Mary which he understood to be a renewal of one's baptismal promises 'to reject Satan and all his pomps and works and to give oneself entirely to Jesus Christ.' De Montfort clearly understood that Mary's maternal mission in the Church is uniquely united to that of the Holy Spirit: 'As the Holy Spirit has espoused Mary and has produced in her, by her and from her, His masterpiece, Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, and has never repudiated His Spouse, so He now continues to produce the elect, in her and by her, in a mysterious but real manner' (Secret of Mary no 13). Pope St. John Paul II, an ardent practitioner of De Montfort's 'True Devotion' stated that De Montfort is a theologian of class. In the discourse of Frederigo Cardinal Tedeschini at the unveiling of the saint's statue in St Peter's, 8th December 1948, we catch a glimpse of this towering figure for

our times: "Not only a founder, but a missionary as well! And more than a missionary: for we see another aspect; He is doctor and theologian who has given us a Mariology such as no one before him had conceived. So deeply has he explored the roots of marian devotion, so widely has he extended its horizons, that he has become without question the announcer of all the modern manifestations of Mary, from Lourdes to Fatima, from the definition of the Immaculate Conception to the Legion of Mary. He has constituted himself the herald of the coming of the reign of God, through Mary, and the precursor of that longed-for salvation which in the fullness of time the Virgin Mother of God will bring to the world by her Immaculate Heart." (Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary).



'To know Jesus Christ is to know all we need. To presume to know everything and not know him is to know nothing at all.'

Without Prayer, No One Goes to Heaven

By Paul Moran



Without doubt, prayer in all its applications keeps us on the straight and narrow path, and vast numbers of books have been written on the various aspects of prayer. What they all have in common is the need to pray constantly. I have heard it said: “one climbs to Heaven; one falls into Hell.” In other words, Heaven is not a given. We are obliged to live a virtuous life in co-operation with God’s grace by means of prayer and the regular reception of the sacraments, which are the primary sources of grace that assist us on our pilgrimage through life. The saints and doctors of the Church were conscious of the need to pray in all circumstances. Yet, it is increasingly difficult to maintain one’s Catholic faith in today’s secular environment that is so antithetical to God and religion. The scary thing is that such an environment can suck the spiritual energy out of one’s Catholic faith. This is why prayer is so vital.

Watch and Pray

On an hourly basis we are insidiously assailed on all sides by temptation. What kind of temptation? Principally

that which embodies the seven deadly sins: pride, lust, anger, covetousness, envy, sloth, and gluttony; all are insidiously decked out in an alluring aspect on our T.V. screens and mobile phones 24/7. Even the abnormal is represented as normal. If that were not enough, we have to contend with Satan, humanity’s arch enemy: ‘who goes around like a roaring lion seeking who he may devour’ (1 Peter 5:8). Hence, the absolute importance of Our Saviour’s caution: ‘Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ (Matthew 26:41).

Prayer is the Foundation of Faith.

‘Is there anything more excellent than prayer?’ asks St. Augustine. “Is there anything more beneficial in our life? anything sweeter to the heart, or anything more substantial in our holy religion? Prayer is the groundwork of all virtues: the ladder by which we mount to God. It is related to the angels; it is the foundation of faith.” He went on to say: “Prayer is the main protection of our soul. Prayer is the source of all virtues.”

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity had this to say: “Prayer does not mean reciting a certain number of formulas or vocal prayers each day, but the raising of the soul to God through all the circumstances which establishes us in a kind of continual communion with the most Holy Trinity, quite simply doing everything in God’s sight” ... “I find prayer a rest and a refreshment. I come quite simply to Him I love; remain close to Him like a child in its mother’s arms and let my heart speak.”

Grace comes to the soul through prayer

As faith is nourished by prayer, St. Alphonsus Liguori has said: “The person who prays is saved; the person who does not pray is lost. The saints are in Heaven because they made use of prayer; the damned are in Hell because they refused to pray.” The saintly Jesuit scholar Fr. John Anthony Hardon echoes the imperative to pray: “No one goes to Heaven without prayer.” Instructing a group of lay people, he wrote on a white board the abbreviation ‘P + G = H,’ that is: ‘Prayer plus grace equals Heaven.’ Similarly, in her diary St. Faustina wrote: ‘A soul arms itself by prayer for all kinds of combat. In whatever state the soul may be, it ought to pray... There is no soul which is not bound to pray, for every single grace comes to the soul through prayer.’ Effectively, those who do not pray live precariously off

the supernatural grid; in other words, without the power of grace.

Our Father

St. Paul tells us that: “God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world... From eternity he destined us



in love to be his sons and daughters through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:3-14). Pope Benedict XVI in his Apostolic exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* affirmed: “The sacrament of Baptism by which we are conformed to Christ, incorporated in the Church, and made children of God, is the portal to all the sacraments. It makes us of the one Body of Christ (I Cor 12:13), a priestly people.’ So, it is good to reflect on the reality that we have been baptised into the divine and human natures of the God-Man; thereby by the Blood of Jesus original sin has been wiped away and we became a ‘new creation,’ in the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ. Consequently, one ought to be aware that all our prayers are directed in the spirit of sonship to the eternal Father. Hence, Jesus instructed: “When you pray, say, Our Father1” (Luke 11:2). Of course, as social beings we gather together in unison at Sunday Mass and recite the ‘Our’ Father.

Neither cold nor hot

Believers desire to go to Heaven at the end of their earthly lives. Yet how is it that they take their Catholic faith so lightly and seldom pray nor partake of the sacraments. We read in the Book of Revelation: ‘I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am going to spit you out of my mouth’ (Rev. 3:15-17). Since lukewarmness is so distasteful to God, great caution ought to be exercised least one falls into the dreadful disposition of lukewarmness, which is

the slippery slope to non-practice and disbelief. Such was the case of Edith Stein, a Jewish philosopher and one of the most intelligent women of the 20th century, who at the age of sixteen stopped praying and became an atheist. Eventually she discovered the fullness of revealed truth is contained in Catholicism. We know her today as St. Benedicta of the Cross.

I shall leave the last word to the great Doctor of the Church St. Augustine: “To love and to possess God in the everlasting security of eternal life should be the final object of all our prayers.”

EXPLANATION OF FRONT AND BACK COVERS

The picture on the front cover is entitled ‘Our Lady of the Rosary.’ Her Feast Day is on 7 October. The picture was originally called ‘Our Lady of Victories’ because on that date in 1571 a miraculous victory was won by the Christian forces against the mighty Ottoman Turkish fleet at the Battle of Lepanto which thereby saved Europe from the Islamic threat.

Before the battle, Pope Pius V requested all Christians to pray the Rosary and as a result victory was attributed to the power of the Rosary. Two years before establishing the Feast Day, in 1579, the Pope officially approved the Rosary in its present form with the Papal Bull *Consueverunt Pontifices*.

The picture on the back cover is the painting ‘Maria Hilf’ - ‘Mary Help.’ It was painted circa 1630 by the German Renaissance artist Lucas Cranach the Elder, who was the court painter for the Electors of Saxony at Dresden.

Through a series of donations, the picture eventually arrived in 1650 at the Cathedral of Saint James, Innsbruck, capital of the Austrian Tyrol. The painting is on display above the high altar and is the cathedral’s most precious possession. It is a very popular image of the Virgin and Child and has been copied many times throughout the world. It is considered a unique painting of the Virgin and Child and is filled with the dignity of the Queen of Heaven, the charm of the Virgin and the gentleness of the Mother.

THE MOTHER OF GOD

Have you heard of that chosen Mother,
Her youth was the rising sun,
Whose reply to God's invitation
Was a whispered 'thy will be done.'

Have you heard of that Virgin Mother
Who in cave with ox and ass
Gave birth to the Infant Saviour
That scripture come to pass.

Have you heard of that frightened Mother
Who fled into Egypt's Land
To protect her helpless infant
From Herod's vengeful hand.

Have you heard of that thoughtful Mother
Who lived far away in the East,
Whose Son changed water into wine
At Cana's wedding feast.

Have you heard of that loving Mother
Whose Son came to save mankind,
The friend of the poor and the lonely
The healer of lame and blind.

Have you heard of that humble Mother
Whose Son in Eucharist we eat
Since none can look on Love-and live
He hides in a grain of wheat.

Have you heard of that faithful Mother
Who walked through a crowded street
Of tears and jeers and soldiers
Her outcast Son to meet.

Have you heard of that lonely Mother
Who remained at the foot of the cross
When each of His friends had departed
And knew the great pain of loss.

Have you heard of that sorrowful Mother
Who watched Him slowly die
And gave Him back to the Father
For the sake of you and I.

Have you heard of that pitiful Mother
Who was pierced by sorrow's sword
And bore the pain in silence
For the glory of the Lord.

Have you heard of that stainless Mother
Immune from sin's death-night,
Because of her conception pure
Was assumed into Heaven's light.

Have you heard of that glorious Mother
Who was crowned by Heaven's King:
Our tainted nature's only boast
Round whom the angels sing.

Have you heard of that beautiful Mother,
The Queen of Heaven fair,
Who walks with moonbeams at her feet
And starlight in her hair.

I speak of Mary – the Mother of God
Who gave us Jesus her Son
Her love for us can ne'er be told
'Till the sands of life have run.

Anonymous



60TH Anniversary of Bilbao Senatus

22 SEPTEMBER 2023

By Pili González

Most of the data presented here has been obtained from 67 letters written to my aunt by Legion Envoy María Paz (Pacita) Santos Díaz during the 1950's. I have also taken quotes from her memoir, now a book 'Pacita Santos: The Filipina who brought the



Legion of Mary to Spain.' For Spanish members, Pacita is the fourth outstanding person in the Legion of Mary after the Legion's Three Causes. She

possessed enormous generosity: being sent for three years, she remained in her mission for eight, leaving a firmly established Legion in that country.

ARRIVAL OF THE ENVOY, SR. PACITA SANTOS

In 1949 a priest from Bilbao assigned as coadjutor in the parish-Cathedral of Santiago, reading the magazine 'Incunable', learned of the existence of a new movement called the Legion of Mary. He decided to write to the Concilium asking for information. The priest's name was Fr. José Manuel Apellániz. A reply was not long in coming, with the promise that an Envoy would arrive in Spain shortly

and that she would contact him. And so in early February 1950, Pacita Santos arrived in Bilbao and introduced herself to the aforementioned priest.

As is mandatory in the Legion, Sr. Pacita contacted the bishop – at that time the first in Bilbao, Fr. Casimiro Morcillo – to ask for permission to establish the movement. At first, he was reluctant, but in the end he gave his consent because, as he said: "I know the founder and I have the impression that he is a true saint."

FOUNDATION OF THE LEGION IN BILBAO AND ITS EXTENSION

On 16 March 1950 the first weekly meeting of the Legion was held in Bilbao and, therefore, in Spain. The problem for its continuity was that the people who had attended could not continue because they belonged to another institution - specifically to the Covenant to Jesus through Mary - and the leaders did not think it convenient to belong to two ecclesial institutions at the same time. Thus, the first legionary meeting in Spain was held in Bilbao, but the first praesidium was formed in Madrid, to where Pacita soon moved. In November 1950 the first praesidium in Bilbao was founded under the name "Mary Immaculate."

It was established in Santiago Parish with Fr. Apellániz as Spiritual Director, and an initial six legionaries. On 2 December a second praesidium was established, and on the 11 February 1951 a third.

In March 1951 The first Curia of Bilbao was formed with these three praesidia. The spiritual director was also Fr. Apellániz and the first president was Sr. María Bautista Bilbao.

Between 1951 and 1956 extension work continued though only within the metropolitan area. Then in 1957 extension outside Bilbao began and the Legion was progressively founded in distant suburbs such as Baracaldo and Portugalete, and nearby towns such as Algorta and Basauri.

In 1959 the boundaries of the diocese were crossed. After the visit made by Envoy John Murray from Dublin, and other legionaries with him, the Curia of Bilbao was authorised to extend its boundaries to neighbouring provinces.

In 1960 the Curia was elevated to the rank of Comitium. It was a time of rapid expansion, including the formation of the Youth Curia “Cause of Our Joy” in Bilbao itself, with eight praesidia; and a new Curia in Portugalete with four. Further afield, the Curia “Our Lady of the Pillar” was formed in Corella, Navarre.

In July 1961 the Curia of Pamplona was established and in September the



The first praesidium in Bilbao “The Immaculate Conception”, in the Cathedral of Santiago, November 1950. Fr. José Manuel Apellániz, SD is in the centre.

Curia of Santander was formed and later elevated to Comitium.

In January 1963 the Curia of Vitoria was established in this southern city of the Basque region. Then on 22 September the Comitium of Bilbao was elevated to a Senatus, with jurisdiction over thirteen dioceses. Several Curiae founded directly by Pacita Santos or other legionaries now came under the governance of the new Senatus, as did the Comitium of Burgos. Today, the Legion is still established in ten dioceses.

In January 1968 two Curiae were formed: San Sebastian and Astorga (León)

In March 1969 Logroño Curia was established, and later elevated to a Comitium by the attachment of the Curiae of Haro and Calahorra. In April of that year the Curia “Andra Mari” of Durango was formed.

In 1971 two more Curiae were established: in October, Oviedo, and in November, Gijón.

In September 1980 the Curia “Our Lady of the Snows” was created in Basauri, and in June 1990 a second Curia was created in Calahorra, in the province of La Rioja.

THE QUALITIES OF SR. PACITA SANTOS

How and why did the work of Sr. Pacita bear so much fruit? My answer is thanks to her great generosity, as exemplified in the following actions in her life and mission:

She left her family and country: It is evident in her letters that she was worried about her mother's health, and it must have been painful for Pacita not to be able to be with her in those moments of old age and illness. Surely it must have weighed on her conscience!

She exercised the virtue of patience: As Pacita's book describes, she had to develop this virtue in order to obtain interviews with the bishops of the various dioceses in which she wanted to establish the Legion. She also met with opposition from some parish priests and others who were invited to assist in her efforts. In Barcelona and Logroño, for example, her letters report that "few want to work in the hard field." Pacita was a positive woman, though. She took the motto of the Legion Handbook on failure quite literally: it reads: 'failure is only a postponement of success.'

She struggled valiantly in the face of illness: in 1954, she mentions that she has had to stay in bed. She had many problems with her liver and suffered from dizziness, which made it difficult for her to do her job. There were times when her closest companions prevented her from continuing for a few days.

She gave all as an extension worker: nowadays we have good public transport and good motorways and roads, but the situation in the Spain of the 1950s was very different. For longer journeys, Pacita often bought time by travelling at night. Once, after almost six hours of travel in order to meet a priest, he was unable to receive her, and she had to repeat the trip a few days later. In one month, I have been able to count, through her correspondence, trips to six cities very distant from each other between Madrid and the north of Spain.

WHAT UNDERPINNED HER COURAGE?

Without a doubt, it was her faith. She was a person who gave herself unwaveringly to the Lord, and this with an ardent love for His Mother Mary. By the end of her mission in Spain, Pacita had founded 84 praesidia for adults and 19 for youth. The Senatus of Bilbao in particular is truly indebted to her as we celebrate our 60th Anniversary.



Group at the 60th Anniversary Mass, Nov. 25, 2023,
in the Church of St. Nicholas of Bari, Bilbao.

St. Dominic Savio - The Boy Saint



By Michael Walsh

Dominic's maxim: 'It is God's will that we all become saints,' applies to religious and lay people alike. The call to the religious life can take many forms, including the contemplative path. Lay people also have multiple choices while aiming at the goal of sainthood. The lay apostolate is one such choice whereby, e.g. in the Legion of Mary, a structured mechanism is in place to progress in the spiritual life while at the same time passing on the faith to others.

Dominic Savio was born on 2 April 1842 in the village of Riva in northern Italy. His father was a blacksmith and his mother a seamstress. His devout Catholic family lived in hardship despite being hardworking. He was two-years old when his family returned to their native village of Castlenuovo d'Asti. As a child Dominic was fervent in practicing his Catholic faith. He always said Grace before Meals. "I am not capable of doing big things, but I want to do everything, even the smallest things, for the greater glory of God," was an axiom by which he lived. He attended Church regularly with his mother and was often seen kneeling before

the Tabernacle in prayer. He became an altar-server, attended daily Mass, went regularly to Confession, and requested his First Holy Communion at the age of seven. This was not the practice in the Church in Italy at that time.

Dominic said that the day of his First Communion was the happiest day of his life. On the day he received his First Communion, he wrote four promises in a little book. Those promises were: I will go to Confession often, and as frequently to Holy Communion as my confessor allows. I wish to sanctify the Sundays and festivals in a special manner. My friends shall be Jesus and Mary. Death rather than sin.



Dominic walked three miles to secondary school each day. One day a farmer asked why he wasn't tired. Dominic replied: "Nothing seems tiresome or painful when you are working for a master who pays well."

At school, he was forgiving to other students and often took the blame for their pranks.

When Fr. John Bosco gave Dominic a copy of The Catholic Readings, a pamphlet dealing with apologetics, ten minutes later Dominic recited the text and provided a full explanation of its significance. At this stage he expressed an interest in the priesthood and Fr. Bosco took him to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Turin where he studied industrially, and renewed his First Communion promises.

After six months at the Oratory, he delivered a speech on the path to sainthood during which, he made three outstanding points:

- (1) It is God's will that we all become saints.*

- (2) It is easy to become a saint.*

- (3) There are great rewards in heaven for saints.*

Towards this goal, he practiced mortification and other voluntary penances, hoping they would help him to grow closer to Jesus and be less concerned with his own needs.



He even made his bed uncomfortable and wore thin clothes in Winter.

When his tutor, Fr. Bosco observed these practices, he corrected Dominic, explaining that as a child, what he should do instead was to devote himself

to his studies and to be cheerful. He discouraged Dominic from any more physical penances, and his advice was heeded.

At this time as Dominic was progressing well at studies, his health deteriorated and he started losing his appetite. The doctor advised that he be sent home to his family to recover. After four days at home, Dominic's health worsened. The doctor ordered him to rest. Over the next four days the doctor was satisfied that he would recover, but Dominic thought otherwise. He implored his parents to bring the Parish Priest so he could make a last Confession. They obliged him, and Dominic made a Confession and was given the Anointing of the Sick. He asked his father to read him the prayers for the Exercise of a Happy Death. Then he fell asleep. Hours later he awoke and said to his father: "Goodbye, Dad, goodbye ... Oh what wonderful things I see!" The boy saint died within minutes in 9 March, 1857; he was 14 years of age.

Dominic's burial place is the Basilica de Auxiliadora, Turin, Italy.

During his short life, Dominic Savio portrayed a strong and positive message on what is important in life by declaring: "It is God's will that we ALL become saints." Note the stress on the word 'ALL' This assertion alone from a person who was later to become a canonised saint, revolutionises the concept of sainthood. His conviction in this regard challenges the notion that sainthood is for the few special souls, and invites examination on what constitutes sainthood. This was a theme close to the heart of Legion of Mary founder, Frank Duff. (*Refer to footnote*).

Dominic's biography, 'The Life of Dominic Savio' was read in schools across Italy.

His writings and example are now more relevant than ever at a time when spiritual awareness by lay people has waned and vocations to the religious life are scarce.

**DOMINIC WAS DECLARED VENERABLE
IN 1933 BY POPE PIUS XI,
BEATIFIED IN 1950,
AND CANONISED IN 1954
BY POPE PIUS XII.**

**SAINT DOMINIC'S FEAST DAY FALLS
ON 6TH MAY.**

PRAYER TO SAINT DOMINIC SAVIO

O Saint Dominic Savio, a model
of purity, piety, penance and
apostolic zeal for youth;
grant that, through
your intercession, we may
service God in our ordinary duties
with fervent devotion, and attain the
grace of holy joy on earth,
that we may one day love God
forever in Heaven.
Amen.

Footnote: Servant of God, Frank Duff wrote a booklet on the topic of sainthood titled, '*Can we be Saints?*' (Available at Concilium Headquarters. A quote from this booklet, is as follows: 'Every person who is born is called to be a Saint. Take it as most certain that you -- no matter how unfitted your life may seem for holiness -- are being given graces sufficient, if corresponded with, to bring you to sanctity. We have already seen that nothing beyond our strength is expected; neither is sanctity the exclusive property of any grade or manner of life. Among the saints canonised by the Church are kings and beggars, and representatives of every trade, slaves, hermits, city people, mothers of families, invalids, soldiers, and persons of every race and colour.'



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Junior Praesidium Longford

By Kitty Ross

From the lips and hands of children, GOD has found praise, with the enemy defeated and silenced. Legionaries are expected to be loyal, courageous, disciplined, and obedient. They should always wait in readiness to carry out instructions, to be able to endure, and work towards being successful while pursuing the work of Our Blessed Mother.

Legionaries are lay people, formed by weekly studying of the Handbook, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the assistance of our Blessed Mother. The earlier this formation starts in our lives, the more likely we are to be in a better position to attain these sought-after virtues. Young legionaries by being part of a presidium are trained in actual warfare for Christ. Our Blessed Mother in Fatima in 1917 asked three young visionaries Jacinta (age seven), Francesco (age nine), and Lucia (age ten) to engage in spiritual combat. She asked of them: "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and to endure all the sufferings HE sends you, as an act of reparation for the many sins and for the conversion of sinners?" The young children answered "YES" to the Mother of Heaven. These three children who could neither read nor write were transformed into fighters for souls. St Padre Pio said: "Children will save the world." We know from

our Handbook and scriptural study that even the smallest parts of the body are necessary and valuable to the entire body. So, it is with children. Their contribution to the work in our Holy Mother Church is unarguably extremely valuable. Young legionaries learn about our true faith as they work. They also consecrate themselves to our Blessed Mother each year at our Acies ceremony.



St Louis De Montfort states: "If we belong to Mary through consecration, then Mary belongs completely to us." Week- by -week the young legionaries help to thread Miraculous Medals, make Rosary beads, help in the making of brown scapulars, and the making up of spiritual gift packs (Care Packs). I consider it such a privilege to hand out what has been made by the hands of a child. The children help in the running of the meetings, and it delights me how seriously they all take their work responsibilities. All of our members are encouraged to work towards the St John Paul II award.

Works of the young legionaries:

Our Lady of the Eucharist Curia has recently been struggling to re-establish Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, Slovakian praesidium. I was taking a probationary Slovakian legionary with me for an hour of home visitation work. She was able only to speak Slovakian and I could speak only English, but her eight-year-old granddaughter who is in our junior Legion of Mary praesidium came with us. Vivienne could speak both English and Slovakian and we were able to make six contacts. This was the first time that I have undertaken home visitation with such a young legionary and her help was invaluable. We met after the 10 am Saturday Holy Mass in St Mel's Cathedral, where Vivienne along with Elizabeth (9 years) and Victoria (11 years) had led the children's Holy Rosary at 09.30 before the daily Holy Mass. The children from the junior Legion of Mary along with other local children lead the children's Holy Rosary each Saturday morning. In the region of 20 children take their turns leading the Rosary each Saturday over the month.



One of our members recently obtained his Leaving Cert and went to the University of Limerick. I knew a legionary in Limerick, and I informed him that Christopher had helped run Our Lady of Mount Carmel Junior praesidium, under supervision for the last several years and was going to be studying in Limerick. I was told that there was a praesidium near the university, and it was struggling to flourish. Christopher joined this praesidium and helped in a month's-long recruitment drive in the local parish church, where people were approached as they were going into Holy Mass and when they were coming out. Information leaflets were handed out; the priest also referenced the Legion of Mary recruiting drive during the Mass. This praesidium now has a large number of young members. They held a conference entitled "Freedom from Slavery" where over 60 attended. Frank Duff in the Handbook states that it is one of the goals of the Junior Legion of Mary to prepare its members to take their place in the adult Legion when they reach eighteen years. We all know of many young people who continue on to third-level education having been brought up as Catholics. However, in many cases, upon the completion of their course, they may now hold different degrees and diplomas but unfortunately with little or no Catholic faith.

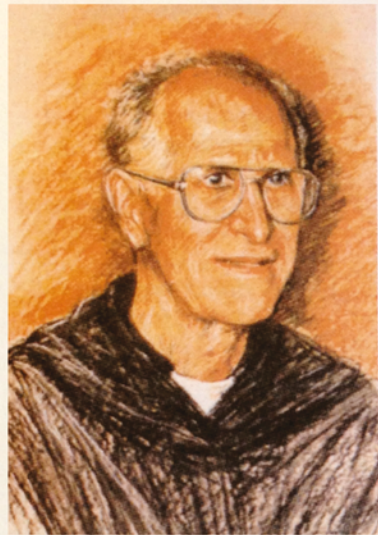
OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Nine years ago, our Junior Legion of Mary had no young legionaries and I knocked on the door of a local woman with young children. I asked her if she would consider sending her three eldest children to the Junior Legion of Mary. She agreed even though she had reservations as she was very protective of them. Her eldest daughter was fifteen at the time and she is now 24 years of age, and she said it was “the beginning of everything for me;” her journey with the LORD had well and truly begun. She has worked since in HIS vineyard, and when she turned 18 she spent two years working in mission and outreach projects with the Pure of Heart in Dublin; since then is with a lay-catholic community in Italy.

In the Maria Legionis, No 4 of 1981 we can read “A Tale of Two Children” written by Rev Fr. John Mc Kniff. The article describes a very poor slum area in Peru where a legionary introduced a twelve-year-old girl to prayers and to the Legion of Mary. The little girl taught her mother to pray and eventually all her family followed suit. She very soon set up a Junior Legion of Mary with 24 members. Another fifteen-year-old girl set up a praesidium with 30 little legionaries, packed into a small room. Later she moved to a city 400 miles away for study and she could not find a Catholic group, so she established the Legion of Mary with the agreement of the parish priest and soon had up to 70 members. Fr. John stated that we



should never underestimate the power of a child. Our blessed Mother chose the young children of Fatima and also St Bernadette (who was only 13 years old). All of these children were given the responsibility of doing wonderful work. When HE was twelve years old Jesus was teaching the doctors in the temple. As legionaries we can often be confronted with a cold response, the closed door and we certainly experience many “ups and downs.” At times it can feel like our own soul is pierced with a sword. We, like Mary, need to treasure and ponder as we witness GOD’s mysterious and Divine Plan at work.



The Servant of God
John J. McKniff, O.S.A.
1905 - 1994

A shining example of GOD'S mysterious plan can be seen in St Luke's Gospel where St Joseph and Our Blessed Mother travelled up to Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth. There was no room for them in an inn and Mary gave birth in a cold stable and laid JESUS in a manger. St Luke never mentions Mary getting stressed or complaining. I believe she trusted in the mysterious and divine plan of GOD. In the meantime, an Angel appeared to the shepherds and told them the good news about Our Saviour's birth followed by a host of Angels praising GOD and singing. The shepherd's left in haste and found everything exactly as they had been told. "Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in Her Heart." Please God we will always be given the Grace to ponder on the mystery, not on the closed doors. I've learned much from my involvement with Our Lady of Mount Carmel Junior Praesidium since it's opening on July 16th, 2009. Each year the children lead a nine-day

novena in St Mel's Cathedral. On July 16th handmade brown scapulars are available and blessed, the priests also enrol members in the Confraternity of the Brown Scapular at the daily masses. Throughout my time in the



Legion of Mary, it has been one of the greatest sources of joy to be involved with the junior members. I often think about the little boy who gave Jesus the five loaves and two fishes to feed the five-thousand hungry people. I do believe Jesus takes the prayers and good works of the young legionaries and can feed thousands of souls. With the seeds that we all try to sow and with the help of our Blessed Mother the Almighty works marvels.



Legion Visit to Albania & Kosovo

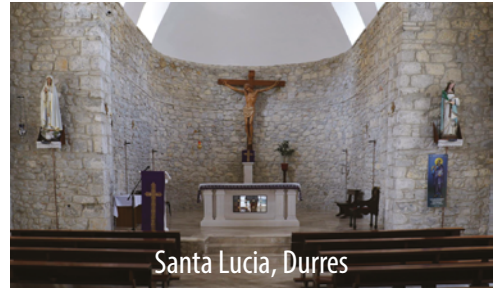
By Br. Joseph Micallef-Malta Regia

Between the 20th and the 31st May 2023, three Maltese legionaries were in Albania to visit all the Curiae and some praesidia, after an absence of over four years. On the request of the Concilium in Dublin, the Malta Regia has regularly sent legionaries to Albania whilst also visiting the two praesidia in neighbouring Kosovo.

Fr. Mariano Lumci, parish priest of Santa Lucia, Durres, Albania, was so pleased with the praesidium “Immaculate Heart of Mary”, that he openly admitted that “they are the soul of the parish!” Together with my fellow Maltese legionaries, I witnessed the enthusiasm and joy of these Durres legionaries who were helping out their parish priest in the apostolic work of the parish. Eleven members were present for the meeting.

The Catholic Community in Durres is in a minority, but, as in the case of all Albania, they live side-by-side in harmony with non-Catholics, both those of Muslim tradition and those of Christian Orthodox tradition—drawing the praise of Pope Francis on his pastoral visit in 2013.

After the recitation of the Rosary in the Church of Santa Lucia, a former Cathedral turned puppet-theatre during the time of the Communist regime, various topics related to the running of the praesidium were dealt with. These humble,



Santa Lucia, Durres

unpretentious legionaries surprised us in their inventiveness and inter-denominational ventures pertaining to the apostolic work in the community.

Besides Durres, we visited all the Curiae, individually. Our mission was to prop up, where necessary, the various initiatives of the Legion of Mary, striking a balance between prayer and apostolic work, and encouraging all legionaries in a land that was still recovering from a harsh, ruthless persecution of an atheistic regime.

Setting out from Shkodra inter-regional seminary, where we were allocated, we could reach out to the Comitium and three Curiae to the North of the country, where most of the Catholics lived. We met more than once with the Shkoder Comitium officers and happily presented the new Spiritual Director, there, with a significant donation, kindly sent from the Concilium, to finance the publication of a second edition of the Legion of Mary Handbook.

We even managed to talk to the printer to get assurances about the publication, mostly about the type of paper to be used, time-frame for completion of works and other matters.

“THE PRESENCE OF THE LEGION OF MARY IN OUR PARISHES IS A TREASURE”: ARCHBISHOP MASSAFRA OF SHKODER

In the Cathedral of Saint Stephen, Shkoder, the Archbishop Mons. Angelo Massafra, was the main celebrant in a Concelebrated Mass which was attended by hundreds of legionaries, mainly from the Shkoder area. In the homily, he said: “The presence of the Legion of Mary is a blessing for our parishes. Dear legionaries, keep up the good work. Stand up for what you believe in!”

The Archbishop graciously welcomed us. Besides inviting us for lunch, he gladly presented the Maltese delegation with a reliquary, including the precious relics of some of the Albanian martyrs.

A PACKED TIME-TABLE

The twelve days we spent in Albania were fully packed with meetings, besides time for Mass and community prayers, including the office of the hours. We managed even to visit a couple of praesidia – that was not included in our itinerary – and witnessed the enthusiasm and effort of the legionaries to attend the weekly meetings and carry out some form of apostolate. Some praesidia in villages

met in rural areas and the members had quite a distance to walk to get to the praesidium.

THE KOSOVARS OUTDID US IN KINDNESS

We also visited the two praesidia of Kosovo, one in Velesh, periphery of Prizren, and the other in Stubel, on the southeast corner of Kosovo, on the boundary with Northern Macedonia. In Stubel, we were welcomed with great joy, even though we were one hour late. These legionaries patiently waited for us. After Mass, and a discussion with the local members about the Legion and their praesidium, we were hosted to a grand lunch, meticulously prepared by these legionaries in the presbytery. Besides the Maltese delegation and all the local legionaries of Mary, we enjoyed the company of the Spiritual Director and officers from the Comitium of Shkoder, who accompanied us to Stubel. All kinds of food were laid down on the table. What a celebration! They were so grateful that we had returned to visit them!

We returned home, thanking God and the Virgin Mary for many a spiritual consolation. On our part, we did our best to bring a smile and a word of encouragement to all those we met in this forgotten part of Europe that, in the words of Pope Francis, had a long, long, history of suffering and persecution.



Care for People with Special Needs



By Rev. Fr. John-Mary Ntol Atep

The following talk was given at Our Lady Queen of Nigeria Senatus, Lugbe, Abuja, Nigeria.

In the second Joyful Mystery of the Holy Rosary, we see how the Blessed Virgin Mary visited her cousin, Elizabeth to help and care for her. This act of kindness did not only impress and bless Elizabeth, even the child in her womb leapt for joy as scripture refers.

The Legion of Mary, which was established on the 7 September 1921, started with some particular aims and a defined Apostolate which includes: Imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her Life and Virtues and also the care of people of all walks of life as an Army set in Battle array.

One of the dearest duties of the Legion shall be to show whole-hearted devotion to the Mother of God. It can do so only through its members, so that each one of these is asked to associate himself with it by serious meditation and zealous practice (LHB Chp. 5, Art. 5).

THE STATE OF OUR MENTAL HEALTH

The contemporary world needs direction in mental health concerns and cares. And I do not think that

we are immune of mental health and its benefits and challenges. This is important because we are daily confronted with mental health issues and if we are not properly reminded and informed, we may possibly end up complicating our experiences and the stories of other sufferers. In Nigeria, Annals of Nigerian Medicine reports an estimated 20%–30% of our population are believed to suffer from mental health issues. And it states further that mental health is generally neglected by all stakeholders.

There is need to create more awareness so that we can help ourselves and help others to become more self-compassionate when affected with mental health issues, more self-accepting and readiness to understand how our mental health system functions in terms of the brain, hormones, nervous system, symptoms, triggers and the options for recovery and healing. St. Paul says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (1Cor. 1:4).

CARING FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE LEGION APOSTOLATE

In the Legion Apostolate, it is important to approach the people with respect, and a genuine desire to support and uplift individuals with special needs. One of the focuses of the Legion Apostolate in caring for people with special needs is to promote inclusion and integration into their local communities. This means actively seeking out and befriending individuals with an understanding of their mental health conditions. It is getting to know them and their needs and finding ways to help them feel welcomed and accepted in society. The Legion of Mary recognises that social isolation and discrimination can exacerbate mental health issues, so our efforts to promote community integration are essential in supporting the wellbeing of individuals with special needs.

The Legion's Handbook in chapter 10 emphasises the importance of recognising the dignity of every person, and this should form the foundation of any practical approach to the Apostolate. For Pope Pius XII once stated: "The faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society. Therefore, they ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church, the community

of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the head of all, and of the bishops in communion with him. These are the Church, and everyone's dignity must be respected" (Concilium Legionis, no. 9). Indeed, the Legion of Mary recognises that people with special needs require not only physical care, but also emotional and spiritual support.

The Legion Apostolate involves reaching out to individuals with special needs and offering them care and support. Legionaries are formed to provide not only practical assistance, but also to listen, understand, and offer companionship to those they serve. This approach creates a sense of community and belonging, which is crucial for individuals who may feel isolated or misunderstood due to their disabilities. Here are some practical approaches to the Legion Apostolate focusing on people with special needs.



1. HOSPITAL VISITATION The visitation of hospitals for the poor was the first work the Legion ever undertook and for a while it did no other.

It teemed with blessings for the infant organisation, and the Legion desires that this work will ever be attended to by its praesidia. The work showed great intimacy with the patients.

In some wards, there is something new and there is an extended account, but most reports are short. Many are amusing, many touching, and all are beautiful in the obvious realisation shown of whom it is that is visited in the patient. The nature of this practical work of the Legion Apostolate was the exquisite care and tenderness of the visits that are supplemented by the performance of many corporal works, like the looking up of the neglected friends or relatives, the running of errands and helping them out in difficult situations.

Nothing is too disagreeable or too trifling to look after by the legionary. The legionary visitation should be used to educate the patients to a true conception of their sufferings, that they may bear them in the proper spirit. They must be persuaded that what they regard as so intolerable is a moulding to the likeness of Christ and as such a great favour. They should be helped to endure their long suffering and most painful illness with admirable patience (LHB Ch. 37).

Visitation to hospitals may include psychiatric homes. The Legion can have a praesidium established there. To have such in the institution is to set at work there a potent leaven. Those legionaries have abundant time to

spend on their activities amongst the other patients and can raise themselves to a high pitch of holiness. This new view of life opened to them, the patients, some of whom had touched the depths of misery in the thought of being so useless and a burden, will taste the supreme joy of feeling that they are of use to God.

2. VISITING THOSE AT THE MARGIN OF THE SOCIETY



Another key aspect for the care of people with special needs is that which is highlighted in the Legion's Handbook Ch. 37: **Work for the Most Wretched and Dejected of the Population.** This aspect, which is seen as one of the practical aspects of care for people with special needs, will involve the visitation of their haunts; and of lodging-houses, hostels, and jails; and it maybe, the conducting of hostels staffed by legionaries, resident and outdoor. There should be no depths to which the Legion will not penetrate in her search for the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Let me quote just some of the most challenging passages in the Handbook: "Until the Legion in any centre can say with truth that its members know personally and are

in touch in some way with each member of the degraded classes, its work must be regarded as being still in a stage of incomplete development, and efforts in this direction must be intensified.”

“No searcher after the rare and most precious things of the earth must pursue his heart’s desire more earnestly than the legionary pressing after these unfortunates of the world. His search may be their only chance of life eternal. Frequently they are so inaccessible to good influences that prison represents for them a blessing in disguise, or very simply the challenging question: ‘What price shall a man give for a soul?’”

We know the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Mercy, but just as the mission of Jesus is defined in terms of the salvation of sinners, so too can the maternal heart of Mary be defined as a care and love for the salvation of sinners. As we know, Our Lady has appeared all over the world and when she speaks, she has the same message in all of them: “Pray for sinners. Do penance for sinners.” One of the favourite prayers she taught us is the Fatima prayer: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of your mercy.”

Those most in need of God’s mercy are especially the concern of Mary and therefore of the Legion. So, the Legion prays a million times every day: “Holy Mary, Mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our

death”, and equally carries out works of charity for the dejected and wretched of the society just like the Virgin Mary. By visiting most wretched and dejected of the society, the Legion aims to spread the love and hope of Jesus Christ to those who may be going through a difficult time. This will positively impact their mental health as well as helping to break down barriers and stigmas surrounding disability within the Church.

3. VISITATION TO THE DESTITUTE AND THOSE IN CAMPS (IDP)

In his letters, Frank Duff points out on numerous occasions the centrality of home visitation in the Legion scheme of things. So, for instance, he writes to Fr. Wesseley, the first Spiritual Director of the Legion in Austria and whose cause for beatification has been introduced, as follows: “We see that the basic work of the praesidium will be the visitation of homes in the parish. This is good, for visitation is the principal work of the Legion, the foundation of all other things, which grows out of it You will find it a remarkable way of bringing souls to God. In fact, I am sure that you will be astonished by the fruits of grace, which you will observe to proceed rapidly from this work.” The importance of the home is so obvious and yet so neglected.



The Feast of the Visitation gives us an example of how Mary herself made a home visitation, and after all we legionaries do our visitation in the spirit of Mary and with her. First, she goes simply to be of help in whatever way is possible. Then she brings Jesus into the home of Zacharia and Elizabeth; this is the greatest blessing of all to the home. Isn't this what every legionary wants ultimately to do as well, namely bring Our Lord to homes together with Mary! It is while meditating on the Visitation that Pope St. John Paul II refers to Mary as the First Evangeliser. No sooner has she received God into her womb and heart at the Annunciation than she begins the work of bringing Him to others. The visitation of the legionary is not simply a social visit, although its immediate object is to appointments, helping with household tasks, or simply spending quality time with them. For example, visiting a person with special needs regularly for companionship and assistance with daily activities can make a significant difference in the life of that person.

2. SENSITIVITY AND UNDERSTANDING:

It is essential to approach individuals with special needs with empathy and understanding. Providing training to Legion members on how to communicate effectively and be sensitive to the needs of individuals with disabilities is valuable. For instance, organising training sessions on sign language or communication techniques for interacting with people

with speech impediments can enhance members' ability to connect with and support individuals with special needs.

3. CREATING INCLUSIVE ACTIVITIES:

Hosting events and activities that are inclusive and accessible to individuals with varying abilities is important. This might include adaptive sports events, art workshops designed for individuals with sensory sensitivities, or organising outings to places that are wheelchair accessible. For instance, organising a nature walk with wheelchair-accessible paths can provide individuals with mobility challenges the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors alongside others.

4. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

Establishing partnerships with community organisations and resources, such as disability support services, medical professionals, and advocacy groups, can expand the support network for individuals with special needs. For example, collaborating with local therapy and counselling centres to provide free or subsidised therapy sessions for those with special needs can greatly benefit the community.

CONCLUSION: The Legion of Mary Apostolate in the Catholic Church emphasises caring for people with special needs, rooted in the Gospel teachings of love and service. We believe that all people, regardless of abilities or disabilities, are children of God and deserve dignity and respect.

The Legion provides physical, emotional, and spiritual support to those with special needs, creating a sense of community and belonging. It organises regular visits to hospitals, nursing homes, and rehabilitation centres, offering care and comfort to

those facing illnesses or disabilities. We can also develop programs tailored to accommodate their needs, such as modified religious education classes, sensory-friendly Masses, and inclusive faith-sharing groups.

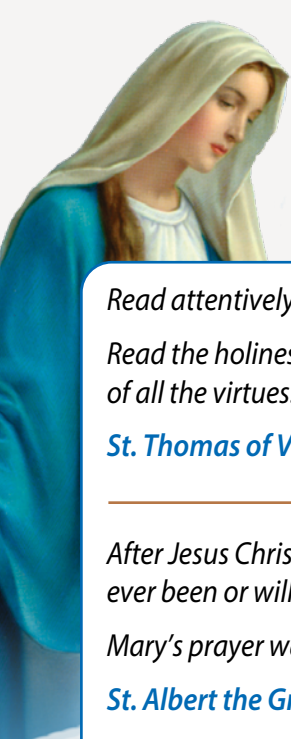
The Senatus of Abuja held its Annual Workshop last January 27, 2024, with the theme: “Approaches to the Legion Apostolate: Care for People with Special Needs”.

A number of priests and religious were present at the said event and Senatus Spiritual Director, Fr. John Mary Atep delivered a talk and gave advice on visiting the destitute, those who are in hospitals and those residing in the camps and caring for those in the margins of society; all to be done with the aim of bringing Christ to all people.

The Abuja Senatus officers led by Fr. John Mary Atep paid a visit to His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan the Archbishop emeritus of Abuja in his ‘Domus Pacis’ residence. The visit was in appreciation to the Cardinal for his support and guidance to the Abuja Senatus right from its humble beginnings as Comitium to Senatus. Legionaries prayed 15,421 decades of the Holy Rosary for his intentions in gratitude for his support.

Following the Catholic Information Desks (CID) evangelisation efforts by Queen of Apostles Comitium a mass wedding is being planned for April 2024 at St. Anthony Kabusa. Over one hundred couples are to be prepared for the sacrament of matrimony after responding to calls made for marriage regularisation across parishes in the area.

Recently, owing to the efforts of legionaries from the Masaka Comitium, an ill couple were both baptised and their marriage blessed by a priest after 37 years.



Praises of Mary



Read attentively the book of purity that is Mary, written by the finger of God.

Read the holiness, the love, the kindness, the humility – in short, read the vast fullness of all the virtues.

St. Thomas of Villanova

After Jesus Christ, the Divine Mother was the most perfect in prayer of all who have ever been or will ever be.

Mary's prayer was continual and persevering!

St. Albert the Great

Apart from the Son of God, no creature in the world was so exalted as Mary.

For no creature in the world ever humbled itself so much as she did!

St. Bernardine of Siena

Those who love Mary must silence within themselves the desires of the senses.

They must also silence the disordered longings for the passions.

St. John Eudes

We must accomplish all our actions through Mary, with Mary, and in Mary.

In that way, we will also accomplish them all through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus.

St. Louis Grignion de Montfort

To whom shall we look except to you, O Mary?

Your most pure glance is on this poor world, enveloping and bathing it in an atmosphere of purity.

Pope Pius XII





AFRICA - Cameroon: Works mentioned in reports to **Douala Senatus** include home, hospital and prison visitation, street contact and catechism classes. Exploratio Dominicalis and two congresses were held. This resulted in nine new senior praesidia and three junior praesidia being established. In Bamenda Comitium sixteen prisoners joined the Legion ranks. Over one hundred converts were also mentioned. In Yaoundé Regia, one Curia visits refugees and the membership of another Curia has nearly doubled.

Cape Verde: Celebrations to mark the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of the Legion of Mary in Cape Verde took place in December in the Diocese of São Lourenço dos Orgãos. A Comitium reports visiting prisoners, prostitutes, alcoholics, and drug addicts.

Ghana: Great efforts are being made to visit and revive areas with dormant praesidia. There is particular emphasis on prison visitation and on the establishment of praesidia in senior high schools.

Guinea: Conakry Comitium has a total of just over 1,000 active and 300 auxiliary members. Their works include home, hospital and prison visitation, contact with street children and catechesis.

Guinea Equatorial: In **Malabo Regia** reports indicate progress with recruiting. Home and Hospital visitation and street contact are the main works of the praesidia.

Ivory Coast: The Legion work includes visitation of psychiatric hospitals and prisons, teaching of the catechism, home visitation, and recruitment of new members in health

centres, sewing workshops, schools and universities as well as during door-to door and street contact. Some fruits borne from these works include families having been reunited, couples marrying, lapsed people returning to Mass, people being baptised and new members joining the Legion of Mary.

Lesotho: Works reported include family and hospital visits, distribution of rosary beads, encouraging lapsed Christians to return to practice, and teaching children catechism.

Mozambique: Tete Comitium reported that in February, celebrations took place in various parishes across the Diocese. The aim was to encourage and motivate legionaries. Quelimane Comitium has 32 affiliated Curiae. The future is promising. There are six praesidia in the city of Nacala. Work has been done on the establishment of new praesidia in the neighbouring districts.

Senegal: Legionaries in Dakar Comitium do home, hospital and prison visitation and also give catechism classes.

South Africa: In Matatiele (Kokstad) Comitium, attached to **Cape Town Senatus**, works include visits to the sick and alcoholics and teaching the Catechism. Mothers are encouraged to study the Catechism in preparation for the baptism of their children, and cohabiting couples are encouraged to get married in Church. Annual Masses to commemorate the anniversaries of Venerable Edel Quinn and Servant of God Frank Duff are celebrated. In May, home visitation is carried out and the rosary is recited where possible. As a result of their efforts twelve children

were baptised, nineteen children received their First Holy Communion, one convert joined the Catholic Church and three lapsed Catholics returned to the Sacraments.

Togo: Lome Senatus reports five-thousand French Handbooks have been printed. A week-end of apostolate and sixteen Exploratio Dominicalis projects were held since the last report. Kara Regia has over 18,000 active members. Their main works are home and hospital visitation and catechism classes.

ASIA - Armenia: During the year the Curia established three new praesidia in Armenia itself and one in Georgia. One junior praesidium of sixteen members reported.

Hong Kong: Works reported included classes for the formation of the newly baptised and teaching catechism to primary and secondary school teachers.

India: In **Chennai Senatus** restoration of peace in families and enthronement of the Sacred Heart are promoted, while 200 people were brought back to practice of the Faith.

Pondicherry Senatus reports returns to practice and rectification of marriages. In **Mumbai**

Senatus people who have lapsed from the Faith and bereaved families are visited. Children in remand homes are taught catechism. Ten

days were spent in **Nepal** – four parishes in Kathmandu have the Legion as well as two isolated areas. In **Kottar Regia**, In the course of their works, legionaries deal with the aged, sick and mentally ill, as well as people with drug and alcohol problems. **Karnataka Senatus**

reports 278 people received the sacrament of the sick. Catechism is taught and preparation for the sacraments of baptism and First Holy Communion are undertaken. In **Kerala Senatus**

Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in homes is encouraged.

Indonesia: In **Malang Senatus** works included visitation to prisons and orphanages, and marriage and sacramental preparation. Works reported from **Jakarta Senatus** included teaching literacy to people experiencing extreme poverty. The university praesidium is made up of 24 members.

Japan: In Kyoto Comitium, attached to **Osaka Senatus**, the praesidium Mother of the Saviour, founded in 1951, recently celebrated its 3330th meeting. Through the efforts of the Spiritual Director, five new members joined,

Korea: At the September meeting of the **Seoul Senatus**, the Spiritual Director said “We pray that God will listen to our petitions through Brother Duff’s intercession. I hope for many miracles leading to the Beatification and Canonisation of Brother Duff.” A Comitium attached to Gwangju **Senatus** reported 43 baptisms and 243 returns to the Sacraments. 90 active and 63 auxiliary members were also recruited during the period. In **Daegu Senatus** a Curia reported a recruitment drive in a newly built complex of 1,610 households. Street contact was carried out as an alternative to calling on each apartment. Many lapsed Catholics were contacted as well as potential converts.

Malaysia: The Chinese Curia in **Kuala Lumpur Regia** reported visitation of Catholics at home and hospital. Some non-Catholics were also contacted.

Pakistan: The Annual Reunion was very well attended with music, games, speeches and a lovely meal. Three priests present expressed their joy to be among the legionaries again.

Philippines: In **Bicolandia Senatus** a women’s praesidium in Naga District Jail has 35 members who teach fellow inmates to pray the rosary. Mass is celebrated there each Sunday. Minglanilla Comitium, attached to

Cebu Senatus, reports works include home visitation, teaching prison inmates to pray the rosary, crowd contact and a campaign to participate in "Clean and Green" projects as per True Devotion to the Nation. In **Dumaguette Regia** two Catholics who had abandoned the Church returned to practice after a visit. Bareli Comitium organise a book-barrow and conducted Exploratio Dominicalis and an elderly man, lapsed for forty years returned to Church. Two Born Again Christians converted to the Catholic Faith. In **Northern Philippines Senatus** Comitia of San Pedro, San Pablo and Mayapa catechised 628 children for First Holy Communion, 197 for Baptism and 324 for Confirmation. **Western Visayas Senatus Regia of Negros Occidental**: School children are catechised, Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in homes is carried out, a family has converted to Catholicism, a seminar was organised for 23 couples as part of preparation for their Church wedding and street children are taught basic prayers. Iloilo junior Curia has six praesidia, and some of their works include encouraging 86 families to pray the rosary and attend Mass. **Singapore**: In **Singapore Senatus** works reported on included organising retreats and outdoor functions, visiting the elderly with Holy Communion and reciting the rosary at wakes and funerals. 30 attended a Spiritual Formation Day organized by the junior Curia. The Filipino Curia held its Anniversary Mass in September and its Reunion in November. **Sri Lanka**: Catechism is taught to children attending non-Catholic schools. 8,000 attended the National Rosary Rally at which the Bishop said the Legion of Mary has a large role to play in reviving the practice of the family Rosary. **Taiwan**: The Legion apostolate includes

work with youth in the parishes where they bring children from affiliated schools to visit the church and lead them in prayers. Single mothers and mothers of disabled children were invited to a special Mass on Mother's Day. The legionaries also carry out an apostolate to indigenous tribes.

Thailand: Bangkok Senatus: Birth of Mary junior Curia, with seven praesidia and full officerships held its first meeting and is blessed to have a Spiritual Director appointed.

Vietnam: The **Regia of Ban Me Thuot** gave its tenth report operating in two dioceses with six Comitia. It is in a highland region. There are ethnic minorities so language communication can be difficult. During the period 449 adults and 323 children's baptisms were arranged. They assisted in the regularisation of 476 marriages, 340 sick people to be anointed and 35 were encouraged to protect life and not proceed with abortions.

CENTRAL AMERICA - Costa Rica: A number of praesidia took part in a project to visit all families in a large area where there was no praesidium. Legionaries are organising auxiliary rallies and other functions to help the auxiliaries understand their role in the Legion and in the Church. The book barrow apostolate was introduced with a very beautiful stand for the books. Legionaries are very encouraged with this new Legion apostolate and the interest of the public.

Honduras: They are working well and present good reports. They are also organising retreats and plan to hold Legion Congresses during the year.

Salvador: Reports to **San Salvador Senatus** show that a number of couples had Church marriages; special attention is given to auxiliaries, legionaries accompany the priest

to visit the prison, public rosaries are recited in different areas of the parish and the care of a man recovering from cancer who finally agreed to a visit from the priest, confessed after many years, received the sacrament of the sick and died very soon afterwards. May he rest in peace.

Cuba: There are four Curiae in Cuba including one in Havana. Recent recruiting efforts are positive. A new Curia with five praesidia was set up in the provinces.

OCEANIA - Australia: Works in **Melbourne Senatus** include distribution of Holy Communion to the housebound and residents in nursing homes and organising for Mass and anointing for nine Catholic residents. Juniors, with their families attended the Junior Fun Day and presented a short play on the Wedding Feast at Cana. Praesidia in Adelaide handed out 300 Christmas flyers outside the Central Market. The Senatus held their Summer School on February 10th and 11th with 170 attending on Saturday and 100 on Sunday. Of these 56 were legionaries from attached councils, including 17 from Nauru Island, and twelve from Fiji. Other councils included Adelaide, Perth, and Darwin. Bishop Columba McBeth Green graced them with his presence. In **Sydney Senatus** Catechism is taught in state schools. Baptism gift packs are prepared for the newly baptised, Enthronement of the Sacred Heart is carried out, and public rosaries are prayed in May and October. The Korean Comitium contact non-believers and 33 were baptised in February. Masses to commemorate Anniversaries of Servant of God Alfie Lambe on January 6th and Servant of God Frank Duff in November were both well attended. The Senatus visited Dili Comitium in Timor Leste, which has five Curiae.

New Zealand: The junior Curia in Auckland **Senatus** has four praesidia, which do some works

with seniors. A senior praesidium journeyed on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) course with five participants.

EUROPE - Austria: Senatus of Austria: The 75th anniversary of the Legion of Mary will be celebrated in Austria this year. A new praesidium was set up among the African Community and another was set up in Floridsdorf. Praesidium reports show home and hospital visitation, street apostolate and Pilgrim Statue visitation. In another Curia a church marriage for a couple was organised, two people returned to the sacraments and one person went to confession and received Holy Communion after fifty years. Several Peregrinatio Pro Christo projects were carried out including one in the red light district in Hamburg.

Belarus: A good variety of works is undertaken including distribution of Miraculous Medals, visits to the sick and elderly, encouraging people to Mass and the Sacraments, contact work at train stations, and street contact at a shopping centre.

Bosnia Herzegovina: Saravejo Curia has four praesidia. Home and hospital visitation are the main works. They received a visit from Zagreb Regia officers.

Croatia: In the **Zagreb Regia** home, hospital and street contact are the main works. A praesidium in the Zadar Comitium has an apostolate to a shelter for people who are homeless. People with special needs are visited. The legionaries take them to Mass, play social games and pray with them. In Split Comitium ten people received the sacraments after long periods, two were baptised and two received the sacrament of Confirmation. Petrinja Comitium has a junior Curia with five praesidia.

Czech Republic: Prague Comitium has fourteen directly attached praesidia and

four Curiae. Street contact is included in the apostolate.

England: Works in **Central London Curia** include home visitation, visitation of care homes, crowd contact with the book barrow and many other works of service. **Liverpool Senatus** reported that following a recruiting drive in Aintree three new members were gained. Middlesbrough Curia reported many returns to the sacraments from their apostolate, and 52 people registered for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) Programme. Legionaries in the Manchester Comitium are engaging in a very good apostolate of Night Fever.

France: The Lourdes report highlighted a good number of visits from Austria, Germany, Ireland, France, Italy and Norway. The legionaries in Lourdes held a day to discuss apostleship which the president of the Senatus attended. The Bishop of Lourdes was in attendance and will return to meet the legionaries in February.

Germany: In **Munich Regia** the works being done are street apostolate, book barrow, visits to the sick and homeless. Berlin Comitium has a praesidium of four members in formation. The Korean Curia has twelve praesidia. Works include baptism instruction for adults and Catechesis for First Holy Communicants in parishes. Special outreach is made to the lapsed and Korean migrants.

Hungary: **Budapest Regia** reports Extension efforts have resulted in the formation of three praesidia in Tarnaleles and two other villages with the support of the parish priest. One praesidium leads a public rosary and carries out street contact.

Lithuania: Works include home, hospital and nursing home visitation and visitation of

people who are housebound. Crowd contact is also done. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the rosary are promoted. Excellent apostolate among sick people is done, many patients made their confession and received the sacraments. The legionaries of Taurage Curia helped to organise the Living Rosary Congress of Telsiai. A very successful Congress was held by Kaunas Comitium in October with very good attendance and participation.

Moldova: In Chisinau Curia street contact resulted in two people returning to the practice of their faith. One praesidium organised a function with a short talk on the role of Mary for every Christian..

Netherlands: In **Amsterdam Regia:** the Cape Verdean Curia in Rotterdam organised a project in Paris to start a new praesidium. Fifteen legionaries took part. The English speaking praesidium in Amsterdam organise a block rosary and help with the Sunday school for Chinese children. A Muslim lady wanted to know more about the Catholic Church. A non-Catholic was taught to pray the rosary. Contact was made with African Refugees who wanted their children baptised.

Norway: The works of the praesidium in Tonsberg include aftercare of auxiliaries with visits and phone calls, inviting and encouraging people to Sunday Mass and visits to the sick and housebound. The praesidium in Drammen give Catechism classes to children in the parish and do nursing home visitation. They also recruited for and participated in the Novena from 15th to 23rd of December in preparation for Christmas. There is an online rosary and faith sharing each Saturday evening also.

Poland: In **Praga Comitium:** The apostolate carried out included an outreach to non-

Catholics, those in non-sacramental relationships, visitation of people who are homeless, of people who are in hospitals and in nursing homes. Over 900 Miraculous Medals were distributed. The **Warsaw Comitium** prints 5,000 copies of the Legion of Mary bulletin twice a year. 160 Bishops receive a copy. A new praesidium of ten members of the younger age group was set up in Zalesie. A praesidium reports the Parish Kiosk is open every Sunday from 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. where many good contacts are made. In **Lublin Regia** eight people joined the Legion of Mary from an information Sunday. Twelve people returned to the sacrament of reconciliation.

Romania: Satu Mare Regia. The apostolate includes visits to auxiliary members, leading the rosary before Mass, visits to the elderly and sick people in their homes and hospital, helping the priest and many other works of service.

Russia: Siberia has one Curia with three praesidia. Legionaries in Bogotol accompany the priest on his visits to the villages.

Scotland: Two new praesidia were set up with eight and six members. Our Lady of the Wayside praesidium presented its annual report with fourteen active members.

Slovakia: Curia Travana has been raised to Comitium status to govern the Legion of Mary in Penoz.

Sweden: A visit was made by Manchester Comitium to Sweden from 18th of Sept to 2nd of October 2023. A Curia with Arabic, Spanish and Swedish praesidia was visited. Visits were also made to two Arabic praesidia with a total of 19 members and to several other praesidia.

Switzerland: A Peregrinatio Pro Christo was held in Biel from 5th to 8th October. Several people expressed interest in the Legion and

it is hoped to restart a praesidium there. Street apostolate is undertaken weekly, The international daily online rosary group has grown to one hundred groups.

SOUTH AMERICA - Argentina: Reports from **Buenos Aires Senatus:** show huge crowds of legionaries and non-legionaries took part in the anniversary ceremonies which continued for three days at the graveside of Servant of God Alfie Lambe. Mass was celebrated in the Cemetery Church. The **Mendoza Regia** have now begun street contact in an area where there is prostitution. The Comitium of Rio Gallegos stretches to the Antarctic. Visits to praesidia and Curiae are done in spite of long distances, snow and ice. In **Salta Senatus** five new junior praesidia have been started by grandmothers who are active legionaries. The **Corrientes Regia** presented a report on the 5th Young Adults' Conference which was held in Corrientes. 178 youths from all over Argentina came together for three days. There was a message of support from the Archbishop of Corrientes, Mgr Stanovnik, while Auxiliary Bishop Larregain was present at the Conference.

Bolivia: The Comitium of Cochabamba,, attached to the **Senatus of La Paz**, reports the setting up of a praesidium with eight new legionaries who are all young adults. Another Curia reports keeping in contact with Bolivian emigrants living abroad.

Brazil: In **Belo Horizonte Senatus** a meeting of Spiritual Directors was held. **Ponta Grossa Senatus** reported legionaries visited families and led Apostolic Days in neighbourhoods and streets. They distributed Holy Communion to the sick and elderly, at home and in hospitals and enthroned the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary in homes. Legionaries in Recife **Senatus** visited the Men's

and Women's Prisons. A group of young legionaries dramatised the Passion of Christ in the streets. Thirty-nine couples were prepared for and received the Sacrament of Matrimony. The City Council honoured the Legion of Mary on the 102nd anniversary of its foundation. In **Salvador Senatus** legionaries visited families in conflict and far from the Church. They also provided assistance with prayers and words of comfort to young people living on the streets, drug addicts, and some were sent to hospitals with the necessary support. The **Regia of Vitória da Conquista** organised the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary, with 27 legionaries making the Consecration. Works undertaken in **Santa Maria Senatus** included visits to hospitals and homes and to the bereaved. Holy Communion was brought to the sick at home. Legionaries in **São Paulo Senatus** visit families and also bring Holy Communion to a great many sick people in their homes. A Comitium reported Enthronement of the Sacred Heart carried out in thirteen homes. Another Comitium made visits and revisits to 2,632 families. A Regia reported that 38 migrant families were helped to find shelter and employment. A Curia in **Brasília Regia** reported on the apostolate in the cemetery on All Souls' Day, making excellent contacts with visitors.

Chile: Senatus of Santiago: A praesidium report mentioned organising a football club. Young boys who easily can be involved in drug gangs are invited to youth projects in the parish. A praesidium with married couples carry out street contact late at night, speaking with people who are homeless and sleep on the streets.

Colombia: The **Senatus of Bogota** comprises 50,298 active members, and 58,622 auxiliaries.

Many councils work in prison pastoral care, and one reports on visits to prisoners in police stations.

Ecuador: Senatus of Quito: Difficulty is being experienced in building up praesidia and councils after Covid. One new praesidium has been set up.

Paraguay: All praesidia of the **Senatus of Asuncion** have carried out Exploratio Dominicalis in 2023. In February, 38 legionaries carried out a three-day mission to a town 30km from Asuncion; six adult praesidia and one junior praesidium resulted. 57 legionaries from a Regia in the east of Paraguay did mission work which resulted in seventeen people returning to the Faith.

Peru: Senatus of Lima: Very positive news has come from Lima which is that of a very strong Curia there being divided and leading to the creation of another Curia. New praesidia are also being created. Another Curia is made up of older legionaries and have reactivated ten praesidia by visiting various villages. Comitium Santa María works in the women's prison and hope to form a praesidium of prisoners.

Uruguay: In the **Senatus of Montevideo**, Prison work stands out and an apostolate to people in street situations and women considering an abortion.

Venezuela: Most councils in the **Senatus of Caracas** are extending and all reports indicate recruitment of new members. One Comitium has nine praesidia in formation, and a new Curia was set up. A praesidium gave a talk in an Evangelical Church on the virtues of Our Blessed Lady. This resulted in the baptism of an infant baby, and following instruction, two people were received into the Catholic Church and made their First Holy Communion.



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