



# THE LEGION OF MARY

## MEMBERSHIP

Members of the Legion of Mary become instruments of the Holy Spirit through a balanced program of prayer and service in a family atmosphere. Works include door-to-door evangelization, parishioner visitation, visitation of the sick or aged, Catholic education, visiting the newly baptized, visiting families, and meeting the other spiritual needs of the parish community. Legionaries are under the guidance of a spiritual director named by the pastor. The Legion of Mary is, in essence, an extension of the heart and hands of the pastor.

Members meet weekly for prayer, planning and discussion in a family setting. Then members do two hours of definite work each week in pairs and under the guidance of their spiritual director.

The Legion of Mary is open to all Catholics who:

- faithfully practice their religion;
- are animated by the desire to fulfill their role in the Church's apostolate through membership of the Legion;
- are prepared to fulfill each and every duty which active membership of the Legion involves.

Persons who wish to join the Legion must apply for membership in a Praesidium.

No one shall be admitted as a candidate for membership of the Legion of Mary until the President of the Praesidium, to which admission is sought, is after careful enquiry satisfied that the person seeking admission fulfills the conditions required.

A satisfactory probation of at least three months is required before the candidate can be enrolled in the ranks of the legionaries, but from the first the candidate can participate fully in the works of the Legion.

A copy of the Tessera shall be given to every candidate.

### **What is the Legion of Mary?**

The Legion of Mary is a world-wide organization of the lay apostolate, in which Catholic men, women and youth sanctify themselves through prayer and apostolic work in union with Our Lady under the guidance of a priest. The Legion of Mary was first organized in Dublin, Ireland, on September 7, 1921. In the first decade of its existence it consolidated itself in Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland. In the second, the Legion spread rapidly through the United States, Canada, India, Australia and Africa. The third decade saw it span the length and breadth of Europe. Finally, the vast Spanish-speaking countries caught its contagious missionary zeal, so that the Legion now exists on all continents. Today the Legion is organized in nearly all the dioceses throughout the world. Its handbook, the official guide in the hands of every active legionary, is printed in nearly every language and its prayers are recited in over sixty. It is estimated there are nearly 3 million active and 15 million praying members throughout the world today.

### **What is the purpose of the Legion of Mary?**

The purpose of this association of Catholics is to make its members better Catholics, to mobilize the Catholic laity, and to raise the spiritual level of the entire community through direct contact with and interest in every member and potential member of the Mystical Body of Christ. The sanctification of its own members is achieved through prayer and work. Each weekly meeting offers to the legionaries the recitation of the rosary, spiritual reading, a short talk by the spiritual director a discussion of Catholic doctrine and devotion and an evaluation of the work program. At the meeting is assigned to each member two hours of apostolic work, to be performed during the week and reported on at the following meeting. The doing of apostolic work is really only a means to an end, namely, the sanctification of the individual member. The Legion is thus needed in every parish, for in every parish there are parishioners who want to become better Catholics. Experience has shown that in every parish there is a nucleus of people called, it seems, to be sanctified in this unique way.

### **Doesn't the Legion of Mary duplicate the work of other existing parish organizations?**

No. You will find that the well-trained legionaries will do things for you that no other organization can or will do, and will do them according their rule systematically, regularly and continually. The legionaries think of themselves as the eyes, ears, arms and legs of the priest in helping to bring to him innumerable souls with whom he would not ordinarily come into contact.

### **Who is eligible for membership?**

The Legion of Mary is open to all Catholic men or women over eighteen years of age who have the good will to want to serve God in the capacity of helpers to the priest, and who will conform to the Legion system.

Legion of Mary membership makes it actually easy to follow the rules and be a good Catholic, but it does more: the Legion offers a proven method and motivation for sanctity, thus fulfilling Canon 210 which states: "All Christian faithful must make an effort, in accord with their own condition, to live a holy life and to promote the growth of the Church and its sanctification. The sanctification of its own members is achieved through prayer, apostolic work, and to make its members better Catholics.

### **How does your ministry do what it has been called to do?**

The Legion aims not at the doing of any particular work, but has as a primary object the making of its members holy. Membership in the Legion does not require specific skills or advanced spirituality. The Legion can take an ordinary Catholic with the willingness to give the required time and to follow the Legion system, and develop him through the formation and spirituality of the meetings and the experiences of the apostolate itself into an excellent lay apostle. This development is definitely the work of the Holy Spirit who gives to those who give themselves to him. In this regard it is interesting to note that reception into the Legion of Mary involves a commitment not to Mary (nor to Jesus) but to the Holy Spirit.

The Legion is only one among ten thousand organizations which propose a noble warfare for souls and a programme of important works. But it is also true that it is one of the few which make their apostolate definite. The Legion reduces its warfare to a definite spirituality, a definite programme of prayer, a definite weekly task, a definite weekly report and, it will be found, to definite accomplishments. Lastly it bases this methodical system on the dynamic principle of union with Mary.

**What type of person makes the best member?**

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**How would I go about starting a Legion group in my parish?**

Convinced that the Legion will be an asset to your parish, you would contact the diocesan director of the Legion of Mary or officers of the governing council. They will discuss with you the more practical and effective ways of recruiting members for your parish group. They will also send to you well-trained legionaries who will teach your group the Legion system, and stay with them until they are ready to function on their own. From that point on the local governing council will continue to keep close contact with your group through the monthly council meeting, attended by the four officers of each parish group and the spiritual directors when possible. There is further contact by mail and by an annual visitation by representatives of the governing council.