

Have the Mind of Mary

I get down to bedrock of the Legion – the question of motive.

I am going to dwell particularly on that part of the motive which concerns her whose name the Legion bears. Mary is a principal motive in the Legion and as the Legion sees things is completely essential.

The Great Council has been making history in many directions. One of them has been in regard to Our Blessed Mother. Some people have been saying that it has downgraded her. I am absolutely baffled when I hear such a suggestion. It looks like nothing but perversity. What justification can be seen in the legislation for an assertion of that kind? On the contrary the council has risen to heights in regard to her. The *De Ecclesia* decree, which describes itself as the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, is the first attempt the Catholic Church has ever made to get itself down on paper. It has given a whole section, Chapter 8, to the place of Mary in the Church. Those who have followed the proceedings of the earlier part of the council will recall the holy disputation which arose among the bishops in regard to whether

Our Lady should be given a separate decree to herself or incorporated in the decree on the Church. A great number of the fathers, most of them originally, were anxious for a separate decree on the grounds that Our Lady's dignity required such special treatment. They regarded it as derogatory to give her a corner in a general document like that on the Church. So strong was that feeling in regard to her that the Holy Father himself, as well as some other very distinguished figures, had to intervene to correct it. He pointed out that the contrary was the case; that her proper place was in the Constitution of the Church, and that to take her out of that setting would be prejudicial to her. Of course this point of view is right. If Mary is in the Dogmatic Constitution she has to be described in strict proportion to the Church. Doctrine cannot be subordinated to devotion. She cannot be exaggerated but neither can she be minimised. Her role is constitutional and cannot be ignored.

But if she were dealt with in a separate decree, this could easily be waived aside as one of second rank. The stronger its terms about her, the more it would be regarded as a merely devotional document, a gesture compelled by popular feeling. This would accomplish the opposite to that intended.

Finally the matter was seen in full perspective and Our Lady was given a glorious place in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, such that we may call it her Charter.

How is Our Lady manifested in it? She is shown as part and parcel of the whole scheme of God. One cannot but be struck by the similarity between that Charter and what is taught to you in the pages of the Legion handbook. The sum total of it is that the said Charter constitutes an

endorsement of everything which has been taught to you in the Legion about Our Blessed Lady down through the years. Neither does the decree say anything which leaves the Legion lagging behind. But this is nothing to the credit of the Legion really. Because the Legion has been merely placing before you what the Popes have been teaching and the council is only putting into formal legislation what the Popes have been writing to you in their words and writings.

So Our Lady holds a key position. She is inseparable from the Catholic Church. You cannot take her out and yet leave the Church intact. It would cease to be the Catholic Church. Her position is primary.

Neither may she be diminished. If one brings her down below what is declared in that decree, it interferes with the doctrinal structure. You know that quotation in the handbook about the web: that if you break a string of it, you mar it. Similarly if you pervert a doctrine you throw the Church out of plumb. The Church is the handiwork of God himself, a delicately contrived thing. Everything in it is in due balance and proportion. If man tampers with it, he will damage the structure and as a consequence he will hurt himself.

I go from that point to discuss certain aspects of Our Lady as they bear upon ourselves. As a logical part of the doctrine of the Mystical Body we have been urged to unite our thinking to the thought of Jesus Christ himself. We have been accustomed to the idea that we should act in union with him. We are in him; we are his instruments; we are dependent on him; and the whole scheme of the Mystical Body rests upon that co-operation between him and ourselves. We contribute certain poor little things which he has condescended to accept and even made

necessary to himself. Then he pours into that spirit of union with him and giving to him and gaining from him; that we set about our apostolate. It has not been so fully realised that we must apply the same idea of interaction to the higher operation of Our Lord, his thinking. Of course he looks to us to think for him just as he appeals for our hands or our feet to work for him. We must think for him. We must plan for him. When we attempt those things, his thought and his plan unite themselves to our lesser ones, and his virtue flows into the joint transaction.

I propose to you the same idea in regard to our Mother Mary. In St Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 2:16) he enjoins us to have the mind of Christ. Here I adapt that saying: Have the mind of Mary. Union with her must be the study of the legionaries. We must so unite ourselves to her that we enter into every aspect of her life, including the higher realm of her mind.

The mission of Mary is essentially maternal. She was constituted in the mind of the Trinity before all time as a mother. She was to bring forth the Lord and give him to his mission and that she did. As part of the plan she brings forth all his members, united to him and to her and to each other and she takes care of their lives. She is most truly a mother to them in every respect. She seeks to expand those members, every man indeed, to nothing less than the full stature of Our Lord. This is the phrase which is used in another of the Epistles of St Paul (Eph 4:3) to describe the purpose of the Church. It is the Holy Spirit who accomplishes this wonder. He uses Mary as a co-operator, thus making her a true mother to men. So it is her very function to develop us into the complete likeness of Christ, reproducing all the aspects of his life and participating fully in his redemptive work. As part of

him, we must obviously be doing all the things that he engages himself in. Mary is armed with all the means to fulfil her mission. It is the culmination and completion of that maternity for her to associate men to it.

In another of its tremendous strokes the council insists that all apostleship is but an extension of the motherhood of Mary; it is a part of her giving of Christ to the world. It follows that nobody can take part in apostleship or persevere in it except with her. Therefore we must seek her concurrence in it. We should be familiar with that idea because the Legion is built upon it. Now it is taught by the Church as doctrine. Mary sustains us in that apostleship. To be successful in it we must have some comprehension of that arrangement. While we do gain graces from things which we do not perfectly understand, an understanding multiplies those graces exceedingly. We must never be satisfied with the vague, but always press on to the definite, to an ever greater realisation of what Our Lord and Our Lady are doing in our lives. Just in the measure that we consciously enter into that apostolic union with Mary will it be fruitful for ourselves and for others.

All graces are available to us if we lay ourselves open to them in the proper way. The first step is to ask for them. God knows our needs, but he requires as part of the essential element of human co-operation that we petition what we want. So we must ask the grace to enter fully into that divine arrangement whereby Mary mothers souls and uses us as helpers.

Then we must proceed to do those things for which we ask. We must not plead to be apostles and then do nothing about it, because in that case we would remain unapostolic despite our pleading. We must act rationally and this obliges us to set about the work itself.

One efficacious way of doing this is to join the Legion. This single operation provides the basic ingredients for apostleship viewed as a participation in Mary's motherhood of souls. In the first place it teaches Mary, a necessity in the light of the legislation of the council on her. Catholic apostolates often err by supposing in their members a foundation which does not exist. They do little about telling their members that their work depends on Mary. The end of this is disastrous. One should never take anything for granted.

The Legion guides one carefully along the hard road of apostleship from the very first step of entering the ranks on towards the attempting of the greatest performances. If we keep our spirit right and if we keep our eyes upon our mother, striving to increase our union with her, the great performance should follow almost automatically after the first feeble steps. It is to be noted that already many who took that first faltering step into the Legion have entered Heaven in the triumphant capacity of martyrs. The Legion has been producing martyrs on a grand scale.

All that is needed to step into the Legion is good will, followed of course by an act of that will. After that the system of the Legion looks after the willing one and shepherds him along. It instils into him the doctrines and motives on which the work is built. It supplies and organises the work; this is all important. There is no use talking much about the apostolate and its spirit and its ideals but then leaving people to find and plan the work for themselves. For that would be to invite failure. It is as necessary to provide the work as it is to teach the motives.

The Legion also attends to the question of formation and spirit and not merely to the maintenance of spirit and faith, but to the pressing of those qualities to an ever

fuller development. For in the divine things there is no finiteness; there are no ultimate horizons. So there is no limit to the extent to which we can rely on Jesus and Mary and draw upon their power.

According to the Legion formula the work must be done for Jesus and in such an intense spirit of union with Mary that it is virtually she who performs the work. I repeat that this co-operation with her must include the higher aspect; we must have the mind of Mary. As a very part of her apostolate we must seek to enter into her way of thinking. We must imagine how she would look on people. What would be her train of thought in a particular situation? Is this so difficult? Many would say yes but it is not so. Let us think of our own mothers for instance. See the sort of love for the child that is at work there. Exalt that wonderful thing still higher to the pitch of sheer idealism. With that as a basis, imagine what the mother love of Mary must be like. We must draw that love into ourselves and share her desires.

What are her desires for the world? The council teaches that she is the mother of all men, not merely those in the fold, or of those who love her, but of all men, those who do not know her, even those who hate her. In the soul of every one of these mortals there is the germ of love for their mother. That germ exists for the purpose of being brought to life, but unfortunately human neglect leaves it undeveloped. Pope Paul insists that every Catholic must be taught this role of Mary towards all men. When they have learned, they must pass on the knowledge to all men. In other words, instead of keeping Mary from those outside the Church as if she were a barrier in the way, we must do the opposite. She is the essential means of giving them grace.

So we must develop our union with her. Vital to that union are sympathy and understanding. How could we say that we have union with her if we are only imitating her actions in the manner that a monkey would imitate our actions. That animal would not be entering into our mind. The union which only takes in externals and lesser things would be no more than a surface transaction and obviously would only achieve the same sort of success. Because Mary, despite her heart, can give only according to the dispositions she finds in us. This does not mean that the dispositions must be perfect. For in that case she would not be able to give at all.

But there must be a longing for her and a leaning towards her on our part. She must find a capacity to receive. Then she is able to give. And of course her giving increases our capacity, so that there is progressive growth. If we go on to the point of offering her a sacrificial co-operation she will be enabled to respond according to her own measure. She will take hold of our gift and swell it out to the dimension of her motherhood.

In the Legion Promise we ask that she will unite herself with her soldier and her child. That she desires and seeks. Whatever falling short there may be, it will not be from her side. If we aspire to draw into ourselves her quality of mind, certainly she will be eager to give it to us. Even on the human plane we will find it of inestimable assistance to our piety and way of acting if we thus try to fill ourselves with what we would imagine to be her thoughts. She is of course very far above us. She is the Immaculate Conception. This means that she has a life in her which is definitely beyond human realising. It is something which has carried her to the very borders of the divine. So she is an extraordinary being, living according to a unique

dispensation. But it would be an error to think that this has transported her out of our ken, or made her more distant, or less our mother. That is not the case. Those wonders which have been wrought in her have brought her closer to us. Her assemblage of graces has made her the ideal woman and all the more our mother, for that was the purpose. We are capable of presenting to our minds some sort of image of the ideal mother. That image will fall very short of Mary but it reaches affectionately towards her and that is what counts.

She is meant to be our mother. She is meant to be our model. Therefore we must be capable to some degree of imitating her and understanding what her motherhood means. Surely if we want to love Jesus, it will be of supreme help to try to imagine how she loved him. So we must dwell on that aspect of things. We must try to enter into her love for him at every stage of his life on to the end when she watched him perish on the Cross. What must have been her love and distraction at that moment! Never was any heart so delicately contrived as hers. Her sensitivity was extreme. She appreciated her son; therefore what she suffered in his sufferings must have been drastic and horrible.

Not only at the final moment but all along the course of their joint lives had she ministered to her son with a devotion which was worthy of him. This is a territory which we must try to explore, because she is giving to us the same sort of loving service which she gave to Jesus. She loves us as she loves him, because we are Jesus to her. She wants to do for us, however unworthy, what she did for him. If we cannot penetrate into the sublimity of her mind, at least we can by thoughtful, sympathetic contemplation of her, feel with her to the full extent of our capacity. As a psychological proposition that would

be precious. But at that stage grace takes hold and raises these natural levels to supernatural heights.

Not only are we trying to fill ourselves with her thoughts and feelings, but we are also seeking to associate ourselves to her motherhood. And she will seek to bestow upon us everything that is necessary for it. It is the divine idea that we be absorbed into that aspect of Redemption. Therefore if we do not interpose obstacles but rather open ourselves to what is being offered, our onward course in apostleship will be as automatic as the operation of the force of gravity itself.

St Louis Marie de Montfort states in his great work that Mary can never be outdone in generosity. She will always beat us in that department. The saint says that for the egg which we give her she will give us in return an ox. That is an immense disproportion of gifts which loses its full meaning in English; there is a play of words which is only understandable in French. Now this maternal generosity, or rather prodigality, of hers emboldens us to hope for things which are even beyond our present power to imagine, or even to ask for. If we are going to enter with any sort of proportion or reality into Mary's mothering of souls, it is essential that we in turn gain from her some part of her motherly instinct for those souls. We must view them as she views them. We must have some sort of sense in us as to how she is looking upon them; what she wants from them and therefore what sort of service we must give in our helping of her. It is only in the measure that we see those souls as she sees them that we will struggle to help them. Otherwise our efforts will be perfunctory and probably only temporary.

Descending from her passionate yearning after souls, to the lowest level of human solicitude for souls, there lie

in between innumerable gradings. One can be satisfied by a few petty acts of service in one's entire lifetime. There are many people who go through their whole life without performing a worthy act for another person. Or we can help souls who so present themselves to us that we can hardly avoid them; this is not much better than pure selfishness. Or we can look to the souls immediately around us and render them services. Or we can go out in search of souls in a spirit of limitation. Or we can sacrifice everything for them, as the lives of the saints so eloquently show. But the topmost rung of all would be the possessing of this very yearning of Mary for souls, so that their needs do not leave us alone, so that our desires stretch out after them to the ends of the earth and comprise every soul. That is something which you see exemplified very evidently in the lives of any of the missionary saints. Even in her convent the Little Flower thus looked out over the whole world. She had a sort of anguish for every soul. She could not go out after them, but her heart did what her body could not and her prayer winged its way after every soul.

There is a section in the handbook which tries to strike that note for you. It is that one entitled 'The Last Testament of Our Lord'. It sets out every possible type of people whom we must evangelise in thought. By a multiplication of the categories of necessity, that list attempts to drive home the idea of touching every soul everywhere, not letting one escape. Nothing less than this ambition must be in us if we want to echo in the slightest degree the instinct of Mary for souls.

We must aim somehow or other at establishing touch with every soul in the world with intent to convert it. Fantastic – someone may say. But no. It is possible if only enough of us throw ourselves into Mary's mothering. It

does form a perplexity that so many persons of virtue can limit themselves in the vision. They do love souls, but apparently only the souls which are committed to them formally. If they think of more, they certainly do not show it, nor do they snatch at opportunities which present themselves outside that circle. Strange but true!

Sometimes persons who take up teaching or nursing as a religious vocation are not found looking out through their classroom or hospital ward towards the multitude of afflicted souls just out beyond. No thought for instance of organising a praesidium which they could send to those souls. No, it is not thought of. They do not either directly or indirectly reach out after the souls beyond their threshold. Of course, I do not for one second suggest that they should change from their present task or that they should take time from it. They may be cut away by physical circumstances from anything more than having a desire but surely this would be fermenting in them if they had a proper love for Mary. For this necessarily includes an entering into her outlook on souls.

It is intriguing to see that legionaries who are only average human material do exhibit that aspect of reaching out in thought after souls. They are found straining after opportunities to help them and even travelling in pursuit of them. The Peregrinatio is an example of that urge. Unquestionably all that is due to the fact that legionaries have been properly instructed in Mary's motherhood of souls.

In the end I have come to this conclusion: That we cannot possess the true apostolic instinct if we do not share the mind of Mary. But there is more to it than that. That yearning in Mary after souls has a sort of creative power; it produces ways and means of reaching out to

souls. When we indulge in the operation of longing, coupled with a willingness to act if we see a way, somehow or other a way discloses itself. Next thing we are pushing forward into the work itself. Our yearnings have set her maternity at work, perhaps not always through ourselves. Things begin to happen, not according to the feeble human philosophy but according to her power which is the might of God issuing through her. Into that process do we insert ourselves when we undertake the apostolate. We plunge ourselves into Mary's motherhood and Mary's motherhood is really an infinite thing because God has made it part of his own parenthood.