

Concilium Bulletin November 2023

ALLOCUTIO

By The Very Rev. Fr. Paul Churchill

The Bright Star of Faith

As the days of darkness fall upon us in the Northern Hemisphere they seem in harmony with global events. The continuing conflicts and tensions seem to have no end. The kingdom of sin may appear to have its tentacles going deeper as the world of war, drugs, abortion, selfishness and apathy abounds. Many seem to have abandoned God and for others it seems that God has abandoned them. In the midst of it all one person still shines out with a great brightness of light: Our Lady. And that is because when a great darkness surrounded her on Calvary she kept her faith, yes, she trusted still, even though the whole purpose of her being seems to have come to an end.

I call her the Bright Star of Faith. That is what she is for us all. What a shining example. Matthew, Mark and Luke all describe a great darkness falling over the earth during the three hours Jesus hung on the Cross. This is not just a physical darkness, it is a spiritual darkness as humanity says “no” to its loving Father who had sent his only Son, it is an emotional darkness for those who hoped that he would be the one to redeem Israel (Lk 24:21). John, in his account does not mention that darkness. His passion narrative is one of light and glory. Why? I suggest that it is because, staying close to Mary, he received from her a strength and a light which brought him through those awful hours. And that inner light of great strength in her is what will sustain us through the dark days we are living in. She says to us all with Jesus, “Trust in God still and trust in my Son!”

Advent is a season in which we look to God’s promises of old. God was faithful to those promises. Abraham kept faith in God. Moses led the people in faith. The many prophets announced a Saviour in faith. And Mary is the person in whom those promises reach their fulfilment. They all show that faith is not in vain. What a response God provided after Mary’s keeping faith on Calvary: The Resurrection from the dead. Massive.

At this moment of time, when many will be depressed by the dark things going on, be it global events or situations around them in their own lives, we need to renew our faith in the God who holds us all in his hands, who is always in charge, who is faithful to his promises, whose love never fails. The light of faith is that beacon which can help bring so many through present crises. And we legionaries must not be shy in turning to Mary, that Bright Light of Faith, who shows us how to stand trusting even in the darkest hours. Let us ask her help to never give up.

We pray at each of our meetings, “Confer, O Lord on us, who serve beneath the standard of Mary, that fullness of faith in you and trust in her ... a faith firm and immovable as a rock, through which we shall rest tranquil and remain steadfast amid the crosses, toils and disappointments of life ... a courageous faith ... a faith which will be our Legion’s Pillar of Fire ... to enlighten those who are in darkness ...” It has been there all along, that standard of Faith. But it is modelled on her great faith which withstood Calvary.

How do we deepen our faith and express it? Here is a truth. Only God can do that for us. Mary has said it clearly: He who is mighty has done great things for me. And what greater gift than to bring

her, untarnished in her faith, through the suffering of Calvary! And if we take, for example, St. John of the Cross, whose feast day is soon upon us (December 14), then it is often through dark nights of the soul that He digs that well of our faith for us. He just asks one thing: stay with me, trust me.

We should come to him each day and maybe often each day. Even if it is to say, “Lord, help me to pray, Lord, help me in my human limitations, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!” Even if it is just to be there in his presence when words cannot form, be it due to heartbreak or tiredness or exhaustion. Know that Mary has already been there before you.

In today’s Gospel passage of the talents, we can ask ourselves what talents has God given me? He has given us all a share in faith. Let us invest it no matter what. Don’t let fear impede you. That is what the evil servant did, let fear block him. Have faith and share the faith. Every seed of faith sown will bear fruit. For the word of God that goes forth from his mouth does not return without bearing fruit (Is 55:11).

That star of Bethlehem which guided the Magi to Jesus was the light of faith which helped them not to give up. Mary is the greatest model of that faith. Ask her for a share in her Bright Light of Faith.

REPORTS

DUBLIN NORTHSIDE CURIAE

Porta Caeli Curia: Four praesidia are attached to this Curia, with hopes that this number increase with help from another Curia. Book Barrow apostolate attracted a lot of interest during the summer. Visitation of parishioners and former members takes place. Holy Communion is brought to sick parishioners who are also helped with their shopping needs. **One hundred (100) copies of Maria Legionis are delivered quarterly and recipients are asked to pray for the various Peregrinatio Pro Christo (PPC) projects.** A praesidium’s works include **home visitation to promote the Sacred Heart**, distribution of Miraculous Medals, Frank Duff leaflets and other literature and promotion of Our Lady’s feast days. A man who professed to being ‘an avowed atheist’, said to the legionaries on departure: “It’s a nice day, thank God”. Another man said to the legionaries, “You are awake in the real spiritual sense of the word”.

Consolata Curia: Recruiting drives are continuing in all of the parishes. A praesidium encourages parishioners to return to Holy Mass and confessions, when on home visitation. Members assisted a couple in getting their baby baptised. **One member set up a junior praesidium in the school where she teaches.** Near the Feast day of Our Lady of Fatima, second year students were invited to the church, to pray at Our Lady’s altar. They were given Miraculous Medals and encouraged to pray the rosary and put up a May altar in their homes. While volunteering with disadvantaged children in Rwanda during the summer, a legionary told the story of Edel Quinn and promoted her cause. A praesidium’s main works are nursing home visitation, assisting with children's liturgy, and **November visitation to the parish cemeteries. Brown Scapulars and Miraculous Medals were distributed on the Feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.** Title of last Patricians was “The Crisis in the Faith”. Five (5) legionaries and four (4) non-legionaries attended. On the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, legionaries organised a Candlelight Procession and promoted visitation with the Pilgrim Statue.

Exaltata Curia: A new praesidium has started in Mulhuddart and Curia is planning to start one in Mountview in the near future. The works of a praesidia include volunteering in the Regina Coeli

hostel. The rosary is recited with the residents before tea. This praesidium has six full members and three probationary members.

Veneranda Curia: Legionaries assisted with the Berkeley Road project, distributing parish information to all homes. A praesidium operates a weekly book barrow where contacts are invited to return to attending Holy Mass and the sacraments. The rosary is also promoted. **Over one thousand (1,000) Miraculous Medals were distributed in the last year.** Despite all efforts, a men's praesidium has not been given permission to return to visitation in Mountjoy prison, post-Covid. Other works of this praesidium include volunteering at the Morning Star hostel, home visitation and street contact.

Presentata Curia: An **Advent retreat** is planned for December 16th in St. Saviour's and **Rosary at the Crib** in North. Earl Street will be on December 10th. A praesidium holds regular Traditional Irish music nights. Recent Patricians meetings which discussed 'Knock' and 'The Sacrament of Marriage', had attendances of twenty (20) and fifteen (15) respectively. **Volunteering at the Regina Coeli hostel and twice-weekly street contact are the main works of a praesidium which was established two years ago.** Street contact has resulted in the recruitment of three new members. In May the praesidium **organised a Mary Conference, with over one hundred (100) attendees.** They hold a **regular film club** and held a **quiz night** recently. Another praesidium's main work is the **day-to-day running of the Morning Star hostel, which has over sixty (60) residents.** Focus is on the Spiritual and temporal wellbeing of the men. The Men's Shed has re-opened recently where music, art classes, Bible study and Irish lessons are organised. Two residents moved into their own accommodation this year. **Legionaries always try to keep in touch with all who have moved from the hostel.**

Bethlehem Curia: Bethlehem Curia celebrated its 60th anniversary recently with the celebration of Holy Mass in Gardiner Street church, which was well attended. The parish priest praised the good work of the Legion of Mary in the parish, where a **recent Exploratio was carried out. Frank Duff prayer meeting is held monthly** in 28, Mountjoy Square. A praesidium's works include: a book barrow, volunteering at the Regina Coeli hostel, Pilgrim Statue visitation and home visitation. A nursing home which used to be visited by legionaries now accommodates Ukrainian immigrants. **The Ukrainian residents are pleased with visitation by legionaries and they accept Legion of Mary literature.**

IRISH PROVINCIAL REPORT

COMITIA

Carlow Comitium: The Comitium is organising regular recruiting in Carlow town. Some legionaries from the Comitium and Kildare Curia attended the "Light the Fire" event held on the Hill of Slane which had a very big attendance. Miraculous Medals and Legion of Mary literature were distributed. Kildare Curia reported nursing home visitation during which the rosary is recited with the residents. Laois Curia had two praesidia. Both praesidia are engaging in a good apostolate including house calls, prison visitation, and visits to those who are sick.

Tuam Comitium: Two praesidia gave their annual reports. With small membership in each, the legionaries are engaging in a wide variety of works which includes nursing homes visitation, leading the rosary in church, **organising twenty-four hour Adoration in church on the Eve of the Feast of the Sacred Heart and in November,** bringing Holy Communion to the housebound. **The Blessed**

Sacrament is brought to the school once a month. At the request of the principal of one of the primary schools, the legionaries showed children how to make St. Brigid's crosses. The Comitium had a stand at the vintage rally during which some good contacts were made.

Elphin Comitium: A mini recruiting drive took place in Elphin in August. No new members were gained but much follow-up is being done. Our Lady of Lourdes praesidium in Roscommon gained seven new members since the meeting resumed after Covid having lost some former members due to illness. The legionaries have resumed public rosaries and visits to nursing homes. **On Reek Sunday some legionaries from the Comitium did contact work where many Miraculous Medals were distributed. One member part in a PPC project to Stoke-on-Trent where a new praesidium was formed during the week.** **North Elphin Curia:** The July Curia meeting recorded 82% attendance. The Curia is hoping to acquire some new members for the two praesidia in Boyle and Ballinafad that have small membership. The summer outing took place to Rosstown in Donegal.

CURIAE

Galway Curia: The Curia participated in parish extension in Castlegar and volunteered at the Legion of Mary stand at Knock Shrine during the pilgrimage season. The reporting praesidium of Our Lady of Fatima, Renmore has **visited four hundred and eighty-six (486) homes** since September 2022. Auxiliary members are visited regularly. A long-term residential unit for people suffering from chronic health issues is also visited. An average of forty people attended the rosary organised and promoted by the praesidium every evening in the month of May at the Grotto at Renmore Church.

Killala Curia: A praesidium of three members in Ardagh does home, and nursing home visitation and help at the various stands at Knock Shrine. The Curia has agreed to organise an MEP project in Connaught at a suitable time.

Clonfert Curia: The Curia with six praesidia is constantly making efforts to increase membership which since Covid has declined due to ill-health. Visitation of the attached praesidia was reported. Two members went on PPC projects in 2023. The Curia organised a bus for the Legion of Mary pilgrimage for Knock Shrine on September 24th.

Achonry Curia: Kiltimagh is the only active praesidium in Achonry. There are five active members and a spiritual director. **The deacon teaches the rosary to transition year students and the students lead the rosary during term time from Monday to Friday at 9:20 am and remain for Mass at 10:00 am.** The apostolate includes leading the first Saturday devotions, taking the Pilgrim statues to families, bringing Holy Communion to sick parishioners. Two members helped at the Legion of Mary stand at Knock Shrine during the pilgrimage season and their busiest day was on Saturday 24th September for the Legion of Mary pilgrimage.

Ferns Curia: **The first annual report of Muire na n-Óg praesidium was given.** There are **seventeen (17) junior members on the roll, fourteen (14) of whom attend regularly.** Two senior members, president and vice-president attend the meeting weekly. Both attend their senior meeting each week. **Six of the juniors helped at a recruiting drive to establish a new praesidium in Enniscorthy.** A variety of works is undertaken. Papers and religious magazines were distributed. They make contact with passers by on their work and tell people about confession in the Friary. Miraculous Medals are regularly strung. **Help is given with the family Adoration providing music**

and serving refreshments in the Friary Hall after Adoration. The Legion of Mary summer outing took place to Adamstown Fishing Lakes and was very much enjoyed by all.

ASIA

Philippines: Cebu Senatus. Talibon Regia reported ten Comitia, ten Curiae, and twelve praesidia. Reports include marriage validation, home and prison visitation and Catechesis. A Protestant became a Catholic and has joined the Legion of Mary. Carcar Comitium has five Curiae, **four hundred and fifty (450) senior and one hundred and eighteen (118), junior members, plus fifty- six (56) probationers.** Book barrow apostolate, backyard catechesis, prison visited, Exploratio Dominicalis and Columban Drives took place. Dumaguette Regia has seventeen praesidia, four Curia and seven Comitia and reported the conversion of a Muslim and a death-bed conversion. A Curia reported setting up five new praesidia and another the conversion of fifty-eight Protestants. Palo Regia. Minglanilla Comitium has fifteen praesidia and six Curiae. They supervise several junior praesidia and a youth choir. **Four Protestants were converted and a person lapsed for fifty (50) years returned to the sacraments.** San Joaquin Curia was re-organized after Typhoon Yoland devastated the area.

Bicolandia Senatus. September minutes reported twenty (20) in attendance. Some legionaries are still reluctant to return to meeting, visitation is done to try and urge them back. The **Seminary Curia reported with 12 praesidia.** They undertake works including jail and hospital visitation, cleaning the compound, serving at Mass and choir. They did a **two- week Peregrinatio Pro Christo (PPC) to a new parish in a Mission territory and prepared 150 adults for baptism.** Regia of Legaspi reported a big attendance at a Marian Congress. The parish priest of the Cathedral parish wants the legionaries to spearhead the Marian devotions and actively participate in the parish novenas and processions.

Western Visayas Senatus: There have been many returns to the sacraments, marriages validated, reconciliation of a family of five siblings after much follow up. Exploratio Dominialis, **Homes consecrated to the Sacred Heart,** contact made to vendors, boarding houses and jail apostolate. An **unmarried mother of three whose partner was a Baptist, was converted, and their church wedding was facilitated. She is now a legionary.** Reporting this period were three praesidia, four Curiae, ten Comitia, two Regia and one junior Curia.

Senatus of Northern Philippines (Manila): July Senatus had visitors from Port Moresby, Mt.Hagan and Madang in Papua New Guinea. They discussed the possibility of setting up a Senatus in Papua New Guinea. Regia of Antipolo covers seventy- four (74) parishes with two hundred and twenty (220) senior and one hundred and eighteen (118) junior praesidia and has forty-one (41) Patrician units. New senior and junior praesidia have been set up. **Manila and Makati Comitium covers thirty (30) parishes and the Legion of Mary twenty-seven (27) of these. Twenty- eight (28) new members have been recruited, twenty juniors graduated to seniors. Two thousand, two hundred and eighty- six (2,286) children have been prepared for the sacraments, and five hundred (500) non- legionaries attended seven (7) Patrician groups.** The Comitium in Guam is very weak.

Mindanao Senatus: Visitation to Comitia and Regia is ongoing. Recovery after Covid for some councils and praesidia has been quite slow, with some only having their first meetings in recent months. The Senatus officers offer much-needed support, advice and encouragement and visit three or four councils every month. Elections are taking place where needed. The new vice-president and secretary of Eco Curia were former juniors.

New Zealand.

Auckland Senatus: The Northwest Auckland Curia, with nine senior and three junior praesidia attached gave its first report. **Visits are made to grieving families**, the rosary is promoted through Statue visitation, Brown Scapular enrolment is carried out, help is given with the running of Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) programme and support is being given to a couple in their preparation for marriage validation.

Australia.

Melbourne Senatus: Reports mentioned retreats, outdoor functions. Albury and Wodonga Comitium has six praesidia and one Curia with five praesidia. Membership is comprised of eighty-nine active members with seven new members having recently joined. The **Rosary in the park had one hundred (100) in attendance** including juniors and parents. Hobart Curia in Tasmania has three praesidia of eighteen members. Noumea Comitium in New Caledonia has ten praesidia, nine Curiae and three hundred and seventy-five seniors and four junior praesidia. Catechism is taught to children and in the tribes and villages. **Retired priests are visited**, and lapsed Catholics are contacted and encouraged to return to the Catholic Church. The Legion of Mary is in the seven attached Islands. Home visitation is done, and visits to Protestant tribes, sick and the elderly are carried out. Lack of priests and oversees sects is a big problem here.

Sydney Senatus. The Korean Silverwater Comitium reported **two hundred and seventy-one (271) active members and recruited thirty-two new active members and twenty-five (25) auxiliaries. Forty-five (45) lapsed Catholics returned to the Faith, thirty-two (32) adults and twenty-seven children were baptised, thirty-three (33) candidates are preparing for baptism next February.** Hospitals, retirement villages and nursing homes are visited. Vietnamese Curia reported one hundred and twenty-four (124) active members and a new praesidium was set up with twenty-five (25) members. Most of the work reported was parish based.

SOUTH AMERICA

Senatus of Asuncion, Paraguay: A lady diagnosed with severe colon cancer was visited; her family asked to keep the Icon of Perpetual Help for a few weeks. When they returned, the legionaries learned that the cancer had completely disappeared after treatment. They also visited a family with poor relationships between siblings; through prayers and regular visits, relations are now improving. At the Villarrica senior penitentiary, three praesidia with twelve men each are in the formation stage. The same Curia is helping in the catechesis of poor children for their baptism. A Comitium carried out extension work and six hundred and forty-two (642) people were invited of which fifteen active and nine auxiliary members were recruited and two senior praesidia were formed. They make visits to homes and to the sick in homes and hospitals. Thirty-six unmarried couples did a matrimony course and five couples have already married in church. They also visit schools and colleges to spread the rosary, visit penitentiary inmates and bring Holy Communion to the sick. **On September 8th in the church of the Nativity in Asuncion twenty-eight (28) Seminarians made their promise.** There are **now seventy (70) seminarians in five praesidia** all which meet on Mondays.

Ecuador, Senatus of Quito: The Senatus is working well. Councils and praesidia have filled most of the vacant officerships since Covid. A Comitium reported eighteen (18) adult Curiae and one (1) junior Curia and nine (9) praesidia attached. A Curia organised a retreat to encourage and motivate legionaries. The legionaries are well received during home visitation. As well as encouraging Sunday

Mass and the sacraments, they invite the children to weekly catechesis in the parish where some of the legionaries are also catechists. **The 102nd anniversary of the Legion of Mary and the 68th anniversary of the Legion of Mary in Ecuador was celebrated with a special Mass in Portoviejo with an attendance of five hundred and two (502) legionaries.**

Senatus of Caracas, Venezuela: All reports indicate great efforts to recruit and consequently there are legionaries on probation in many praesidia but there are also many vacant officerships throughout the Senatus area. An attached Comitium reports prison visitation and plans to divide one of its Curia. Legionaries accompany the priest to visit and bless homes where the family has requested the blessing.

Senatus of Santiago, Chile: Senatus visits to their distant councils have been done; three days were spent in Arica on the border with Peru, and in Antofagasta, working with council officers and visiting praesidia. Two Senatus officers did this visit, they took another legionary with them to train for future visits. A Comitium ceased to meet during the pandemic; one of their attached Curiae is helping restart that Comitium. Street contact is done by many legionaries. A special approach is made to those living on the street. Weak praesidia and those that had closed, are helped by neighbouring praesidia. In some cases, legionaries from stronger praesidia transfer to weaker praesidia until they have their own officers.

Senatus of La Paz, Bolivia: Children are given rosaries made by legionaries and taught to say the rosary. The three causes are promoted, especially Alfie who started the Legion in Bolivia. **The Comitium in Oruro is very strong. Junior legionaries do street contact reaching out to teenagers.** Colomban Drives and Exploratio are done in many parishes. Many legionaries took part in special celebrations to mark the Legion's 102nd birthday.

Colombia, Senatus of Bogota: Four praesidia reported, three senior Curiae and one junior Curia, five Comitium and five Regiae. Their works include public rosaries, visiting homes, the sick, the elderly, prisons and health personnel in clinics or hospitals with the help of a pilgrim statue, evangelization of homeless people, taxi drivers, and those drawn astray by the sects, and carrying out of missions in small communities. Praying the rosary helps calm the anxiety of autistic and blind people that they visit. **The Regia of Villavicencio catechised three couples co-habiting for more than thirty years cumulatively, who later married.** A Comitium there has three junior praesidia ready to form a junior Curia. The Regia of Barranquilla held a Peregrinatio Pro Christo (PPC) with twelve (12) legionaries accompanied by the parish team. They carry out an apostolate in Riohacha to the Wayuu indigenous communities using their native language. Several attached councils reported founding new praesidia. **They were the hosts of the National Youth Conference with eighty-two (82) participants from ten (10) different regions, and some attendees are now probationers.** They relegated a Comitium to a Curia for conflicts between officers, despite the support provided by the Regia and the Senatus. The Regia de Fontibón recruited several new members using the Columban Drive. The Regia of Bucaramanga carried out several missions but finds extension difficult because they are rural areas. **The Senatus visited the Major Seminary of Bogotá to explain the Legion of Mary to a large group of future spiritual directors.** There was good representation of legionaries at World Youth Day in Lisbon. Monsignor Rueda Aparicio, Archbishop of Bogotá and Primate of Colombia, asked the Senatus to postpone the October 14th Conference on Alfonso Lambe, as he has been designated cardinal and being in Rome at that time for the Synod; the Legion agreed to this petition.

Senatus of Medellin: They have had no correspondent for some time. According to the minutes, the secretary of the Senatus only was present, the president was absent and the vice-president and treasurer were excused. There were forty (40) officers present at the meeting, seventeen (17) excused and ten (10) absent. A Curia reported, sixty-nine members (80%) at the Curia meeting and one

hundred and three (103) auxiliaries. Some of the legionaries are catechists preparing children for First Communion and confirmation. They also visit the sick and lead rosaries in churches and at grottos.

Senatus of Lima, Peru: Five praesidia, nine Curiae and five Comitua reported. **There are three hundred and thirty- one (331) probationers and various praesidia in formation.** The Senatus has formed a "Committee of Helpers" of willing legionaries. Works include home visitation, catechesis, marriage preparation, nursing home visitation, visiting the sick, street contact, junior praesidia, Patrician meetings, and Frank Duff Prayer Groups. **The Curia of Hurcapata is mostly made up of men, but several of the men there have invited their wives to join, and their wives have joined the Legion of Mary as a result of this.** They are mostly Quechua speakers. The Curia of Huancayo has five praesidia in the desert. They do not have internet access. Legionaries of the Curia of Surquillo work with people suffering from cáncer, putting them up in their homes when necessary, and thus giving wonderful testimony to friends and family. A Curia in Lima works with prostitutes. In Tumbes, badly hit by Covid and Dengue fever, where a Comitium existed, only two praesidia remain but the members are doing trojan work to recover the situation.

Senatus of Montevideo, Uruguay: In this period, two praesidia and two Comitua reported. Works include visitation of homes and nursing homes and catechesis. They are working on re-establishing a praesidium in the industrial region of San José. The praesidium of the Cathedral of Montevideo has been affiliated directly to the Senatus. There are four probationers. They have asked all their councils and praesidia for prayers for their former correspondent Joan Barry.

AFRICA

GHANA- The Senatus of Accra: The correspondent has queried the reporting structure at the Senatus meeting. Star of the Sea Comitium held a successful Edel Quinn Triduum and formed a new praesidium at a senior high school. At a recent conference Fr. Patrick Quarcoopome, the Senatus spiritual director said that **“The Legion is needed in these challenging times for the Church” and advised members “to go out and conquer the world as legionaries.”**

The Senatus of Egypt: Communication was received from the corresponding secretary, but no minutes have been received since the last report.

Mozambique- Maputo Regia: The Regia organised an event in which the rosary was prayed with local communities throughout the month of October. The annual Pilgrimage to a Shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima in Namaacha was held. **Tete Comitium:** To celebrate the anniversary of the Legion of Mary, a weekend event took place. The programme for this event was comprised of prayer and recreation. The focal point was Holy Mass, celebrated on Saturday and Sunday. **Quelimane Comitium:** The Legion of Mary continues to grow in this Diocese. The spiritual director and the bishop have suggested a formation day for spiritual directors, as well as a formation day for officers of all the Mozambican Comitua. The council reports difficulty in getting Handbooks because of the cost and they are asking for help in this matter. **Beira Comitium:** has Curiae comprising sixty-seven (67) praesidia. To celebrate the 102nd anniversary of the Legion of Mary, Holy Mass was celebrated with good participation of legionaries from all attached Curiae.

Angola- Bengueala Senatus: Elections took place in September. Br. Martinho Luciano Longuenda was re-elected president for a second term. The Senatus is working on expanding the Legion in the diocese. Several new praesidia were established, and **a new Regia is being formed in the Diocese of Menongue.** Visits to attached praesidia and councils are carried out periodically. The **Senatus organised a training day for its officers**, led by its spiritual director, Fr. Daniel Gomes. Several praesidia report a return to weekly meetings, visiting the sick in their homes and in hospitals, and encouraging people to return to the sacraments. Many councils meet periodically and visit their attached praesidia.

Cape- Verde Regia: Works reported include encouraging parents to enrol their children in catechism classes, visits to the sick, helping the infirm with medical consultations and hospitalisation as well as paying visits to immigrants, alcoholics, and drug addicts. The Curia of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception instructed legionaries to identify people near their homes who need to be visited because they are sick or elderly so that they may send legionaries to visit on a weekly basis. **Fifty- eight legionaries took part in a Peregrinatio Pro Christo (PPC) project on the island of Santo Antao** from 31st August to the 13th of September. Senhora do Socorro Comitium reports that **a person** from the Adventist Church has been **converted to the Catholic Faith**.

Lesotho: Attendance at Senatus was lower than usual at approximately 33%. Several councils presented no reports. Despite the low attendance and lack of reports, those who did report, report large work undertakings, including home visitation, visiting the sick and lapsed Christians. Children are taught their prayers and catechism, while parents are encouraged to have children baptised, and to have them attend church, and youths are reminded of the dangers of taking drugs. The **Senatus president welcomed and thanked God for every legionary who can attend the meeting despite difficulties of transport, distances, and occasional extreme temperatures**. Several praesidia reported their work done in percentages which is not as informative as reporting individual works carried out. Legionaries were encouraged to pray for the spiritual director, that God gives him the grace to attend weekly meetings regularly. Efforts at reviving dormant praesidia, including youth praesidia, are under way while others are the subject of discussion. Members of stronger praesidia continue to volunteer for and in some cases monitor revival efforts of weaker praesidia.

South Africa- Cape Town Senatus: The Afrikaans handbooks have been printed and include the two insertions (Pope Francis' Letter and the paragraph on St. Raphael). Port Elizabeth celebrated their 90th Anniversary in September. The rosary was prayed at Grottos and in homes throughout the month of May. Two Sisters report having a wonderful experience. Other works reported include home visitation and visits to a nursing home. **Johannesburg Senatus:** Two praesidia reports were received recently from the Senatus. The praesidium in Edenvale is rebuilding since Covid and **one thousand (1,000) people were met on street contact of whom four hundred and twenty-eight (428) were non-Catholics. A number of lapsed Catholics returned to the sacraments**. In Tembisa Curia all members died during Covid. **Esigodeni Comitium:** Bishop Jwara and five priests attended the two-day retreat for the legionaries. Fr. Mzizi was appointed as the new Comitium spiritual director. **Matatiele Comitium:** A praesidium of eighteen active and five auxiliary members reported ten children were baptised, fifteen prepared for confirmation. Fifty- two children and four adults and a priest attended the monthly Patrician meeting.

There is no update for Durban (South Africa), Harare (Zimbabwe) and Hwange (Zimbabwe) since the last report.

HANDBOOK REFLECTIONS

As we approach the beginning of a new year, we have chosen p. 25- 27 from “Some Handbook Reflections” as the extract this month:

PLANNING

“We must have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16).” We must reflect with a view to producing good work and advancing in every respect. We must plan. We must be ingenious. We must strive as a very part of the work itself to devise better methods, to hammer out new ideas, and to solve the problems. In a word, we must give to religion the same concentrated and intelligent approach that we lavish on the world.” So as a first principle of our effort we must THINK. Our mind is the highest part of our natural make-up and we must place it fully at the service of Jesus Christ. We must think and plan as if everything depended on it.” “So when we plan, it should be with faith, ambitiously, a little beyond what we judge to be our reach, so as to leave some room for Him to operate” (Frank Duff: Thinking in Christ: Mary Shall Reign: 18).

AN ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING

To fulfil the need to plan, officers of a praesidium or council might consider the value of meeting once a year for the purpose of planning for the year ahead. It is desirable that sufficient time be allowed for the meeting so that ideas and suggestions can be well discussed. It would be helpful, also, if the President invited the other officers to submit suggestions in advance for the agenda of this meeting. If the officers approach the meeting in a spirit of faith and union with Mary and conscious of Brother Duff’s words, quoted above, they will be giving scope for the Holy Spirit to work through them. The plans formulated at this meeting can then be brought to the praesidium or council for consideration, and if approved, can then be put into effect through the weekly praesidium meeting or the monthly council meeting. For councils, of course, the pre-council meeting provides opportunities for follow-up and on-going planning.

Planning for the Praesidium: There are many items which might be considered at an annual planning meeting: Recruiting new members, active and auxiliary; promoting Praetorian and Adjutorian membership and True Devotion to Mary; Improving reports and study of the handbook; Exploratio Dominicalis; Auxiliary Rally; Retreats; Praesidium function in September, etc. The development of the members and of the work is a priority. The handbook speaks of an enterprising spirit being kept alive in the members by the regular breaking of new ground. Is the praesidium tackling the most urgent needs? What more should the praesidium be doing?

Planning for the Council: In addition to such items as: Frequency of reports; Visitation of praesidia and affiliated councils: Legion Functions, Acies, Annual General Reunion, Retreat, etc.; Elections; Appointment of officers of praesidia, Annual audit etc. there is the great need to plan Extension and the development of the apostolate in the council area. It can be a great help to sit down with a map of the area and note the strengths and weaknesses both as regards places with or without the Legion and also in regard to the extent of the Legion apostolate. Do higher councils consider delegating responsibility for Extension in certain areas to affiliated councils? Is the Legion apostolate directed to the most urgent needs in the council area? Do the officers think that they have to do everything themselves? The handbook says: “the denial of some responsibility to those who are fit to assume it does injustice both to those individuals and to the whole Legion.” (28: 2: 16). The handbook also says that the consideration of new works forms an important part of a Curia.

If planning is to be effective, it will be necessary to assign specific tasks to individual officers or members, who should be asked to account for them. Otherwise, plans may remain just that, plans.

-Matters for consideration for Planning Meetings for 2024 -

The imminent arrival of 2024 presents a wonderful opportunity for a brand new chance for all of us to make our best efforts regarding the plans that our Blessed Mother wishes to see come to fruition for The Legion of Mary, and the role that we all have, individually and collectively, from praesidium upwards, in all of these plans for the year ahead.

Frank Duff urges us in the above extract from Some Handbook Reflections to “think”, and very importantly, to “approach the meeting in a spirit of faith and union with Mary.” We are currently in a very fortunate position of having lots of time us to pray in advance of these planning meetings for 2024 so that our faith and our union with Mary can be deepened, and thus much greater fruit be borne as a result of these meetings. Frank Duff recommends that the president invite the other officers to submit suggestions in advance for the agenda of the annual planning meeting. Let us use wisely the time between now and the new year to pray also to the Holy Spirit to direct, guide and enlighten us in this regard. The importance of prayer for the establishment and realisation of these plans can never be over-emphasised. Proverbs 16: 1-3 tells us “Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed.” Frank Duff advised that plans be brought from the officers’ meeting to the praesidium or council for consideration and implementation as approved. Proverbs 15:22 informs us “Without counsel plans fail, but, with many advisers, they succeed.”

Works for consideration for 2024

- How are we doing regarding crowd contact such as street contact, home visitation, and extension work? The suggestion of considering a map of the area as councils consider the extent of the Legion apostolate in an area is very helpful. Having a knowledge of the scheduling of local festivals and local events such as the marking of feast days of local Saints etc. could provide us with great opportunities for crowd contact.
- 2023 – 2025 marks the 350th Anniversary of the Apparitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Could we in the Legion of Mary decide that we will resolve to begin as soon as we can the establishment, throughout the world, of as many Sodalties to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as possible? How pleased would our Blessed Mother be to see Her Son honoured in such a way at this very special time? It may well be a work that would particularly suit some legionaries, and would be a most beautiful and wonderful way of contributing to the expansion of our works.
- How active are we in the promotion of Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in homes? Do we need to consult with our Spiritual Director or the priest in the parish about this?
- How are we doing if we happen to be a praesidium- attached to a Pioneer Centre- for the purpose of promoting and recruiting for the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?
- Could we perhaps consider establishing a junior praesidium in 2024?
- Are we promoting the practice of daily Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament?

- How are we faring regarding recruitment and after-care of auxiliary members?
- Are we promoting praetorian and adjutorian membership?
- Perhaps there are retired priests in our parish whom our Blessed Mother would like The Legion of Mary to visit?
- Is Pilgrim Statue Visitation a new work that we could incorporate into our plan for 2024?
- Could we be offering support to people who have recently been bereaved?
- Could we be visiting people in a local prison?
- Are we visiting hospitals, including psychiatric hospitals?
- Perhaps we could look at establishing a Frank Duff prayer group, to be held once every two or three months to begin with even, and then maybe on a monthly basis as time proceeds.
- Could we maybe set up a book- barrow?
- Could we think of maybe running Patrician Meetings?
- How are we faring regarding serving the particular needs of the place in which we find ourselves? It could be of great benefit for us to check what other groups in our parish are doing also as we prioritise and plan our works.
- Are we actively promoting Maria Legionis as we should? How many subscribers do we have? Could some legionaries perhaps write an article for Maria Legionis in the new year?

Planning of Masses, functions and activities for 2024

Bringing along to the annual planning meeting a religious calendar (as at least one very experienced legionary regularly does at meetings, and thus prompted this thought!) which notes all religious feast days could be a very practical way of speedily securing potential dates for some of the following which could then be confirmed with the priest or spiritual director:

- The Acies be held on or as near as possible to Feast of the Annunciation (Monday 25th March 2024).
- Organising 24- Hour Adoration and/ or a Procession on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Friday 7th June 2024).
- Planning for promotion of and Enrolment in the Brown Scapular for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Tuesday 16th July 2024).
- The handbook strongly recommends that each praesidium holds a social function around the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady (Sunday 8th September 2024).
- Promotion of the Feast of the Miraculous Medal (Wednesday 27th November 2024) by various means such as promotion or leading the rosary, a triduum, a novena, and distribution of Miraculous Medals and novena leaflets.
- Scheduling the Annual General Reunion on, or as close as possible to Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Sunday 8th December 2024).
- Scheduling Rosary and Carol Service at the Crib for December 2024.
- Is the Comitium or Curia due to hold a Congress?
- Establishing dates for the celebration of Masses for the three Causes, extension work, Exploratio Dominicalis, retreats, the summer outing etc.
- Scheduling of- and distributing to all relevant officers and legionaries- the dates and times for pre- Curia, Curia and other council meetings.

An understood awareness that we will all report at the end of the year on the set targets that emerge from the planning meeting will hopefully make the system more efficient, while strengthening us in our focus on remaining close to our Lady and listening for, and to, the whisperings and promptings of the Holy Spirit as we march on as legionaries for our Blessed Mother in the year that awaits us.

May we remain constantly open to the promptings of God and our Blessed Mother regarding additional works for which- beyond those that emerge from the annual planning meeting- we may be called upon at any time to plan, carry out and follow-up on. These all come from the infinite love of God and our Blessed Mother for all.

It is most exciting to muse upon the fact that God and our Blessed Mother are offering us all a vast array of opportunities for 2024, and most consoling that all that is asked of us is our “Yes” in response. They will help us from there on.