

Everyone Must Pour Himself Into Another Soul

By Frank Duff. (Founder of the Legion of Mary.)
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I am going to write about your destiny and about your idealism and about the sort of spirituality you should have. It is essential that I do so, because the Legion of Mary is Our Lady's spirit come to life in people. Only in the measure that such takes place and that we realize it and act in accordance with the idea, are we going to get anywhere. If we merely esteem ourselves to be an organization, no matter how good or useful an organization, and leave that other thing out, it is the old proverbial case of the body without the soul.

In the Handbook of the Legion of Mary, there are a few phrases which I would venture to commend to your close attention. Your eyes have strayed over them many times and perhaps there is the danger that things which we have looked at a great number of times may fail to attract our close attention.

SEEK AND TALK TO EVERY SOUL.

One phrase is a quotation from a great writer and it is something to this effect: "Everyone, if he would survive, must pour himself into another soul". Another phrase, also a quotation, is: "We will be called upon to give an account of every soul in the whole world." A statement like that could easily be taken by us as representing a sort of poetic exaggeration. How could we be held accountable for souls that we know nothing about and will never touch? Another phrase is a heading to one of the sections of the Handbook and perhaps it is the most important of all. It is the little heading: "Seek out and talk to every soul." Seek out and talk to every soul! Why? Chiefly because Our Lord's command to the Church is to reach out to every creature, and as units of the Church we must play our part in realizing His commands.

Also, there is another reason which is less important but at the same time has its great weight; it is the very necessity of the case. Today, every heart is a seething pot; every man is a problem which, if left to itself, will fester and corrupt others. It used to be supposed that all was well if our people were attending Mass and going in a reasonable fashion to the Sacraments. It also would be contended in certain places that all was well and that the Faith was firmly held even if people were inattentive both to the Mass and the Sacraments. It used to be said: Even if there is neglect, it is a surface transaction; underneath, the Faith is there and can be relied upon.

Those soft, soothing, reassuring phrases have proved to be unreal. In modern times, we have seen the great historic Catholic nations crumble away into non-practice, unbelief and even Communism. And at the present moment, the world, as we look out over it, affords a dismal contemplation.

You, here in America, are very privileged in one way. (Footnote: This address was given during the visit the author made to the U.S.A. to receive the Pius XII Marian Award in 1956.)

You have not experienced the worst horrors of war and devastation. Over in the other lands they have had that awful experience. They have seen their cities wiped out. They have seen hunger and displacement and misery untellable. And in those older nations, a very different spirit prevails from that which fills you. You are full of optimism. You see the menace of the future, but you are not afraid of it. Over there, I repeat, everybody looks out over his world with fear, and there is no man, really, who faces up to the situation with any sort of confidence. You are very fortunate to have that buoyant spirit. But I ask you not to allow it to deceive you too much. Try to look out over the world in, perhaps, a less optimistic vein than that which you have. In particular, you must be realistic in regard to the religious position. It is really bad. It would be fatal to relax into a false comfort. Let us analyze things a little.

In many of the older countries, we are face to face with the phenomenon of Catholic children abandoning the practice of the Faith immediately after they leave school, and that in countries where religious education is at a high level. It is said that in many such cases fifty per cent of the children abandon practice as soon as they leave school. Imagine that result of all the care and thought and money which has been poured into the education of the young!

A recent authentic case is that of a boys' secondary school, where an entire class abandoned the practice of religion on leaving school. One entire class without exception!

“THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING IN IT.”

If that is the case with the young people fresh from the sources of knowledge, let us draw a line from that to the more hardened adults and try to imagine what the position is. A distinguished priest, a very balanced man, speaking about his own country which he has traversed from end to end and in a manner which brought him into touch with the minds of the Catholic people, has said that the valuation of their religion held by a large portion of the Catholic population was no higher than that “there might be something in it”. His estimate was that this was true of half of the people. That would amount to it that they were practicing the Faith on a sort of insurance principle, instead of in terms of fiery conviction. They feel that there might be something in it! Therefore, it is better to be on the safe side! Could faith reduce itself to a level lower than that? Practice on that level is precarious in the extreme. It only requires a slight jolt to knock one off from practice. Such people are only driftwood, a liability, and of course completely non-converting. Put in the middle of opportunities of the most lively description, those people are found to be a purely negative proposition so far as the Church is concerned and in fact worse than negative because they cannot but be giving great scandal to the non-Catholics around them who are far-seeing enough to realize the situation.

I fear that we must go even further than this and suggest that the very badge of a Catholic in the world today is that he is reluctant to help another person in point of religion. That is a thought which afflicts one, because in saying it one has stated the very opposite of the Christian idea. A great French writer has defined a Christian as one to whom God has confided the care of his fellow-man. And here we find ourselves looking out over our people and having sorrowfully to admit that the great bulk of them are not prepared to help another person in regard to the things that matter — in regard to Faith.

A DISMAL LITTLE LITANY.

That would be catastrophic. But I am satisfied that things are so. And I feel that you must realize it fully, if you are to be stimulated towards that program which we are discussing. Therefore, I ask of you to pardon me if I inflict a dismal little litany upon you.

A distinguished lady over in my own city, a lady who was in her ninety-sixth year, stated to a Catholic friend some little time before her death that we Catholics were the strangest of folk, that in her whole lifetime not a Catholic had ever attempted to convert her.

Last year a few of us were indulging in a cycling trip. We came into a village in the North of Ireland composed of two-thirds Protestants and one-third Catholics. The relations between the two sections are kindly. We were told that in the one and only pub which the place boasts of, the Protestants had started asking questions about Catholicism. It was obvious that those questions were based upon a desire to know. We asked: "Are they getting the answers?" No! No Catholic was prepared to give an answer. I am not saying that this arose from indifference. I am only giving you the facts.

When our two envoys went out last year to Brazil, they traveled on a great liner carrying about nine hundred persons. Those two Legionaries were the only people aboard that liner who did anything for the cause of religion during the journey. They worked, as we would expect our members to work. Nobody else did. During their rounds, they got down among the crew and they encountered two good Catholics, one of them a Scot and the other an Irishman. Those men told them that during their voyages a constant barrage of questions and difficulties poured in on them from the other members of the crew. They were asked: "Do you try to help them?" Answer: "We do not feel ourselves equipped to do so." No help!

We sent Sister Twomey out to South America the other day by the 'good ship' Alcantara. During that voyage, she again was the only person on board that ship who worked for the Faith. She spoke to a large number of people — many of them Protestants — and made a certain amount of headway with each of them. What that will turn into we do not know, but that is not the question. She endeavored to do something because she was a Legionary of Mary. One episode I put before you as significant. She had been dealing with a young Protestant who was definitely interested. He went on shore to visit Lisbon. With him was a Catholic lady from the ship. She was a good person; she had gone to Mass on board. They visited a Church and he asked her a question which was part of his seeking for information. The lady's answer was of the briefest. She just cut him off with the word "No." It answered his question, but it certainly finished off the discussion.

There was a recent case where a Legionary approached a Protestant lady and asked her whether she had ever thought of becoming a Catholic. The reply was: "I have been waiting sixteen years for somebody to ask me that," and she was readily brought into the Church.

In another case, a Protestant lady working with a well-educated Catholic girl began to talk about her own sorrows. She said that in these trials which appeared to be so great to her, her own Church had no message for her and no help to give her, and that in these circumstances she had resolved to go to Mass daily. She said: "I have the belief that that will help me." You will realize that what she was really saying was: "Bring me into the Church." What did the Catholic girl do? She said, "Oh!" That was her contribution! What a terrible tragedy! Fortunately, the story came on to us, and we have been able to take up the threads. That case is sad, but it is typical.

At a recent inaugural meeting of the Patricians, (one of the Legion of Mary's works whereby Catholics can increase their knowledge of the faith and their ability to spread it abroad) at the interval somebody pointed out a girl and explained that she was not a Catholic. One of the

Legionaries went to her and gently asked her how she had been attracted to the meeting. Her answer was: "I have been knocking around with this set for a long time and I just came with them!"

The question was asked: "Does that mean you have any sort of interest in Catholicism?" "Yes." "Have you ever thought of becoming a Catholic?" "Yes." "Would you be willing to become one?" "Yes." But nobody had ever asked her.

Unfortunately, I could go on with that litany indefinitely. Indeed, it would be hard to find an example to the contrary, that is, where the ordinary Catholic will assert himself to help another in the matter of religion. So I have to repeat my sad little definition that a Catholic is one who is unprepared to help his fellow-man in point of religion.

THE CENTRAL IDEA: PERSONAL CONTACT.

I now sum up by suggesting that no Catholic should be accounted safe unless you have some evidence that real faith reigns in his heart, and you should not take things for granted. You should not assume the existence of an efficient working faith until you have reason to believe that it is there.

But how are you to find out what is in their hearts? This transports me back to my initial quotations. We must get in touch with every person. We must talk to people about themselves. We must induce them to discuss religion, and this applies to those outside the Church as well as those inside the Church; and of course, the plight of those outside is much more grievous than the plight of those inside.

That program means personal contact, the contact of one soul with another. That is why I stressed that little heading: "Seek out and talk to every soul." Talking is the main idea, and it is the thing which we dodge most. We will do everything except go and talk to people about religion. I honestly believe that mass contact — contact with people in bulk — is only useful if the primary contact, the personal contact, is there as well. In relation to that personal contact, the mass contact (such as realized through the press, the radio, et cetera), is secondary, holding much the same position as the plumage does to the bird. The plumage is only living and only has real meaning when it is growing out of the bird. Divorced from the bird, well, it is a decoration for certain purposes. Similarly, if that personal contact — which is the central Christian idea — is not there, then be very doubtful about the feathers, even though they be beautiful.

FAITH AND OUR LADY.

Suppose we set ourselves to such a project; that we resolve to go out to reach people and to try to give them a little of our own conviction, there are certain requirements which we must fulfill if we want to be used by God with effectiveness. Obviously, we must have faith. That is the basic Christian requirement. Faith itself must not be a vague thing. It is not enough to say: I believe in God and the Catholic Church, while hardly knowing what the Catholic Church stands for. We must have a modest understanding of Christian doctrine, and we must, as part of that, have Our Lady. When I say, "have her," I mean, "properly understand her." We must understand her not merely in her role of obtaining favors, because that is the least part of her function. We must understand her as Mother of Divine Grace, as Mother of our Souls, as Mediatrix of all Graces. In other words, Catholics who want to accomplish anything should understand Our Lady in the way you Legionaries do. Your action is spurred by that idea of Our Lady and rendered confident and strong by it, not merely in the psychological sense but in the fact that fullness of appreciation of her has

opened you fully to her maternal influence. She is able to establish a union with you and that union is a comprehensive union. It is not merely that she bestows graces upon you, but that she acts through you. In other words, she is your Mother and she pours life into you — the life which is her Son. Then she does not merely fill you, but she reaches out through you. Through those who offer themselves to her, she exercises her maternal function towards all men.

That is important when we begin to think in terms of that program which contemplates the whole world, which aspires to get in touch with every member of the human race and to pour the great treasure of faith into that person's heart. You won't do - you can't even attempt to do it - you won't even think of it - unless you are in union with Our Lady

WITHOUT MARY, JESUS IS NOT GIVEN.

That idea of Our Lady is not an exalted one. It is elemental, it is Christian. If we do not understand Our Lady in that way, we do not understand her properly. We are diminishing her, we are belittling her. We are placing her in the category of the saints. It is no praise of Our Lady to declare that she can obtain absolutely anything from God that she asks for. That is not praise of her, because every saint can do that. Every saint lives in God. Every saint seeks according to God's will. Every saint is automatically granted what he wants. Therefore, to talk about Our Lady in that vein is not to praise her and it is not to understand her. If you do not understand Our Lady, you do not understand Christianity, because Christianity puts her in a most extraordinary position. It is true that she is redeemed by her Son like every one of us is, and it is true that she is completely dependent on Him. But when you have said those things, you have then to go on to the fact that she has been assigned a most amazing position, a position unique and unlike any other, and primary. She was the means of introducing the Lord into the world. Without her He would not have come. We would not have Him. And that law which initiated things continues as the Christian Law to-day. Without her, He is not given; without her, there is no grace, not even the small graces. And what of the big graces, the great converting graces? If you do not bring her into your life, you are beating the air. You may put forth prodigious exertions, but in the end, you will be left with practically empty hands.

FAITH AND THE MYSTICAL BODY.

In the second place, that faith of yours must contain the notion of the Mystical Body. That doctrine of the Mystical Body is rudimentary in every sense of the word. It was taught to the primitive Christians as basic. Read the Epistles of Saint Paul, and you see the extent to which that doctrine was fundamental. The analogous image used by Our Lord Himself was that of the Mystical Vine, which was the same idea again; the branches and the trunk, the members and the head — all one, living it is true out of the virtue of the trunk in one case, the head in the other case, but truly united to the source of life, and meant to be the carriers of that life. Therefore, that doctrine cannot be as many of our people think it to be, inaccessible. If it is central in Christianity, it must be understandable to the people. "In Christ," the phrase which occurs so often in Saint Paul, is not a figure of speech. "Mystical" does not mean unreal, as most people seem to think it does. The Mystical Body is just as real as Our Lord Himself. The connection of the Head with the members is real and perfect, more intense than any of the connections in the purely natural order, more intense than the union, for instance, of my hand with my arm. That is real enough, but the union of the Mystical Body is still more intense.

If the idea of the Mystical Body is not grasped to some extent, I fear it means that the Church is not understood; that it is only being regarded as a worldly society. True, it is a visible society, one with

its rulers and members and laws, a very exalted society which is divinely guaranteed to teach the truth. Nevertheless, to regard it only as a society would be but a shadow of the reality. The Church is far more than that. In plain language, the Church may be said to be Christ and to carry on the life of Christ. He is in the Church, as life inhabits the body, not as people live in a house. The members of the Church are His members; really part of Him; His means of expression; His instruments. The Church is beyond comparison and proportion with all other societies and institutions. It is in a different order altogether. Saint Thomas Aquinas declared that the Mystical Body was the central dogma of Christianity, but definitely, it is a sealed book to the majority of Catholics. Imagine the central doctrine missing! It would be somewhat in the same category as a person without a skeleton.

The Mystical Body began when the Second Divine Person came among us to live our life. He took flesh in the Virgin's womb and was born as a baby; and the body that He took on was God's instrument. The Second Divine Person carried out His mission through it, and although that Person, Jesus Christ, was God. He conformed to the limitations of that body.

He ate and He slept. He conveyed His thoughts by speaking, and if He was addressing a crowd of people, He would have to raise His voice. As a Babe, He was carried and He was put to bed. His life was saved by His Beloved Mother and Saint Joseph. In His babyhood, He did not talk because it would not be natural for a baby to talk. If He wanted to go some place, He walked, that is, if He did not ride on a donkey's back; and if He wanted to cross the Lake of Genesareth, a ferryboat was summoned. He was hungry and He was tired. He was grieved and He wept. He went to people; He consoled them; He taught them; He touched them and He healed them. And such was His humanity that in the end people were able to kill and bury Him.

WE CONTINUE CHRIST'S MISSION.

You know that that did not end things but indeed only began them. Even our own death only begins a new phase, a new existence. When seed is planted and dies, it brings forth fruit one-hundredfold. And similarly with the case of Our Lord Himself. His Life on earth was not something existing for that time alone. It was intended to be followed by a new and bigger life, a more influential life, a new body. He saved men and added them on to His own body like additional cells on a growing body. A new-born child weighs about seven or eight pounds I understand, but it grows up into an adult of about twenty times or more that weight. In some similar way, Our Lord added to His original body all these new cells, the baptized, ourselves. And that new body, which is the Mystical Body, lives like the original one, almost as if Our Lord had continued growing after His death. As a very distinguished Nuncio recently declared to us, we are His mouth, His eyes, His ears, His hands, His feet; and He has no other. We are His means of action. If we give ourselves to Him, He can carry on His mission in our days. That new career of His is more important than His original life on earth (that is, if one could say that anything in the life of Our Lord is more important than anything else in it!) in as much as it was the last for which the first was made. That first living of His on earth was intended for the second living. That first existence of His was confined to His own country. The frontiers of Judea bounded it and we do not hear of Him speaking any other language but His native Aramaic. Then came the Resurrection and Pentecost, and the frontiers of Judea were obliterated. Christ in His Mystical Body put His feet upon the pathways of the earth and went out to carry on what He had been doing before, this time speaking in all tongues, going to all peoples, but carrying on His mission much as He did in His earthly career.

If the Mystical Body lends itself to Him to a reasonable extent (and it can withhold that co-operation just as it can give it,) Our Lord is enabled to do the same things that He did of old. He can go about seeking people, helping them in every way and above all teaching them the rules of eternal life. Through us, He can act in the fullness of His power. There is no limit in regard to what may happen.

That does not mean that through each one He puts forth His full power; that He speaks infallibly, or that He works miracles. Though He could do it, and sometimes He does. His action is governed by His own will. It takes forms that we ourselves may not understand, but it is not limited. Through the Pope, for instance, He speaks infallibly, and through saints, He works miracles, and He could do these things through any person if the situation demanded it. But what is certain is that in His way He does reach out even through the weakest of us and is enabled to accomplish His plan.

“GREATER THINGS THAN THESE SHALL YE DO.”

You will remember an extraordinary phrase He once used to His disciples when He was among them. Referring to His miracles, He said: “Greater things than these will ye do”: in other words, greater even than the wonders that the Lord had been accomplishing before their eyes; greater things even than those would be accomplished through them in the future. That is an overwhelming statement which should bring before us in a compelling way the fact that He truly lives in the Mystical Body and by it exerts Himself and carries on His mission and operates the fullness of His power.

Especially must that Mystical Body, which is the carrier of Christ and His means of expressing Himself, go to those who are outside the Church with the aim of adding them on to it. That approach is, as I said in my pathetic litany, unfortunately not being made. It is an awful idea that we can prevent the Lord from doing all those things that He wants to do to mankind. It is just as if His actual body was sick or injured; He would have been held back. By reason of the general inactivity of Catholics, the position has come that the vast majority of the world’s population is not even being approached. Absolutely no approach is being made to Mohammedanism, although in Africa it is growing twice as fast as the Church. The Jews are not being approached. You may say that Protestantism, which nominally possesses three hundred millions, is not being approached. The Buddhists, the Hindus, are hardly being approached and the ordinary pagans are only being approached in a very partial fashion.

Whole great populations, the former Catholic nations that have fallen away into unbelief, are not being approached. Legionaries setting about their visitation in those great irreligious areas, report that they have not discovered a home which within the memory of man had been visited on a religious errand. That means that Our Lord is practically debarred from those places by that law of His which we have been considering. I suppose that if we were driven to arithmetic, we would have to say that fifteen hundred million people in the world to-day are not being approached by Catholics.

To the extent of our own poor power, we must try to reverse this position. We must realize our responsibility in the light of the doctrine of the Mystical Body which means that the Lord depends on us. We must be active. We must lend ourselves to the Lord and His Mother in faith and in conscious practice of that doctrine. We must act with the deliberate intention of giving Him to people. We must open our mouths and talk in the belief that He will in His own fashion utilize those

poor words of ours as the bearers of His message of salvation. We should play a part in the Lord's command that the Church must reach out to every person.

READY TO BE USED BY CHRIST.

Our Legion service must be no business of four hours a week: for the Legion, as has so often been said, is only a school-time. We go to that school for a few hours every week, not for the sake of the school but for the sake of the other hours. If people went to school and never used outside what they learned in school, the school would have been a waste of time. Similarly, we go to school in the Legion for the purpose of learning our Catholic duty and of learning the basic Catholic doctrines upon which that duty rests. After that, we must try to see that every minute of our lives is full of the spirit of readiness to be used by Our Lord, full of what we would call an act of offering of ourselves to Him and a willingness to avail of the opportunities which beset our path in number. There they are like the sands upon the seashore and we do not even see them. We must stir up our vision in faith and we must look on every person who crosses our path, as Our Lord Himself would look upon the people who met Him. If we do not put ourselves into that positive frame of mind, we will be found limiting His action.

I have said that Our Lord, while He was on earth, conformed to the limitations of His body. Now we must not impose those limitations. We must submit ourselves to Him in the responsive way that His physical body did. It is true, as we have seen, that now and then His body, so to speak, surrendered to nature. He was tired and He could go no further, and His feelings overcame Him. But that was momentary. Immediately the faithful instrument, His humanity, revived and went on with its work. If you read the pages of the New Testament, you see the unalterable devotion of His life. It would be impossible to imagine a greater degree of devotion. We know that never for one second did His devotion flag; that every moment was full of that urgent eagerness, that ardor to do His Father's will, that hunger for souls. We must, I was going to say, reflect that utter devotedness, but the expression is inadequate. Because it is not a case of reflection. His love is in us, for we are part of Him. So rather, we must radiate His solicitous love for mankind, if we let ourselves be the medium for that radiation, He will put forth His power and achieve His plan.

POWER MUST GO OUT FROM US.

You will remember the story in Scripture where the woman pressing to get near Him managed to touch the hem of His garment. Forthwith as He says Himself, power went out from Him. No less will happen if we try to realize our destiny in Him. Then power will go out from us no matter how weak we are. We are his up-to-date garment of flesh. For all our poverty and misery and sinfulness, He is eager to use us. Indeed, He is constrained to use us, because the Head has need of the members; and you are members who humbly place themselves at His disposal.

Now, that is your program. How are you to reach out to the whole world? First of all, reach out to your own little world, the world which revolves immediately around you. You have in this great metropolis (this talk was given in New York) an image of the whole wide world. Here in your own city you have all the races of the earth, all the problems without exception. Yet it is not as big as the world, and in a real sense, it would be possible for you to get into some sort of touch with every person in the area. It might not be a very intense touch, but you can establish a touch. You can go to people. You may not be able to convert anybody, but that is not the problem. The Lord did not say: Convert everybody, because conversion is His gift. But He did say: Go to everybody. When we have fulfilled the command of going to every person, then what is going to happen?

I would petition you to take this idea seriously. You are a goodly host as it is and you have a happy and good spirit in you. It would be a terrible thing if you were to limit that by not realizing the use that you are to put it to. You must lift up your eyes, look out to the ultimate horizons of your own world here, and think in terms of every soul. Think in terms of the multitude of Jews that you have in this city, the multitude of non-Catholics, the multitude of terrible, seething problems, the Catholic souls that are sick and sorry and making no use of their lives. Do not let your heart fail when you contemplate that spiritual chaos, but think in terms of the doctrine that I have been trying to put before you. Remember that though you are a little flock, He who is mighty is not merely in the midst of you, but is living in you and wants to realize through you His eternal mission. If you open your mouth, the words of eternal wisdom will be uttered by Him through you in His fashion. If you walk and go to people, it is He whom you are carrying to those people. It will not be your feebleness which will be at work, but His might. - So that when you do these things for a little while, fruitlessly it might seem, suddenly the desert flowers and conversions begin to pour in.

Fill yourselves with that crusading spirit. Nothing less is worthy of our Faith. Big ambitions and courageous action will attract the Holy Spirit. If you attract the Holy Spirit, you have set things moving. You may be opening up a new era in the world.
