



THE LEGION OF MARY

The Legion of Mary is an approved association of the Catholic Church, which seeks to help its members grow in holiness by uniting them under the leadership of MARY IMMACULATE in carrying out apostolic good works which have the approval of the diocesan bishop and the parish priest. It was founded in Dublin on the 7th September 1921 by Frank Duff, an Irish civil servant, and it still has its headquarters in that city, although it is now a worldwide organization found in every continent. There has been a group (praesidium) of the Legion of Mary in this parish for over 50 years.

The Legion is organized on the model of an army – the Roman army – and operates on a clearly defined plan which it expects its members to adhere to strictly. There is a weekly meeting which includes prayer, spiritual reading, reports and plans for apostolic work for the week ahead. For those who are officers there is in addition a monthly meeting of the next higher group or council. In Birmingham there are two such groups, one for South Birmingham and one for the Centre and North Birmingham; this latter group, the Senatus, also supervises the Legion in the dioceses of Clifton, Plymouth, Menevia and Birmingham. There are special groups for those under 18, and the Legion has associate or praying members who support its work by their prayers. (Auxiliary or Adjutorian members.)

THE LEGION OF MARY IN THE ORATORY PARISH.

There is a Senior Praesidium (or group) that meets in the Oratory House on Wednesday nights throughout the year at 7.30pm. Meetings usually finish about 9pm. Members undertake to do two hours active work during the week ahead. The President of our Praesidium is Mrs Pat Healey.

There is also a Junior Praesidium that meets in the Oratory House on Fridays at 5.30pm. Meetings usually finish about 6.30pm and members undertake to do at least one hour of active work in the week ahead. The President is Mr Emanuel Aderbiyi.

The Legion of Mary has, over the years, undertaken a great range of apostolic activities. Its preferred work is visiting the sick, house-to-house visiting, retrieving the lapsed and helping people to understand or come to the faith. There

is nothing, however, it will not undertake if called on to do so, except collecting money and distributing relief to the poor. This task it refers to the S.V.P.

Our praesidium has organised meetings and days for those enquiring into the Faith, and for the lapsed. It has promoted dialogue with the Jews through “*Pillar of Fire*” meetings. It began an apostolate in the Bull Ring every Saturday afternoon. The Rosary is said publically and other legionaries contact members of the public and speak to them about the Faith. This is now carried out on a city-wide basis. Some of our members have gone abroad, taking the Gospel to Argentina, the Netherlands, Russia, Scotland and even the Holy Land. Youth members have gone house-to-house visiting in Cornwall, the Potteries, and in Muslim districts of Birmingham. At one time the Legion of Mary ran the Piety Stall. It also promotes

devotion to the Blessed Trinity, the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady, the Rosary and the Miraculous Medal – and all things Catholic!

The name “Legion of Mary” conjures up in the minds of those who are long-time denizens of the Oratory Parish some famous names of both far off times and of yesterday. I mention only two, Hilary Crush and Olive Alonzo, for fear of offending those of you, once legionaries, who are still alive. We thank you all.

The Legion of Mary has its heroes: the Venerable Edell Quinn, Apostle of East Africa; the Servants of God, Alfie Lambe, Legion Envoy in South America, and Frank Duff, the Legion’s Founder. It also has countless martyrs, especially those who laid down their lives for Our Lord in China at the time of the Revolution – some of these mere children.

GW. ■