

Legion of Mary General Information

Do you want to learn more about the Catholic faith?

Do you want to enrich your prayer life?

Do you want to develop close Catholic friendships?

Do you want to grow closer to Jesus and His Mother?

"*It is no longer I who live,*" says the apostle, "*but it is Christ who lives in me.*" (Gal 2:20) Interior life means that one's thoughts, desires and affections converge on our Lord. The model for achieving this is Our Blessed Lady. She continually advanced in holiness, for spiritual progress, is, most of all, progress in charity or love, and charity grew in Mary during her whole life. All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love...."

-Legion of Mary Handbook, pages 203 and 204

What is the Legion of Mary?

Founded by Frank Duff at Myra House in Dublin, on September 7, 1921, the Legion of Mary has been active in the United States since 1931, has been approved by the last six popes, and was endorsed by the Second Vatican Council. Since then, it has become the largest apostolic organization of lay people in the Catholic Church with well over 3 million active members giving service to the Church on a voluntary basis in 170 countries. The Legion of Mary sees its ministry as an organization for the laity to be an extension of the priest and takes as its mission "the glory of God through the holiness of its members developed by prayer and active cooperation in Mary's and the Church's work."

What does the Legion of Mary do?

Members become instruments of the Holy Spirit through a balanced program of prayer and service. Based on the Gospel, this service and may include parishioner visitation, visitation of the sick or aged, religious education, visiting the newly baptized, airport ministry, or meeting the other spiritual needs of the parish community. Legionaries are under the spiritual guidance of the pastor as an extension of his heart and hands.

Who can join?

The Legion of Mary is open to all Catholics who:

- Faithfully practice their religion;
- are animated by the desire to participate in the Church's apostolate through membership; and,
- are prepared to fulfill each and every duty which active membership in the Legion involves, including the obligations to daily prayer.

How do I join?

The first step is to be a guest at a meeting of the Legion of Mary. Guests are always welcome and can go on one of the work assignments with an experienced member if they choose.

Join the Legion

Membership is open to all baptized Catholics. After visiting a *praesidium* a few times, one can join the Legion as a probationary member. This probationary membership lasts for three months, after which he or she has to

decide whether to join the Legion as an active member permanently. Membership in the Legion of Mary is essentially based on discipline and commitment. Members devote their time and prayer for the intentions of Mary, Mother of God.

Types of membership

Active members: These members regularly attend the weekly sessions of their *praesidium* and pray the *Catena Legionis* daily, the official prayer of the Legion which essentially consists of the *Magnificat* and some shorter prayers. Their main role lies in their active apostolate for the Legion and the Church. Members under the age of eighteen are considered "Juniors," because they cannot take the Legion Promise yet, but they are still able to hold any office in their *praesidium*, except President.

Auxiliary members: These members support the Legion through their prayer. They pray the whole booklet of Legion prayers, the *Tessera*, every day. The *Tessera* consists of an invocation, prayers to the Holy Spirit, the Rosary, the *Catena*, and some concluding prayers.

The St. Pius X *praesidium* of the Legion meets weekly on Tuesdays at 7 PM in the New Library.

Legion Meetings

For all sessions, the "Altar of the Legion" is set up. During the meetings, all the prayers of the *Tessera* are said. The sessions start out with the introductory prayers to the Holy Spirit and in veneration of Mary. These include five decades of the Rosary. The following part of the session includes a spiritual reading and administrative matters. Each member tells in short words how he or she has fulfilled their tasks assigned to them at the previous session. They also discuss and/or read a chapter from the *Handbook of the Legion*. Then the *Catena Legionis* is prayed, and the spiritual director or (if he is absent) the President holds a short sermon about spiritual matters (we call this the *allocutio*.) Finally, the new tasks for the legionaries are distributed. Each meeting ends with the concluding prayers of the *Tessera* and a prayer for the beatification of our founder, Frank Duff.

Our Spirituality

The spirituality of the Legion of Mary is essentially based on the approach of St. Louis de Montfort as put forward in his book *True Devotion to Mary*. De Montfort promoted a "total dedication" to Christ through devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which later also influenced St. John Paul II, as mentioned during his papacy in his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*.

An important element that shaped Legion spirituality was Frank Duff's devotion to the Holy Spirit. He promoted the oft neglected adoration of the Third Person of the Trinity through the Virgin Mary, whom he saw as the "visible image" of the Spirit.

The essential aim of the Legion of Mary is the sanctification of its members through prayer, the sacraments, and devotion to Mary and the Trinity; and the sanctification of the whole world through the apostolate of the Legion.

The idea of an organization where ordinary lay people in all situations of life would work for their own sanctification and for the conversion of the world was groundbreaking for its time. Only when the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) promoted such ideas in its documents did such an approach gain wider acceptance in the Catholic Church.