



# LEGION OF MARY APOSTOLATE

OTTAWA REGIA OF THE LEGION OF MARY

2017 SPECIAL REPORT

The year 2017 has been one filled with joy and at the same time a very fruitful year for the legionaries of Mary throughout the Ottawa Diocese.

At the parochial level, individual legionaries carried out their weekly apostolic assignments diligently and with deep devotion. Legionary apostolic assignments are grouped under the three “C” categories– Conservation, Consolation and Conversion.

## **A. Conservation:**

Legionary Conservation assignments include working with parishes’ youth and children’s formation programs, teaching the Rosary in Catholic schools, visiting lapsed and lukewarm Catholics in their homes and visiting prisons.

## **B. Consolation:**

This work involves visiting residents in hospitals, elderly and physically challenged parishioners in their homes and conducting Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion Service in Extensicare and Senior Residents Centers. Legionaries coordinated a two-night pilgrimage to a Marian Shrine and held a day of recollection for seniors and physically challenged adults.

## **C. Conversion:**

Legion of Mary evangelization is a 24/7 assignment. Always going two-by-two, legionaries carry out their door-to-door visitation and they also evangelize on the Ottawa Carleton city buses. In both cases, they distribute parish bulletins, offered Rosaries, Miraculous Medals and other Catholic literature and religious articles as each situation calls for. They also maintain a lending library of Catholic books, affectionately known as the ‘book barrow.’

At the Diocesan level, six major functions were undertaken:

### **1. The Legion of Mary Annual Acies Ceremony:**

The Annual Acies in March allows active and auxiliary members of the Legion of Mary to gather and renew their individual and collective consecration to our Blessed Mother and their declaration of fealty to Mary, their queen and receive from her strength and blessing for yet another year’s battle with the forces of evil.

**2. The Annual three-day weekend Retreat at the Orleans Retreat House in May:**

Under the guidance of Fr. Mark Slatter, the Retreat Master, participants renewed and strengthened their spiritual energy for another year of apostolic assignments.

**3. The Study Day workshop in November:**

The workshop focused on helping Praesidia improve their extension efforts.

**4. The Annual Social Function in December:**

This annual gathering allows all Active and Auxiliary members to renew old acquaintances and meet new friends and co-workers.

***But the two most joyful and successful undertaking in 2017 were:***

**1. The Coordination of the Celebrations of the 100th Anniversary of our Lady Apparition at Fatima:**

2017 marked the Centenary Anniversary of one of the most astounding events in the history of mankind: The Apparition of Our Lady to the three children at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. To avoid the scattering of uncoordinated celebrations across the Archdiocese and to maximize the solemnity and impact of the honour due to our Blessed Mother and her warning messages and devotional requests for world peace, the Legion of Mary had permission from the Ottawa Archdiocese to coordinate a special celebration to honour our Blessed Mother on this occasion.

The celebration consisted of a series of celebrations in parishes across the diocese, but in particular:

- a. the coordination of a series of Holy Masses and other celebrations on the 13th of each month, in five different parishes; and
- b. the climaxing celebration on the weekend of October 13/14th, consisting of:
  - a procession of the authentic Pilgrim Statue of Blessed Mother Mary from the St. Patrick Basilica to Notre Dame Cathedral; followed by
  - a solemn Holy Mass celebrated by his Grace, the Most Reverend Terrence Prendergast, on Friday evening, October 13<sup>th</sup> at Notre Dame Cathedral in Ottawa, followed by a light reception in the Cathedral downstairs reception hall; and
  - another solemn Holy Mass the next day, Saturday, October 14th, followed by a luncheon banquet with guest speakers on the key messages of Fatima and their consequences for world peace.
- c. The climaxing celebration on October 14th began with a solemn Holy Mass at the St. Maurice Church celebrated by His Excellency Bishop Christian Riesbeck and con-celebrated by the Spiritual Directors of the two High Councils of the Legion of Mary

(i.e., the Toronto Senatus and the Ottawa Regia). Following mass, there was a procession of the authentic Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima from St. Maurice Church to St. Gregory School where a luncheon banquet with guest speakers was held.

## 2. The Story of the Market Ministry:

### LEGION OF MARY

### THE MARKET MINISTRY STORY

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*The Legion of Mary is a world-wide Association of Catholics who, with the sanction of the Church and under the powerful leadership of Mary Immaculate; Mediatrix of all Graces, have formed themselves into a Legion for apostolic service in the warfare which is perpetually waged by the Church against the world and its evil powers.*

*The object of the Legion of Mary is the glory of God through the holiness of its members developed by prayer and active co-operation, under ecclesiastical guidance, in Mary's and the Church's work of crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ. "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). The Legion must be, so to speak, obsessed by that final commandment of Our Lord at the Ascension. It must, as a first principle, set out to establish a contact of some sort with every soul everywhere. If this be done — and it can be done — then the Lord's command will be moving towards fulfilment.*

*For the purposes of the work of the Legion, members are addressed by the title of "Brother" or "Sister" as the case may be.*

### HISTORY

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Active street side evangelization in Ottawa's Byward Market was started in the 1990's by Our Lady of Light Praesidium, which then met at St. Patrick's Parish Hall. On a city bus, one Saturday morning, the then President of this Praesidium heard a conversation between two young women who were sitting behind her. The young women were talking openly and frankly about the fact that, although they were prostitutes, they wished that somehow, they could get away from this type of work. Sr. Cheryl relates that she felt like Our Lady 'tapped me on the shoulder' to indicate that the Legion needed to do something to help them.

The idea was discussed at the next meeting of Our Lady of Light Praesidium and everyone agreed that they would begin doing street-side evangelization. This work initially was assigned, each week to two legionaries of the Praesidium. In the beginning, a different pair was assigned each week and as the Praesidium then had many members, this meant that nine pairs, in turn, took on the challenge.

Over time, Sr. Lucie loved the work so much that she asked for it to be a permanent assignment; subsequently working with several partners over the years. Upon hearing of the work being undertaken, Sr. King from the Praesidium at St. George's, offered to train Our Lady of Light Legionaries for it. (She had experience doing street-side evangelization in Manitoba and had continued it in the Hintonburg area of the city.)

The result was, not only the evangelization of those people whom they encountered on the street in the Byward Market but also the evangelization and spiritual support to the vendors and their helpers. Many Miraculous Medals were distributed!

From the beginning of this work incredible results were realized with the only problem being that, each week, the Market Authority would ask legionaries to leave the Market area and instead only focus on Rideau Street. That happened so frequently that Market Authority finally offered the Praesidium a compromise. They would include the Legion of Mary as an official charitable organization (like the Boy Scouts or Girl Guides) and then give them permission to set up a booth, one weekend each year, to do street side evangelization. If the Praesidium agreed, the work then could be done with the support and protection of the Market Authority. In the interim, Sister King had offered to train Legionaries to do this work.

Our Lady of Light Praesidium accepted the Market Authority's offer and started going into the Market area two full August weekend days, each year, with support from Legionaries from other Praesidia in Ottawa. Legionaries were assigned, in pairs, to staff the booth for two hours at a time. Miraculous medals were blessed and put on string by residents of a local senior's residence. Legionaries contributed any Catholic literature that they thought would be of interest to passersby.

As this ministry continued to develop, Sr. Mary B suggested that we read the book written about the early Legion evangelization in Dublin, both to encourage and to guide the work and Sister Janet offered to guide, train and encourage legionaries who undertook this work.

True to their word, the Market Authority allowed legionaries to book space during an entire weekend each year for a table and supplied much needed security. (Later they also provided tables and chairs and, eventually, set up a marquee tent for legionaries for protection from the elements.)

During that first weekend in August when the Legion of Mary table was set up, over 5000 Miraculous Medals were distributed and many, many spiritual conversations took place. One of the 'street people,' who was very curious as to what was going on, offered to roller-blade Miraculous Medals to all her friends. They then gathered, that afternoon, near the Legion table to ask questions.

After that year, and for each one following, legionaries have had incredible discussions about the faith and have related many extraordinary experiences that transpired. For example, the year of

the beginning of the Gulf War, a man stopped by the Legion of Mary table and asked about the blessed Miraculous Medals that were being handed out. He took one and walked away but returned within minutes to ask for 45 more Miraculous Medals. Surprised, the legionaries present asked why he wanted so many and he responded that his unit was due to deploy to the war zone the next morning and he, as their commanding officer, “wanted each man to have a Miraculous Medal in their kit.”

For many years Our Lady of Light Praesidium continued to organize this annual street side ministry effort with the support of other Ottawa Praesidia members, priests, seminarians and even, one year, a bishop! Eventually, though, the Senatus of Ontario was asked to take over. They agreed and appointed Sr. Liz as the first Senatus Coordinator. A committee then was formed to 1) draw up a roster so that each Praesidium would take turns in organizing the Ministry each year, and 2) to ensure that the supply table had what was needed as far as content and numbers (approved by Senatus).

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## **TODAY**

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As in the past 25 years, the Market Ministry continues to be an annual activity for the Legion of Mary in Ottawa. In the Summer of 2017, a table was set up at the corner of Dalhousie and George Street in the Byward Market with the statue of Our Blessed Mother presiding.

On the table were blessed Rosaries and Miraculous Medals and pamphlets about them in both English and French. Included, too, were many leaflets on Catholic teachings. This booth was staffed from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM that Saturday and Sunday with Legionaries from various parishes; each for a two-hour period. As before, Legionaries walked the streets of the market, greeting locals, tourists and passersby; distributing rosaries and pamphlets to whoever would take them. They gave away hundreds of Rosaries, Miraculous Medals and Catholic pamphlets and spoke to hundreds of tourists and residents on a wide variety of faith topics.

The Market Ministry continues to provide a wonderful opportunity to evangelize! Legionaries have learned a lot from doing this work and have grown in their faith while doing it. This year summer (2018) we will be back in the Market again and hope to have with us, not only legionaries but also members of religious orders.

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## PERSONAL TESTIMONY AND OBSERVATIONS

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This is definitely an excellent means of promoting Our Blessed Mother in downtown Ottawa.

United in prayer,

*Mother Mary Bernadette,  
Queenship of Mary Community*

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Our Lady of Guadalupe Praesidium, Good Shepherd Parish: Sr. Theresa and I attended the market ministry today from 2-4 PM. Fr. Pedro and Sr. Mary, from Our Lady Queen of Peace Praesidium, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish and Br. Jean from Marie, Reine des Apôtres Praesidium, St. Bonaventure Parish, also present.

One story that I feel compelled to share from the many conversations is about Maria, a woman originally from Poland who, although raised Catholic, never learned to pray the Rosary. (She said that when she was young, the communists made sure of this.) I gave her some Rosaries and pamphlets and talked her through one rosary. She was very quick to pick up the instructions.

She cried while sharing that she, although confirmed in Poland by then Bishop Karol Wojtya, was not a regular parishioner at any parish but that she can look after her grandchildren. The daughter's home is close to The Good Shepherd Parish. I gave her a bulletin from our parish and she said she would love to visit the church. Then, to my amazement, Maria pulled out a Tessera\* prayer pamphlet which she prayed every night except for the Rosary.) She told me that she felt meeting the Legion of Mary was God's way of showing her that He loves her and wants her to return to Him.

I found that the two-hour assignment at the Market Ministry went by quickly and there were always people to talk with.

God bless,  
*Sr. Jennifer*

*\*A leaflet called the Tessera, containing the Prayers of the Legion and bearing a reproduction of the Legion Picture, shall be issued to every member, active and auxiliary.*

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A lady came to our table and was given a medal. She tied it around her wrist and talked to us for a while (10 to 15 minutes.) She then she told me that she had stopped here with a headache and that now her headache was gone.

I remember Sister Janet kept putting Miraculous Medals under the steps of a strip club nearby and praying, then not long after the club caught fire and the place closed.

*Sister Angela*

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Mother of Our Redeemer Praesidium, Holy Redeemer Parish, had the time slot on Saturday, from 12-2 PM. Present were Srs. Franca, Meiling, Balsam and Rexana and two auxiliary members (Mary Lou and Angela).

It was a fantastic first experience of this apostolic work on a beautiful sunny day. We have seen many people in many different categories, colors, ages, origins, religions and social levels. We have seen students, singles, couples, families, groups of friends, workers, taxi drivers, homeless, men, women, children, etc.

Personally, I experienced the work of the Holy Spirit not only on the people we met, but through the amazing work of my sisters and brothers in the Legion of Mary working side by side with such enthusiasm, with a heart set on fire to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ through the devotion of His Blessed Mother and the Rosary. Within the first hours of my work, I gave out about 20 Miraculous Medals with their pamphlets and 20 rosaries with pamphlets of Pray the Rosary Daily (English and French).

Among many reactions (or examples) that struck me that day was when we asked some families with adults and children if they would like to have a Miraculous Medal and/or a Rosary, the adults refused but the children would love to have one, so we gave the rosary and medals to children if adults didn't object.

Another is that a taxi driver, who stopped at the corner of the street where it is not allowed to stop, opened his window to receive our gifts of Rosaries (he asked for two) and Miraculous Medals with pamphlets for both.

Another example was the simple workers who I thought would refuse my offer of the Rosary and Miraculous Medals but once they knew they were free, they immediately accepted the gift with joy and respect.

At last, some people, who were hesitant to take a Rosary, told us to give it to someone else who needed it. But we replied by saying that maybe they knew someone who needed the rosary so that they could give it to him/her which made them accept the Rosary and the pamphlet.

And many other amazing stories that could be shared by my sisters and brothers who were present at the Market Ministry prove how God and His Holy Mother's blessings worked in our hearts enkindling in us the fire of their Love and the Love of Jesus Christ that we wanted to share with all people we met that day.

Thank you and God Bless,  
*Sister Balsam*

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A young couple introduced themselves and said: "We are tourists from Hamilton. We have been observing you and your friends all afternoon, in fact we have been following some of your friends around the Byward Market. We've seen joy in their eyes when someone accepted a rosary or a miraculous medal from them as well as disappointment when someone refused or even insulted them.

Is this the usual kind of work of the Legion of Mary?" I replied: "All Legion of Mary assignments are based on the principle that personal contact is key to success in apostolic/evangelization works. One very effective way to approach many people for evangelization is through personal contact in areas where a crowd assembles such as the Byward Market, Exhibition Grounds, etc. We used to have booths at the Canada National Exhibition but due to financial constraints we now have the Market Ministry as you witness today. Legionary apostolic work involves other personal contact assignments such as door-to-door visitation, visiting hospitals, extended care centers, prisons - these all require personal contact. We are an extension of our parish priest.

I know that the Legion of Mary is very active in Hamilton and hope that you will contact the legion of Mary in your own parish or one of the praesidia/groups in a nearby parish. They/we need you.

To Jesus through Mary."

*Brother Peter*

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I have been many times to Market Ministry over the years to give out Rosaries, pamphlets, etc. One time I remember a lady who wanted to know how she could help her children in their lack of faith. I said, with the Rosary I was handing out to her, to say (before starting the Rosary): 'With this Rosary I am binding all my children to the Blessed Virgin Mary'.

*Sister Rita*

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In 2016, we were at the corner of Dalhousie and as I recall, we were assigned with Immaculate Conception Praesidium that day. It rained heavily all day. We distributed a package which included a rosary, pamphlet and medal. There was a young girl sitting on a bench with a little boy, when we approached her she said I am not interested. By the end of the morning she came to us and asked us for rosary the medal. She placed it around her baby's neck and read that pamphlet. That day was a bit wet and cold. It was a slow day.

*Sister Mildred*

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I will never forget Sr. Cheryl telling us of the man who was sitting on the sidewalk with his head hanging down. When she held a Miraculous Medal down to him, he said: "Mother Mary, you haven't forgotten me."

One of the years that we were assigned to a spot by The Bay's entrance was when our St. Clement Parish priest dressed in his long, black cassock stood out in the open there and attracted people like a magnet. He was constantly surrounded by shoppers.

I was struck one year at how poorly I guessed who would or would not accept a Rosary. I headed towards a man in a 3-piece type suit, thinking, 'he'll accept a Rosary for sure.' Wrong - I was brushed off. Then I saw a young man with wild hair and jewelry in his lips, eyebrows, nose, etc. I thought there was no way he would listen to me. When I asked him if he would like a free Rosary, he said 'yes'. When I then asked him if he knew what a Rosary was, he proudly put his hand into his shirt and pulled out his Scapular to show me! I realized you really can't tell from the outside what's going on inside a person!

I was unfortunately on the shift the year that our beautiful statue of Our Lady of the Cape got broken. A huge storm came up with very strong winds and blew the statue over. In the height of the storm, the three of us 'on duty' at the Legion table hung on to three of the poles holding up the canopy. A young man (who looked like he might have been a street person) showed up out of nowhere and hung on to the fourth pole until the storm subsided, then he just disappeared into the crowd. A light breeze then came up that dried us off.

It seems that some years we receive more than we give!

*Sister Liz*

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The times I spent at the Market Ministry were a great experience. I was stationed at the table where all the information was on the table. A lot of homeless people came over and I gave them a Rosary and a Miraculous Medal. Some wore the Rosary and the medal around their neck and were very happy to receive them. It was a very rewarding and spiritual experience.

*Sister Cindy*

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For me, the experiences are positive and negative. We joined another Praesidium at noon for two hours. It was a learning experience for me. I encountered an old man, homeless, living from place to place. He was so happy to receive a rosary and medal that I gave two to him. He asked me to give him another set of rosary and medal to give to his friend.

I met a mother and her teenage daughter going to the market. As I approached them, the mother told me, she's not interested, and they went walking away.

A single mother, walking with her baby girl in the stroller, I gave her a rosary, a medal and prayer card, she took it, but I noticed that she left it afterward.

Two young university students, both girls, I offered them a rosary and a medal, they are very interested, they even asked me how to say the rosary.

Whatever I experienced that day, whether or how many I encountered, I leave everything over to our Blessed Mother and I just pray for them.

*Sister Amelia*

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In 2015, Our Lady Queen of Peace Praesidium, from Assumption Parish, hosted the market ministry. It was well organized and well attended. Three people from our Praesidium were present for two hours.

We distributed pamphlets, rosaries, and medals. It was a learning experience for me as it was my first time working with the Market Ministry. It was a challenge, some of the people listened and walked away, others took our package and said they would pray for us.

*Sister Mildred*

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