

**Address by Fr. Shroff at the March 23, 2013 *Acies* Ceremony
(St. Peter Parish, Ottawa)**

Legion Handbook, ch. 39: Cardinal Points of the Legion Apostolate
(excerpt)

What place must we assign to Mary? - Some may take alarm and say it is a slight to God to credit too much power to a mere creature. But if it has pleased God to make it so, how does it slight his dignity? How foolish it would sound were anyone to say that the force of gravity derogates from God's power! That law of gravity is from God, and accomplishes his purposes throughout all nature. Why should one think it disrespectful to allow as much to Mary in the universe of Grace? If the laws which God has made for nature show forth his might, why should the law which he has made for Mary do otherwise than manifest his goodness and omnipotence?

But even if it is conceded that acknowledgment is due to Mary, there still remains the question of its manner and amount. "How"- some will say - "am I to apportion prayer to Mary and prayer to the Divine Persons or to the saints? What is the exact amount - neither too much nor too little - which I am to offer to her?" Others will go further and their objection will present itself as follows: "Would I not turn away from God were I to direct my prayers to her?"

All these grades of doubt proceed from applying earthly ideas to heavenly things. Such persons are thinking of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and of Mary and the saints, as if they were so many statues, so that to turn to one they must necessarily turn away from others. Various examples might be utilised to help towards a better understanding of the true position. But, strange to say, the simplest and at the same time the holiest solution of such difficulties lies in the recommendation: "You must,

indeed, give all to God, but give it all with Mary." It will be found that this apparently extreme devotion to her is free from the perplexities which measuring and moderation bring.

Every action should endorse her Fiat. - The justification of this method is to be found in the Annunciation itself. In that moment all mankind were joined with Mary, their representative. Her words included their words, and in a sense she included them. God viewed them through her. Now, the daily life of a christian is nothing else than the formation of our Lord in that member of his Mystical Body. This formation does not take place without Mary. It is an outpouring and a part of the original Incarnation, so that Mary is really the Mother of the christian just as she is of Christ. Her consent and her maternal care are just as necessary to the daily growth of Christ in the individual soul as they were to his original taking of flesh. What does all this involve for the christian? It involves many important things of which this is one: he must deliberately and whole-heartedly acknowledge Mary's position as his representative in the sacrificial offering, begun at the Annunciation and completed on the cross, which earned Redemption. He must ratify the things she then did on his behalf, so that he can enjoy, without shame and in their fulness, the infinite benefits thereby brought to him. And that ratification: of what nature is it to be? Would a once-repeated act suffice? Work out the answer to this question in the light of the fact that it was through Mary that every act of one's life has become the act of a christian. Is it not reasonable and proper that likewise every act should bear some impress of acknowledgment and gratitude to her? So the answer is the same as that already given: How much are you to give to Mary? "You are to give her everything."

My dear brothers and sisters of the Legion of Mary,

This excerpt that I read to you from ch. 39 of the Legion Handbook is a response to the objection that some people have in regards to Marian devotion. “If I give too much to Mary,” they say, “wouldn’t I be taking away glory from Jesus?” This question comes from a very protestant mindset. To the protestant so-called “reformers”, a Christian must always go to Jesus directly. One must read the Bible and interpret it for oneself; one must pray directly to God, and to God alone; one must do every action for God, but without passing through the mediation of others (not even the mediation of the Church). For to go to God through another person would be idolatry. This is what protestantism professes as its belief. There is no place in that system for mediators or intercessors. Mediators, it is believed by them, take away from the unique mediation of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God.

But when we actually turn to the Scriptures, and read them in Faith, it becomes clear to us that God does, in fact, use mediators to bring about his plan of salvation for mankind. The first mediators were the angels. And we see the angels throughout the Scriptures, in the Old and New Testaments, interceding for man, mediating between man and God. We see this even at the Annunciation, in which God has a special message for Mary; but he doesn’t come himself to give her that message: he uses an intermediary, the Archangel Gabriel. “In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God...to a Virgin...and the Virgin’s name was Mary.” These brief words from the Gospel of St. Luke show us that God uses angels to bring about his

Will. But he also uses men. Moses was a servant of God, and the people of Israel went to God through Moses. Even the holy Law of God was given to his people not directly, but through Moses. The wisdom of God was given to the people through the prophets, and also through the kings. We think, for example, of the wisdom of Solomon, which clearly reflected Divine Wisdom, the Wisdom of God given to his people. The prophets and the kings, in fact, were all mediators between God and men. And so to say that God only wants us to go to him directly, without passing through any mediator, is simply unbiblical.

In the New Testament, Christ would become the full, universal, once-and-for-all Mediator between God and man. And yet, even Jesus Christ would not come into this world directly: even he chose to come into this world through the mediation of a human being: this time, not a man, but a woman. Christ wanted to come into this world through Mary, and that is why God prepared Mary's womb from the very beginning to be that spotless, immaculate, most-pure and most-holy tabernacle of the Most High. Mary was the first tabernacle of God. It is in her that God dwelt really, truly and substantially for the very first time in this world. Before our tabernacles, before our Catholic altars where Holy Mass would be offered to God day after day, ... before all that, Mary's womb became the first tabernacle of the Real Presence of Jesus. And so, we must ask the question: Is it wrong that we should go to God, that we should approach him, in the same way in which he approached us? If God came to man through Mary, how could it possibly be wrong for us to go to him through Mary? When we give Mary our all, that is exactly what we are doing. We

are promising to never go directly to Jesus, but that rather, we will always approach him through our Blessed Mother.

The words of our consecration to Mary, that we will each individually recite today, express that very desire: that desire of giving all to Our Lady. “I am yours, my Queen and Mother, and all that I have is yours.” Through these simple words, we give everything to Our Lady, to do with as she wills. This act of consecration mentions two things: I am yours, and all that I have is yours. All that I have, means all my possessions, all my good works, but also all the graces, merits and indulgences that I have gained. All of it is given to Our Lady to dispose of as she so wills. And the first part, “I am yours”, underlines the fact that we do not just give to Mary what we have, what we own, what we have won or gained in terms of merit or grace. Our consecration is much deeper than that. We do not give to Mary just what we have, but also who we are. “I am yours.” In other words, “I belong to you, O Mary. Not just my good words, but I myself am your possession, and I place myself into your hands to do with as you will.” This total self-giving to Jesus through Mary is what St. Louis-Marie de Montfort rightly calls “divine slavery.” It is a very strong expression, and that is why many are not able to receive it, or to accept what it implies. But we, of the Legion of Mary, must be willing to accept it fully. We no longer belong to ourselves. We belong to Mary. We are slaves of the Holy Mother of God. But our slavery is not a human one, that takes away our freedom and makes us prisoners. Our slavery is divine, which means that it makes us truly free. That is the great paradox of our consecration. By giving all to Mary (even our free will), we become infinitely more free. We are freer to love God, to

love Christ, and to love all our fellow man, because henceforth, we can love them in and through Jesus and Mary.

Today, may the renewal of our act of consecration to Our Lady not just be an external gesture. May it be a profound, interior gesture of self-giving, of self-immolation. We are called to die to everything within us that cannot be offered to Mary. Sin, self-seeking, disobeying the Will of God: none of these things can be offered to Mary for the greater glory of God, and so they must die within us. But all that is good, and noble, and true: these are the things that must animate our whole existence, and these are the things that we can and must offer to Our Blessed Mother through today's renewal of our act of consecration.

May Mary fill us with her spirit, so that we too may be able to become a pure and holy offering to God the Father, through God the Son, in God the Holy Spirit. Mary always leads us to the Blessed Trinity. May she guide us and protect us in a special way as we consecrate ourselves to the Most Holy Trinity through her maternal hands.

“O Mary, our Queen and our Mother, we offer ourselves entirely to thee. And to show our devotion to thee, we offer thee this day our eyes, our ears, our lips, our heart, our whole being without reserve. As we are thine, good Mother, keep us and guard us safely as thy own property and possession, to the praise and glory of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.”