

All to Jesus through Mary

allocutios for Legionaries – Vol. 3

by

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PREFACE

Here is another in a series of allocutios given in Adelaide, South Australia, for praesidium and Comitium meetings of the Legion of Mary.

The allocutios cover a range of material from consideration of the Handbook to aspects of Catholic life, especially as it concerns Legionaries.

They can be used at Legion meetings, or for private reflection.

Words, written or spoken, are usually inadequate to deal with divine mysteries. I pray that the words of this book will be helpful, at least to some, as they make their pilgrim way through this life.

May Our Lady bless all that we do in her name, and add her powerful intercession to our own prayer in these times.

Fr David Thoroughgood
8 February 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
Part I - The Praesidium Allocutios	5
Prayer	5
Praying for outcomes - how should we pray?	7
Caring for our own.....	9
The Brown Scapular	11
Spirit of the Legion	13
Striving for success	15
Transfiguration	17
Assumption	18
St Bernard	20
Helping understand suffering	23
Without sin	25
Humility.....	27
Our Lady of Ransom	29
The Angels.....	31
The Rosary	33
The Interior Life	35
Scandal in the Church.....	37
Non-practising Catholics.....	39
The personal touch	41
St Francis Xavier	43
Higher gifts.....	45
Contrasts.....	47
The Epiphany	49
Jesus found in the Temple.....	51
The value of Retreats.....	52
Abstinence	55
Grace.....	57
Lourdes	59
Legionary zeal.....	61
The Pope	63
Humility.....	65
The old and the new.....	67
Consecration.....	69

The Annunciation	71
A vague apostolate is of little value	72
Attracting converts	74
After Mass	77
Second nature	79
The Holy Spirit	81
Courage	83
The Eucharist	85
Always on duty	87
Perseverance	90
St John the Baptist	92
Belonging	93
Time	96
Sickness	97
Mary Magdalene	99
The New Evangelisation	101
Our Lady of the Snows	103
Humble attitude	107
Prayer requests	109
Catholics and society	111
Saying prayers	113
Good effects	115
Willing to be martyrs	117
The Bible	119
Consecration to the Immaculate Heart	120
Christian character	122
Mary, Mother of all	124
Holy Souls	126
Spiritual help	128
Anticipating Grace	130
Being present	132
Evangelising the city	134
Immaculate Conception	136
Jesus Christ	138
Part II - The Comitium Allocutios	141
Contemplation and Action	141
Prudence	143

Our Lady of Sorrows.....	145
The Lay Vocation.....	147
Christ the King.....	149
Joy or tears.....	151
Order through obedience.....	153
Prudence and Fear.....	155
Peace.....	157
Mary and the Blessed Trinity.....	159
Gentleness.....	161

Part I - The Praesidium Allocutios

1. Allocutio 18.6.12

Prayer

There are many reasons why we might not pray but we could reduce them to two broad categories - opposite to each other, yet both able to act upon us - Complacency and Despair.

Complacency: is any time we mistake our own personal good fortune for the state of the whole world.

Just because I enjoy my breakfast and my morning walk by the river and the birds are singing in every tree - I cannot forget that there are souls in need of mercy, that people are in danger of going to Hell, that many sins will be committed this very day; and then all the suffering carried in the daily news of killings and bombings and general chaos throughout the world.

I may be happy in my little world, but who is going to pray for all these needs if not I, who am supposed to be a Christian?

It is no use my saying that God will look after it, if God Himself has asked me to pray. He *could* do it without me, but chooses to wait on me to see what I will do.

He wants us to be involved in the work of our own salvation; we are not to be just passive spectators. If

we do not pray we will not receive the promised blessings.

Despair: is any time we do not pray for want of feeling up to it, for letting disappointment and discouragement prevent us from confidently putting our needs before Almighty God.

We are inclined to this feeling often, because we take many blows in this life, and can easily lose enthusiasm.

We must pray on regardless, believing in the power and the promises of God. His arm is not shortened; He does not weary. He is as powerful now as any other time. If we stop praying – as with complacency – things don't happen that should happen.

So the devil plays tricks on us. It sounds simple to follow the instruction – just keep praying and all things will be given to you. But we are tempted to stop praying either because we are going too well, or not well enough. And we are in one or other of those states most of the time.

So most of the time most people are not praying, and that is just the believers! The unbelievers are not praying either, so the church is empty. Churches are so empty we have to lock them so no intruders can get in.

So we pray all the time, regardless of any other circumstance. Mary, always at prayer yourself, keep us always attentive to our need to pray.

2. Allocutio 25.6.12

Praying for outcomes - how should we pray?

The most important part of any prayer is to draw closer to God. We can pray for rain or for a safe trip or the healing of an illness, but none of those things can compare with the need to be united with God.

We might just assume that we are united with God, or think we can work on that later; but it is always the most important thing, and the most urgent. The goodness of God is the one certainty in everything that happens.

I usually do not know what His will for me is in any given situation. He may want me to recover from an illness, for example, or He may want me to die at that point. But either way, He wants me to affirm total trust in Him.

It is hard for us to achieve this kind of trust in practice. We tend to say, if a prayer is answered favourably, that God is good. But, does this mean that He is not good if we do not get what we want?

In this latter case we tend to keep a polite silence. We are disappointed in God but we will not say so. This cannot be right. God is just as good whether the particular prayer request is achieved or not. He does not increase and diminish in goodness. He is eternally perfect.

What we need to do is move our thinking away from particular outcomes, and more towards a true recognition of God's goodness.

This does not mean we are indifferent to what happens. But without losing any of our legitimate concern for earthly matters, we can increase our concern for the true recognition of God.

We can find ourselves concerned almost entirely for what happens, and hardly at all for God. If we move the focus somewhat we can find another way of seeing things.

If we begin with glorifying God we come to trust that His will is perfect and is working itself out in every situation. This makes us not indifferent, but peaceful. A new sense of serenity encompasses us and enables us to deal with the worst, or the best, that can happen.

As our assurance in God increases we realize His ability to swing things around in a different way than we would have expected.

We see just one thing at a time. God sees everything at once. What we regard as a disaster in the short term may be a blessing in the longer term.

Our prayer will always help to improve some aspect of the situation.

But, more accurately, our prayer will bring us to a closer union with God, and this is everything. From

that union certain good things will happen on the everyday level, but those things will not be as important as the union with God.

We have to pray first and foremost that we come to know God more completely.

That is our main prayer, and the main purpose of prayer.

3. Allocutio 2.7.12

Caring for our own (Handbook, chapter 34, part 3: the vice president)

A theme that comes through this section of the handbook is the need to care for each other.

The Legion goes out to every remote place looking for the despised and outcast. But we also must look after our own members, and this section on the role of the Vice President makes this clear.

The Vice President has special responsibility to be aware of the situations of the praesidium members, supporting those who are members, facilitating the entry of new members, and encouraging wavering members.

The Legion is essentially outwards-directed but we need an 'inwards' component as we become aware of the humanity of each other in the praesidium.

We know how hard life can be for ourselves with our various anxieties and pressures. Probably the person on your left and right will have the same problems as you do, or at least similar.

This realisation will bring us closer together in both our Legion identity and more generally as members of the Church.

It would be partly our own experience of suffering that makes us willing to alleviate the sufferings of others. The Legion, being primarily a spiritual body, seeks to alleviate suffering by offering a word of hope; encouraging lapsed Catholics to return to the faith; non-Catholics to find the true faith; and existing members of the Church to deepen their commitment.

So we encourage each other to pursue the Legion vocation, as well as our fullest possible identity with Christ and His body, the Church.

The Legion philosophy always seeks to get the most out of every opportunity. The more good we do to others the more good we do ourselves, in terms of spiritual growth, and a heavenly reward.

So we treat each other with the greatest possible kindness and understanding, adding prayer to our goodwill, and seeking to come to the final reckoning 'without the loss of anyone' (Legion closing prayer).

This is not just the Vice-President's concern but should be everyone's desire.

Our small praesidium can be and should be a micro version of the Kingdom of God come among us. Our Lady, help us to make it so.

4. Allocutio 16.7.12 The Brown Scapular

The brown scapular is a sacramental and like all sacramentals carries certain promises if used in the right way and the right spirit.

It clearly cannot be used as a good-luck charm somehow guaranteeing salvation independently of how the one who wears it conducts his life.

God cannot be deceived. There are stories of the scapular helping to save (either spiritually or physically) those who were wearing it in the right spirit; and other stories of the scapular not helping those who had no faith in it.

How does any sort of guarantee work if it cannot be understood in simply physical terms? The power of any sacramental is that they will assist any good intentions on our part; they provide a little bit of 'wind assistance' from Heaven.

We can go a certain distance by ourselves, but we will go further if we allow ourselves to be carried by more powerful forces from Heaven.

This applies to Sacraments as well as sacramentals. We need all the help we can get to be holy, to rise

over temptations, to enable the better side of our characters to emerge.

[Examples of sacramentals include: holy water, crucifixes, statues, the sign of the cross, blessed medals...]

The proper use of sacramentals will enable us to have the right motives and be seeking holiness for its own sake.

So we are saved from hell not by some technicality but because with the help of the scapular we desire more fully to live a life of holiness; and so desiring we will find ways of achieving that goal. This is a much more positive and healthy approach to the subject.

The scapular is a physical and visible way of connecting ourselves to Our Lady. We need help to bring the spiritual realm into the everyday world, lest our spiritual thoughts remain only thoughts and ideals.

Let us wear the scapular, then, and make use of other sacramentals – to advance our own personal holiness and to be available instruments for Our Lady to use in her efforts to reach her other children.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.

5. Allocutio 23.7.12

Spirit of the Legion

The spirit of the Legion of Mary is that of Mary herself. Especially does the Legion aspire after her profound humility, her perfect obedience, her angelical sweetness, her continual prayer, her universal mortification, her altogether spotless purity, her heroic patience, her heavenly wisdom, her self-sacrificing courageous love of God, and above all her faith, that virtue which has in her alone been found in its utmost extent and never equalled. Inspired by this love and faith of Mary, her Legion essays any and every work and “complains not of impossibility, because it conceives that it may and can do all things. (Handbook, Chapter 3)

The spirit of the Legion and its purpose for existing come to much the same thing: through the great merits and perfections of Mary we are enabled to pool together our talents and best aspirations to achieve a united work for the glory of God and the sanctification of humanity.

The strength of the Legion comes from its devotion to Mary, its humble obedience to Church authority, and the bringing into a united whole of the talents and goodwill of many individuals.

We can achieve a lot more together than alone, is the principle at work.

And not only are we ‘together’ with each other but also together with Mary and all the powers of Heaven. This gives us great strength and potential for much good, if we keep to this original spirit of the Legion.

Always we will be tempted to 'go it alone', to rely only on our individual talents and judgment as to what is best.

The Legion structure and spirit curb any excessive individuality on our part and form us into a larger reality than we could ever have achieved ourselves.

The Legion aspires after Mary's 'profound humility'. For all her individual brilliance she is the most humble person ever to have lived; insofar as she realised better than anyone her dependence on God.

Humility helps us curb our own individualism. Charity helps us to go outwards to others. If we have both these qualities we are ready to work with Mary to bring hope into the lives of the general public.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, says the Christmas reading. The light is there but it still looks as though many people are walking in darkness.

As Legionaries we must constantly renew our own personal hope in better things to come so that we have something to give to others.

Among Mary's many good qualities was Perseverance - she never gave up pursuing what was right and good.

She will obtain this quality for us as well as all other qualities we need to work in her service.

Mary, Queen of the Legion, bless the work we do in your name.

6. Allocutio 30.7.12
Striving for success

With the Olympic Games upon us it is timely to draw spiritual lessons from the world of sport.

We all like to win but what prize are we after?

Athletes have been running around the stadium for a long time, as far back as St Paul, who drew this analogy: *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* 1 Corinthians: 9: 24-25

St Paul is saying two things here: that we should put more important goals ahead of less important ones; and that to achieve the more important goals we should be prepared to expend whatever effort is required.

When we see how hard athletes train, are we prepared to put that sort of effort into our faith? Up early every morning; pushing our body into sacrifices such as fasting and self-denial?

Many Legionaries would put themselves through the discipline of daily Mass, which often requires physical exertion, getting out of bed, putting up with heat or cold, giving up softer options of how to spend our time.

Legionary work itself is a further exertion, which could be easily avoided, but which we know to be worthwhile; so we force ourselves a little harder.

The spiritual life also requires control of the thoughts and the tongue; so it is actually more demanding than the sporting life.

And it goes for much longer. A sporting contest lasts for a few minutes or a few hours; and then we can rest; but the spiritual life is always active. It is always possible at any time of day or night to do the right or wrong thing in a spiritual sense.

So is it all too hard to be spiritual, to enter such a rigorous contest? When we consider the prize for which we compete - eternal life in heaven - it becomes clear that the reward far exceeds the effort; more so than in the case of a sporting contest.

And we have another advantage over the athletes insofar as we do not have to wait till the end of the contest to enjoy its fruits. We can experience already the peace and joy that come from a life lived in the service of Mary. May she help us persevere to the end of the race.