

"THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE,"
SAID CHRIST (St. Mark 16: 15). HOW?

To use the Patrician phrase, the world is prepared to listen and to learn. Are we prepared to give the world what we possess?

Last year Sweden and the U.S.A. were the scenes of ambitious Peregrination ventures. Each was a successful case of the working out of the above phrase, that is, they learning what we were able to teach. The sequels will vitally affect the religious life of those Nations. So much so as to constitute the difference between inactivity and activity — or to put the contrast more accurately, between death and life. For the place in which there is no evangelisation will be non-practising — or worse—in the next generation.

In due course all other places must be taken in so that the same lessons will be learned and applied. It may be asked: Will not the success obtained in Sweden and America be impressed on other legionary areas through the medium of Maria Legionis, etc., so that they will proceed to action? No. In the first place many of those places do not bother to read Maria Legionis which endeavours to unite all Legionaries in sympathy and knowledge. One great English-speaking Senatus area takes no copies at all, and so is clean out of touch with the arteries of Legion life.

But even if all places did know intimately what is being achieved elsewhere, still that would not suffice. This is the strange lesson which has been learned throughout the years. You know the saying of the Poet that stone walls do not a prison make nor iron bars a cage. Likewise words alone do not teach, no matter how sensible or detailed. The importance of this fact is extreme, for the opposite belief has ruled.

Especially it has dominated the religious field. The old Catholic Action was excessively an affair of platforms and classes. It was presumed that when people knew their duty, they would set out to do it. That erroneous supposition devastated the apostolate and hit heavily at the Church—because apostleship and faith constitute the life of the Church. The platforms and classes churned away vigorously but insufficient followed. Then as the promised results did not ensue that first plane of operations, Catholic Action tended to betake itself to politics.

Politics has its own sphere, and Catholics should not remain aloof from them. It is vital to make government enlightened and pure for it can lift or degrade the people. But it would be disastrous to think that society can be reformed by that means alone. Politics is certainly not going to Christianise the world. At very best it can but create an atmosphere favourable to moral good and religion.

The reliance must be on the common pastoral apostolate into which it would be destructive to mix politics. If the Legion erred thus, it would lose at least half its members, because their political thinking is diverse. However, this is far from saying that the Legion does not concern itself about the complex needs of the world. But its motto is: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all those other things shall be added on to you" (St. Matt. 6: 33).

And the Legion's plan of campaign is True Devotion to the Nation, which puts divine things and human things into due proportion; builds motive and means into a whole; and would seek to be helpful to all sections and parties without affiliating to any.

In regard to the foregoing I doubt if minds have yet been properly orientated. For in the new Lay Apostolate can be seen too many of the old Catholic Action ideas. For instance: (a) the draw towards politics; (b) a concentration on the problems rather than on the

souls comprised; (c) an impatience of Ecclesiastical control—which would be fatal, for the Mystical Body must work as a whole.

It does look terribly as if—to use the popular phrase—the Legion has to go it alone, as it had to do in the past. So I just suggest that you give yourselves to it with added conviction. Put your heart into the duties which have been assigned to you. Try to bring all others into that activity. Then they in turn must try to do the same to others, to send the ripples on further. If this process were to be realised even on a partial scale, the whole population of the world would be rapidly enveloped in an apostolic network. But is this possible?

The approaching of other people with a view to influencing them to enter on your own path is not a completely simple process. It depends not only on you but also of course on those other persons. Moreover it depends on the instrument through which it is proposed to effect apostleship. The Council, repeating the Popes, has insisted that in practice it will be necessary to implement individual apostolic duty through organisation. But any sort of organisation will not do. Proposing an unsuitable organisation will not lead to action. On the other hand the Legion has worked. Bishop Fulton Sheen has been speaking on this subject in terms which could not be stronger.

Neither is it enough to propose the Legion and its works to other places by speech or on paper. There must be a physical presentation. The Legion can only be effectively presented by example: the doing of work in company with the novice, the teaching of the novice through precept and action. In other words we are back again to the master and apprentice system.

For years we have been urging in respect of Sweden that the people must be sought out in their surroundings and that Catholicism must be proposed to them. Our words had no fruit. Our arguments were met by saying

that Sweden was unique; that the methods of elsewhere could not be applied there. And so things remained until the recent great expedition which proved that our methods *were* applicable and that approach to the people on religion both in their homes and on the streets was easy and promising. Now perhaps a new era has been ushered in in that land.

Much the same has been the case in the U.S.A. All recommendations as to reaching out wholesale to the population, seeking conversions, going after the Skid Row people and all the underneath classes, produced little effect. Because in the hearts of those we were addressing was the belief that their circumstances were different. Now it has been demonstrated to them that the Legion approach is as easy (or if you like, no more difficult) than in other places. It follows that the same demonstration has to be afforded to the entire world.

No doubt each territory has its special difficulties. But likewise each one has its own special assets. Why concentrate exclusively upon the former, as is our perverse way? As God is everywhere, so the Church must be suitable to all places. Therefore apostleship or approach to souls must be possible in all places.

After toiling away for a dozen years on what might be called domestic chores, the Peregrinatio now finds itself face to face with widened horizons and dramatic possibility. Another stage in its evolution seems to have been reached. It has proved its value and necessity beyond yea or nay. So far it has been like a nucleus more or less confined to a single place, that is working out from Ireland. Have we not now come to the point when we must follow the course of the original legionary development, that is to divide and expand the nucleus? Must we not associate with ourselves as full partners the countries which have been worked on so far?

The first instalment of this process would lie in joint enterprises. The next stage would be that they would become nuclei on their own, vested with individual responsibility and their own mission to other lands. If this can be still further extended—and why not—then we are entering on what is called the geometric progression which carries us far and extremely fast.

For the benefit of the lesser mathematicians among you I define this progression. If a doubling up occurs at each stage, that is one becomes two, and two becomes four, and four becomes eight, and so on, a simply colossal development is possible. I repeat the story of the Eastern Emperor who was cured of a desperate disease and who asked his physician to name his fee. The doctor pointed to a chess board which was in front of the Monarch and said: One grain of wheat for the first square, two for the second, four for the third, and so on for the sixty-four squares of the board. The Emperor laughed and said that this was too miserable a reward. Try, said the doctor. The mathematicians were called in and it was found that the whole realm could not supply the fee.

Therein is shown the fantastic power of the geometric ratio. That is the principle which must be harnessed in our cause, not as a measure of perfection but as sheer necessity. Because if something drastic is not effected at once, the Church will have sunk to being only 5 per cent of the world's population by the end of this century. Moreover, of that 5 per cent only 1 per cent would, on the present basis of things, be practising; so that a condition of quasi-extinction would exist. This statistical expectation represents a ghastly reversal of the attitude of conquest with which the early Christians faced their world. So now perhaps we begin to see why God in due time produced the Legion and made it into a support in this crisis. Furthermore, as the emer-

gency is extreme, so must it be a time of superabundant grace. This is the basis of our hope.

But even a supernaturally based hope does not fulfil itself. As the Handbook stipulates, the Legion must be helped and driven by ecclesiastical authority. Control without active help would amount to imprisonment. Likewise there must be a sound co-operation on our part. Otherwise all our idealism will be only like escaping steam. I state some other imperative requisites:

The first is orthodoxy. I mean the holding of the common Catholic faith in which we have been brought up. It is being menaced today by something which is uncomfortably like a first-cousin to Protestantism. Even the supreme Articles of Faith are being assailed. I pick out one which concerns us greatly and which is particularly the subject of undermining. I refer to our Blessed Lady. The suggestion is widespread that the Council has played her down. A more improper suggestion could hardly be made. It only shows how little people have considered the matter and how far a parrot-cry can travel.

I give the position in a few words. In the whole history of the Church there has been no previous promulgation on the subject of Mary's role in grace. Everything proclaimed in the past had been in regard to her privileges. Now a Council Decree is produced which describes her office, her maternity of grace. Is it a weak document as one might be led to think from the minimising talk? Well, it parallels the Legion Handbook. Many persons have thought that it was a paraphrasing of the Handbook. Is the Handbook weak on the subject of Our Lady? The Decree comes up to the Handbook; it does not pass it. The one renders the other. In such circumstances how can any balanced individual say that Our Lady has been minimised by the Council? So pin your Marian faith to what is in the Handbook. It is totally endorsed by the legislation of the Council.

You know how insistently the Legion reminds us that Mary is the Mother of every soul. This is a truth which the Council now seals with its authority. Her maternal attention is not confined to those inside the Fold. These number only a proportion of mankind whereas she is concerned with all, those who do not know her, even those who have been turned against her.

Each one must be made aware of her, told something about her. This forms a presentation of them to her; and in regard to each of them she will seek to fulfil her maternal office of giving Christ. The old order does not change; she is made necessary today as she was from the beginning.

Herein lies a peremptory motive for a universal, un-discriminating approach to people. As a first principle we must at least endeavour to present all souls to her. Not one of them would be left without benefit. It would be inconceivable that an encounter between Mary and one of her children would be unavailed of by her. As Chesterton says: "Whom has she greeted and not graced in greeting? Whom did she touch and touch not to his peace?"

Likewise I lay the stress on faith rather than on reason, on the soul rather than on its environment, on grace rather than on worldly expertness, on the Sacraments rather than on economics and politics, on full human effort rather than on the short cuts afforded by electronics and the Linotype machine.

Hold on to the common Catholic faith for it is being grievously menaced by Modernism. The latter is the evil of the day. Let us make no mistake about it. It represents at best a slurring of the supernatural, and at worst a contradiction of it. Note in this connection that many of those who are talking loudest about the Scriptures are the very people who do not believe in the Scriptures. See for instance their attitude towards Angels, the papacy, miracles, even towards the Eucharist.

One of the gifts which the Legion has in store for its members is the supreme one of a simple faith. In his recent very deliberate pronouncement to the Concilium, Archbishop, now Cardinal, Bafle said that the Legion was pre-eminent among the Societies of the world for its faith and its obedience.

In this setting of simple, common Catholicism I strike the keynote of it all—the getting into touch with every man. The Handbook's harping on *every soul* is but the repeating of the Lord's Last Will and Testament, His global commandment: Go out into the whole world and deliver to each one My Gospel. And all that receive it, baptise them. It is Our Lord Himself who has declared thus. Do not let any false reasonings or weakness of faith water down the force of it.

A special aspect of the Peregrinatio lies just there. It tries to make contacts on the widest possible scale, and especially among those who otherwise would escape the fingers of the Church. The making of the first contact should be a very principle of ours, because without a first contact there will be no subsequent contact, and few souls are converted at first touch. A process of conversion has to begin with a first contact. The position is much the same as in nature where there has to be seed or germ out of which can proceed development. Viewed in this way, the Peregrinatio assumes a new dimension. It is the deliberate providing on a great scale of those seeds or germs which offer to God the opportunities for which He is seeking. Obviously the more numerous these are, the better. Not all of them will germinate, but as suggested in the Handbook, some sort of proportion will be found as between the number of the initial contacts and the eventual fruits.

Despite every effort and great faith on the part of the Legionary, germination will not take place in many of those approached, because there are not in them the qualities requisite for conversion. But surely some

good will be accomplished in all cases. A claim has been made on Mary which irresistibly draws her on to fulfil her motherhood. That motherhood is unique. It is an extension to all humanity of her Divine Maternity. It is a contrivance of the Holy Trinity to help souls. Through it, the Holy Spirit carries on His mission to men. Accordingly her hand cannot rest, even momentarily, on anyone without leaving the imprint of grace.

Grace begets grace. A grace responded to summons another, so that a first contact should tend towards a second, and so on indefinitely. This creates the image of a chain, each link of which draws another link. This natural image inadequately portrays the supernatural reality, for (a) the ordinary chain may break, and (b) there may be nothing at the end of it. In the higher order the chain will not break of itself, and there is infinity at its end. As that first contact has been produced by your faith and effort, it should lead to development in the supernatural order just as the casting of the seed into the soil tends towards development in the order of nature. That seed has but to encounter some favourable conditions, and the same can be said for the contact.

When planning, do not stress the difficulties at that first stage, but only when your own thought has taken solid form. An ideal in its first stage is somewhat like a bubble. If it is hit at, it dissolves. So only when you have convinced yourself in regard to the necessity of a scheme is there room for a fair weighing of it against the difficulties. Moreover do not reason as if grace did not exist. Your work is built on the fact that grace does exist. Just now we are planning on very big lines. There is plenty of room for the "Practical Man" to step in and point out how impossible everything is. According to that principle which I have just been enunciating we should not at this first

moment consider the question of the obstacles at all. If we do, we may blight the great projects in the bud.

A large proposition has been put forward in the suggestion that this year the Peregrinatio should wing its way to Central Africa. Such a visit by Legionaries from over here would catch the imagination of the African Legionaries as nothing else could. If in addition we could prevail on them to accept our Peregrini into their homes as guests, it would cap the transaction and justify it on the grounds of fraternity as well as of apostleship.

The necessity of Africa at the present time is definitely immense. Several of the new nations there have already expelled the Catholic Missionaries, and it is certain that others will follow this unhappy lead. One of the greater African statesmen recently declared that Christianity is only a remnant of colonialism; that the Christians are living a sort of cocoon-existence of their own without interest in the people or their lives. This is unjust. For the benefits already bestowed on Africa by Christianity have been incalculable, and their withdrawal would leave a desert. But that line looks like a prelude to drastic action.

It is of paramount importance that we should institute a quick building up of the Legion in that Continent and the giving to all its members of a very wide and exalted outlook including the Peregrinatio. For this we have little time. Surely however we have enough of it to cast seeds. As the Gospel points out, the farmer casts these seeds promiscuously. Some fall in soil that is fertile, some on rocky ground, and some in brambles. And it is promised that in spite of the failures there will be mighty increase and harvest.