



# Mary's Notebook

December 2007

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Issue 20

Section	Page
Front Page	1
News & Events	2
Handbook Study	3
Divine Mysteries	4-6
Legion Spirit	7
Special/Extra	8

## Richmond Retreat

The Richmond Curia held a joint retreat with the Tidewater Curia and three other curiae on Friday, November 9 and Saturday, November 10, 2007. The retreat was spiritually uplifting, and a chance to meet legionaries from Across Virginia [Cont. p.2].

## Please Pray for George Bonina Jr.

On September 28, 2007, George Bonina Jr. had a stroke. If people recall, George is the publisher of the Legion Video Series, and the Son of Legion members George and Monica Bonita. After his stroke, he was taken to Prince William Hospital. Then, after a 6 1/2 week stay at the Mount Vernon Rehabilitation Center, George was discharged on December 4 and came home. [CC p.2]

## Annual General Reunion

The Tidewater Curia celebrated its Annual General Reunion at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Newport News Virginia. Legionaries from Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Williamsburg came together with legionaries in the Newport News area to have a good time. Special thanks go to the praesidia at St. Rose of Lima for taking the lead in planning the event. Special thanks are also due to Donna Kurtz for coordinating the food for the event, and to Anthony Rossi for coordinating the entertainment. Of course, everyone else pitched in as well. [Cont. p.2]

## Divine Mysteries: Christian Hope

*Excerpts from Spe Salvi - On Christian Hope.*

1. "SPE SALVI facti sumus"—in hope we were saved, says Saint Paul to the Romans, and likewise to us (Rom 8:24). According to the Christian faith, "redemption"—salvation—is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey. Now the question immediately arises: what sort of hope could ever justify the statement that, on the basis of that hope and simply because it exists, we are redeemed? And what sort of certainty is involved here? [Cont. p.5]

# News and Events

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Issue 20, Mary's Notebook

## Pray for George Bonina

He made remarkable improvement. He can now walk short distances with a cane and minor assistance. He can climb short flights of steps. This means that he can get around the house without the use of a wheel chair. God protected his memory and personality. He is still George. This is a great blessing to us. One of the first things he did when he came home was to go on the Internet to check his favorite movie sites.

While he has made great progress, he still has a way to go to complete recovery. His left arm is still not functioning but they said there is activation in the shoulder and it should recover, although it may take a while. His therapy will continue at home and later as an outpatient. At some point he will return to Georgetown Hospital to have the piece of his skull replaced that was removed when he had his brain swelling.

Please continue your prayers. We are grateful to you for all your prayers. We know that God has heard them. God is the healer as he works through the doctors, nurses and therapists.



## Annual General Reunion

The reunion was held at 3:00 pm on Sunday, December 9, and was great fun. The Legion of Mary prayers were said throughout the day, but the main focus was fun and fraternity. It was great fun.

## Richmond Retreat

The Richmond Curia was held at Mary, Mother of the Church Abbey 12829 River Road, Richmond, VA 23238. Many participations stayed over night, while others stayed in town elsewhere or attended only the functions on Saturday. Participants joined in the daily prayers of the community, joined in the Masses, listened to talks, shared meals, and had time for private reflection and prayer. Another special blessing of the event was the opportunity to meet and talk with legionaries in other curiae.



# Handbook Study

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Issue 20, Mary's Notebook

## Find and Fan the Spark

When dealing with a Catholic family, have it in your mind to bring each individual into the active ranks of the Legion itself. This program may seem to be unreal, but it is necessary in order to screw up your approach to the proper pitch. Consider this important idea for a moment. Suppose you believe those whom you visit to be unfit for Legion membership. Does this not mean that in a charming way you are patronizing them; that in your heart you are adopting the superior attitude, which we have been deprecating? You may not see it so, but they will discern it. They will know that you are limiting the appeals, which you make to them. Your talk is of auxiliary membership, the Patricians, etc., but not a word about the active ranks of the Legion! Tactically a wrong position is created. You are making a radical difference between them and you.

And actually are they not all capable of being active members of the Legion? Certain ones might not be able to do a particular work, but surely in the width and length of society a Christian job can be found for each willing one? Never forget that every Christian is bound to be apostolic according to his capacity. Never should you judge too much from the outside. Even to the less critical eye, some may appear to be pretty backward and unpromising. I give you one example where that surface view was infinitely misleading.



It is the case of Michael Stephen Ekeng, the first legionary of all Africa. When first he arrived in Calabar as a little boy of six, stolen by slave dealers from his village in the center of Africa, brought down the river and sold as a kitchen boy - I am sure he gave no sign of his future possibility. Yet he fought his way into the Church. He became the president of the first praesidium in all Africa, then president of the first curia, and then president of the first comitium. He was initially a rough diamond. Yet that diamond was able to be polished up so that it became something rare and beautiful. Now that diamond is adorning the diadem of our Lady up in heaven.

So do not be tempted to judge by exteriors. Try to see in everybody to whom you go a like possibility, the rough stone that can be polished to a diamond - the undeveloped soul that can be turned into a Michael Stephen Ekeng. Be sure that God made no soul without hiding in it a spark of his own immensity. Your mission is to detect that spark and fan it to celestial fire.

*From Home Visitation by Frank Duff*

# Divine Mysteries

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Issue 20, Mary's Notebook

## *Christian Hope*

[CC. p.1]

3. Yet at this point a question arises: in what does this hope consist which, as hope, is “redemption”? The essence of the answer is given in the phrase from the Letter to the Ephesians quoted above: the Ephesians, before their encounter with Christ, were without hope because they were “without God in the world”. To come to know God—the true God—means to receive hope. We who have always lived with the Christian concept of God, and have grown accustomed to it, have almost ceased to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God. The example of a saint of our time can to some degree help us understand what it means to have a real encounter with this God for the first time. I am thinking of the African Josephine Bakhita, canonized by Pope John Paul II. She was born around 1869—she herself did not know the precise date—in Darfur in Sudan. At the age of nine, she was kidnapped by slave-traders, beaten till she bled, and sold five times in the slave-markets of Sudan. Eventually she found herself working as a slave for the mother and the wife of a general, and there she was flogged every day till she bled; as a result of this she bore 144 scars throughout her life. Finally, in 1882, she was bought by an Italian merchant for the Italian consul Callisto Legnani, who returned to Italy as the Mahdists advanced. Here, after the terrifying “masters” who had owned her up to that point, Bakhita came to know a totally different kind of “master”—in Venetian dialect, which she was now learning, she used the name “paron” for the living God, the God of Jesus Christ. Up to that time she had known only masters who despised and maltreated her, or at best considered her a useful slave. Now, however, she heard that there is a “paron” above all masters, the Lord of all lords, and that this Lord is good, goodness in person. She came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her—that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme “Paron”, before whom all other masters are themselves no more than lowly servants. She was

known and loved and she was awaited. What is more, this master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her “at the Father's right hand”. Now she had “hope” —no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: “I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good.” Through the knowledge of this hope she was “redeemed”, no longer a slave, but a free child of God. She understood what Paul meant when he reminded the Ephesians that previously they were without hope and without God in the world—without hope because without God. Hence, when she was about to be taken back to Sudan, Bakhita refused; she did not wish to be separated again from her “Paron”. On 9 January 1890, she was baptized and confirmed and received her first Holy Communion from the hands of the Patriarch of Venice. On 8 December 1896, in Verona, she took her vows in the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters and from that time onwards, besides her work in the sacristy and in the porter's lodge at the convent, she made several journeys round Italy in order to promote the missions: the liberation that she had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, she felt she had to extend, it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope born in her which had “redeemed” her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody....

I would like to begin with the classical form of the dialogue with which the rite of Baptism expressed the reception of an infant into the community of believers and the infant's rebirth in Christ. First of all the priest asked what name the parents had chosen for the child, and then he continued with the question: “What do you ask of the Church?” Answer: “Faith”. “And what does faith give you?” “Eternal life”. According to this dialogue, the parents were seeking access to the faith for their child, communion with believers, because they saw in faith the key to “eternal life”. Today as in the past, this is what being baptized, becoming Christians, is all about: it is not just an act of socialization within the community, not simply a

welcome into the Church. The parents expect more for the one to be baptized: they expect that faith, which includes the corporeal nature of the Church and her sacraments, will give life to their child—eternal life. Faith is the substance of hope. But then the question arises: do we really want this—to live eternally? Perhaps many people reject the faith today simply because they do not find the prospect of eternal life attractive. What they desire is not eternal life at all, but this present life, for which faith in eternal life seems something of an impediment. To continue living for ever—endlessly—appears more like a curse than a gift. Death, admittedly, one would wish to postpone for as long as possible. But to live always, without end—this, all things considered, can only be monotonous and ultimately unbearable. This is precisely the point made, for example, by Saint Ambrose, one of the Church Fathers, in the funeral discourse for his deceased brother Satyrus: “Death was not part of nature; it became part of nature. God did not decree death from the beginning; he prescribed it as a remedy. Human life, because of sin ... began to experience the burden of wretchedness in unremitting labour and unbearable sorrow. There had to be a limit to its evils; death had to restore what life had forfeited. Without the assistance of grace, immortality is more of a burden than a blessing”[6]. A little earlier, Ambrose had said: “Death is, then, no cause for mourning, for it is the cause of mankind's salvation”[7]....

Naturally, new generations can build on the knowledge and experience of those who went before, and they can draw upon the moral treasury of the whole of humanity. But they can also reject it, because it can never be self-evident in the same way as material inventions. The moral treasury of humanity is not readily at hand like tools that we use; it is present as an appeal to freedom and a possibility for it. This, however, means that:

a) The right state of human affairs, the moral well-being of the world can never be guaranteed simply through structures alone, however good they are. Such structures are not only important, but necessary; yet they cannot and must not marginalize human freedom. Even the best structures function only when the community is animated by convictions capable of motivating people to assent freely to the social order. Freedom requires conviction; conviction does not

exist on its own, but must always be gained anew by the community.

b) Since man always remains free and since his freedom is always fragile, the kingdom of good will never be definitively established in this world. Anyone who promises the better world that is guaranteed to last forever is making a false promise; he is overlooking human freedom. Freedom must constantly be won over for the cause of good. Free assent to the good never exists simply by itself. If there were structures, which could irrevocably guarantee a determined—good—state of the world, man's freedom would be denied, and hence they would not be good structures at all....

It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love....

He once described his daily life in the following terms: “The turbulent have to be corrected, the faint-hearted cheered up, the weak supported; the Gospel's opponents need to be refuted, its insidious enemies guarded against; the unlearned need to be taught, the indolent stirred up, the argumentative checked; the proud must be put in their place, the desperate set on their feet, those engaged in quarrels reconciled; the needy have to be helped, the oppressed to be liberated, the good to be encouraged, the bad to be tolerated; all must be loved”[22]. “The Gospel terrifies me”[23]—producing that healthy fear which prevents us from living for ourselves alone and compels us to pass on the hope we hold in common....

30. Let us summarize what has emerged so far in the course of our reflections. Day by day, man experiences many greater or lesser hopes, different in kind according to the different periods of his life. Sometimes one of these hopes may appear to be totally satisfying without any need for other hopes. Young people can have the hope of a great and fully satisfying love; the hope of a certain position in their profession, or of some success that will prove decisive for the rest of their lives. When these hopes are fulfilled, however, it becomes clear that they were not, in reality, the whole. It becomes evident that man has need of a hope that goes further. It becomes clear that only something infinite will suffice for him, something that will always be more than he can ever attain. In this regard our contemporary age has developed the hope of creating a perfect world that,

thanks to scientific knowledge and to scientifically based politics, seemed to be achievable. Thus Biblical hope in the Kingdom of God has been displaced by hope in the kingdom of man, the hope of a better world which would be the real “Kingdom of God”. This seemed at last to be the great and realistic hope that man needs. It was capable of galvanizing—for a time—all man's energies. The great objective seemed worthy of full commitment. In the course of time, however, it has become clear that this hope is constantly receding. Above all it has become apparent that this may be a hope for a future generation, but not for me.

And however much “for all” may be part of the great hope—since I cannot be happy without others or in opposition to them—it remains true that a hope that does not concern me personally is not a real hope. It has also become clear that this hope is opposed to freedom, since human affairs depend in each generation on the free decisions of those concerned. If this freedom were to be taken away, as a result of certain conditions or structures, then ultimately this world would not be good, since a world without freedom can by no means be a good world. Hence, while we must always be committed to the improvement of the world, tomorrow's better world cannot be the proper and sufficient content of our hope. And in this regard the question always arises: when is the world “better”? What makes it good? By what standard are we to judge its goodness? What are the paths that lead to this “goodness”?

31. Let us say once again: we need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain. The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope. God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely

sense and which nevertheless, in our deepest self, we await: a life that is “truly” life. Let us now, in the final section, develop this idea in more detail as we focus our attention on some of the “settings” in which we can learn in practice about hope and its exercise....

32. A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer. When no one listens to me any more, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, he can help me[25]. When I have been plunged into complete solitude ...; if I pray I am never totally alone. The late Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, a prisoner for thirteen years, nine of them spent in solitary confinement, has left us a precious little book: *Prayers of Hope*. During thirteen years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, the fact that he could listen and speak to God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him, after his release, to become for people all over the world a witness to hope—to that great hope which does not wane even in the nights of solitude...

35. All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action....

41. From the earliest times, the prospect of the Judgment has influenced Christians in their daily living as a criterion by which to order their present life, as a summons to their conscience, and at the same time as hope in God's justice....

The Church has greeted Mary, the Mother of God, as “Star of the Sea”: *Ave maris stella*. Human life is a journey. Towards what destination? How do we find the way? Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by—people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way. Who more than Mary could be a star of hope for us? With her “yes” she opened the door of our world to God himself; she became the living Ark of the Covenant, in whom God took flesh, became one of us, and pitched his tent among us (cf. Jn 1:14).

# Legion Spirit

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Issue 20, Mary's Notebook

## Mary and the Mission of the Church

The whole Church reflects on her missionary vocation during the month of October and she also renews her love and practice of praying the Rosary. In many ways the mission of the Church and the praying of the Rosary are intimately connected. This is certainly profoundly true of the spiritual life of Legionaries.

Let us first look at the missionary vocation of Mary because this is an effective way of coming to understand the mission of the Church. The vocation of Mary is always to bring Jesus into the world. Nothing more and nothing less. With her whole mind, heart, soul and body, indeed, with everything that she is and has she seeks to give Jesus to each one of us. This too is the authentic and primary mission of the Church.

Of course, the missionary vocation of Mary is the gift of a sharing in the life and mission of Jesus. God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son. The mission of Jesus is to give us the love of God, to offer us forgiveness of our sins, and a life of intimate union with the Trinity. The language and the meaning of the words of Jesus on the Cross are infinitely precious and life giving. So, we hear, 'Father, forgive them,' and 'I thirst.' These words express everything in the heart of God in our regard. Calvary is the most perfect statement of the mission of Jesus. These words were branded on the heart of Mary.

Mary was the first one to hear those words of her Son from the Cross and makes them her own. No one will ever understand these words and identify themselves with their source more than Mary. Our Lady understood the personal, infinite, passionate thirst for love and for souls in the cry 'I thirst'. The motherhood that Jesus bestows on Mary at Calvary is a sharing in his infinite thirst for souls - no one is outside the desire of Mary to lead all souls to Jesus. This leads us to an understanding of the missionary vocation of the Church and of every member of the Church.

It is the desire to share in Mary's maternity of souls that is at the heart of the Legion Apostolate. This is what we mean when we desire to be a slave of Mary in

the practice of true devotion to her. As all legionaries know, true devotion to Mary consists in surrendering oneself as a slave to Mary, and to Jesus through her, and then performing all our actions with Mary, in Mary, through Mary and for Mary. The Legion seeks to continue the missionary vocation of Mary. True Devotion to Mary takes precedence over all other works of the Legion. All our apostolic activity on the outside is greatly diminished if there is no union with Mary on the inside in our hearts. For this reason, Legionaries turn to Mary before, during and after our weekly apostolic activities. We turn to her habitually. She is our life, sweetness and hope.

What are the mission methods that Mary uses to fulfil her missionary vocation? Well, one of them is surely the Rosary. The Rosary is simply a focusing on Jesus with the help of Mary. It is an utterly christocentric prayer concentrating on the fruit of Mary's womb Jesus in all his mysteries. It is a beautiful way of being open to receive the graces proper to each of the great mysteries in the saving life of Jesus. The Rosary is simply praying the Gospel so that it gradually transforms our hearts. It is also a great intercessory prayer for those we serve in the apostolate.

The Rosary satisfies one of the deepest yearnings in the heart of Mary, namely, that each one of us should be intimately united to Jesus in His life, death and resurrection. The Rosary is one of Mary's ways of forming Jesus in us. It plays an indispensable role in the formation of Legionaries. It allows Mary to form us into true disciples and apostolic workers for Our Lord. It is one of the secrets of the fruitfulness of the Legion. Let us renew our devotion to the Rosary this October and it will in turn rekindle our missionary spirit. Let us pray it with a greater sense of the presence of God and with greater reverence and love. The Rosary and the mission of the Legion really do go together. It is Mary who teaches us that truth and our Founder learnt it exceptionally well.

*October 2007, Fr. Bede McGregor O.P.*

# Special Excerpt

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Issue 20, Mary's Notebook

## USA Legion of Mary News

**Philadelphia Senatus-** Twenty-four participated in a Peregrinatio Pro Christo project to Knoxville. Twenty-six took part in an evangelisation day where 454 homes were visited.

**Boston Senatus-** Extension efforts show 3 new praesidia. Eight praesidia are engaged in prison work. In 4 prisons there are praesidia. Other works done in the Senatus include teaching religion, street contact and door-to-door visitation.

**Chicago Senatus-** There is a very big interest in setting up new praesidia and sending new members on door-to-door visitation; they invite the lapsed to return.

**Cincinnati Senatus** All councils are involved in extension. Parishes without the Legion were approached. In many cases the Spiritual Directors took part by contacting other priests. A Columban drive resulted in 2 people joining the Legion. Eight new praesidia were reported including one Seminarian and one junior.

**St. Louis Senatus-** A Peregrinatio Pro Christo project to Kansas reported many returns to the Sacraments and 83 people are taking part in RC 1A. A new praesidium has started in Nebraska. Kansas City Council has 9 people under instruction and 6 conversions. In Omaha Comitium 100,000 people attended 3,500 Rosaries. An attached Comitium reported 3 teenagers taking part in RCIA, 4 having received First Holy Communion and 3 Confirmed. A Curia works with alcoholics.

**San Francisco Senatus-** The Senatus has 23 directly attached praesidia. An average of 30 attend the Patrician meeting; a book barrow is organised. At crowd contact sessions Rosaries and Miraculous Medals were distributed. Extension efforts resulted in 5 new praesidia. A rosary procession was held in North Utah Curia and a mini Congress in Anchorage.

**New York Senatus-** A praesidium gives out leaflets on Confession and how to pray the Rosary. A new praesidium has been set up among soldiers; one soldier who joined the Legion is now studying for the priesthood.

**Houston Senatus-** Over 500 attended the Peregrinatio Pro Christo conference and Archbishop Dr. Di Nardo made a surprise visit. In Bay Area Curia a booth at a strawberry fair attracts crowds of visitors who are anxious to receive Rosaries and many good contacts are made.

**Los Angeles Senatus-** A number of attached councils report an average of 3 Patrician groups with a Korean council reporting 7. A Parish in Los Angeles has 6 praesidia.

**Arlington Regia-** Potomac Curia has an average of 15 members in its junior praesidia and the juniors make up half the Curia. A member of the Rappahannock Curia has entered the Poor Clares.

**Miami Regia-** A 3-day Conference for Council Officers took place from 12 to 14 October 2007.