



Mary's Notebook

August 2008

www.legionofmarytidewater.com

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Legion Congress

The Tidewater Curia held a successful Legion Congress on July 26, 2008. The Congress was titled: "The Spirituality of the Legion," was well attended, and included talks and discussion on Edel Quinn, Recruitment, Auxiliary Members, and Home Enthronements. [CC p.2]

Prayers Needed

Prayer is, among other things, a school for hope. In a sense, even when no one listens to a person's needs, God still listens. If you or someone you care about are in need of prayers, e-mail webmaster@legionofmarytidewater.com - we'll add you to our prayer list. [CC p.2]

The Right to Life

The Declaration of Independence says, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men.*" Fr. Frank Pavone of Priests for Life is a leading voice to protect the lives of innocent children and to end the American Holocaust. On page 12 is a copy of one of his articles from several years ago defending life.

Divine Mysteries: Good Movies

Taken From ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF POPE PIUS XI ON THE MOTION PICTURE: VIGILANTI CURA

In August 1934, addressing Ourselves to a delegation of the International Federation of the Motion Picture Press, We pointed out the very great importance which the motion picture has acquired in our days and its vast influence alike in the promotion of good and in the insinuation of evil, and We called to mind that it is necessary to apply to the cinema the supreme rule which must direct and regulate the great gift of art in order that it may not find itself in continual conflict with Christian morality or even with simple human morality based upon the natural law. The essential purpose of art, its *raison d'être*, is to assist in the perfection of the moral personality, which is man, and for this reason it must itself be moral. And We concluded amidst the manifest approval of that elect body - the memory is still dear to Us - by recommending to them the necessity of making the motion picture "moral, an influence for good morals, an educator"... [CC p.4]

News and Events

Mount Zion Retreat

Please give serious consideration to attending the 3rd Annual Mt. Zion Retreat. The Mount Zion Retreat will be held 17 - 19 Oct 2008. The facilities are modern and gorgeous. You'll love the solitude, and the opportunity for spiritual growth. It is best to attend the full retreat.

While the Arlington Regia would love to have full payment by 15 August, it will accept full payment by 1 October. If full payment is not possible by 15 August, the \$25 deposit is needed to reserve your place and for our planning purposes. The cost for full weekend is \$160, for commuter weekend is \$110, and for Saturday is \$65

If you are interested, please contact webmaster@legionofmarytidewater.com

Please Pray For:

Br. Joseph Richardson, an active member of the Mary, Queen of All Saints Praesidium of the Baltimore Comitium. He was rushed to the hospital over the weekend because of a severe asthma attack. He is unconscious and on a respirator.

Please keep Mary Lynn Flook, wife of Bill Flook, president of the Piedmont Curia, in your prayers. She is very ill.

Pope's Prayer Intentions

Pope Benedict's general prayer intention is: That the human family may learn to respect God's plan for the world and become ever more aware that Creation is God's great gift.

Pope Benedict's mission prayer intention is: That the answer of the entire people of God to the common calling to holiness and mission may be promoted and fostered by means of careful discernment of charisms and constant commitment to spiritual and cultural formation

PPC - 2008

September 12 - 20, 2008 at Holy Family Catholic Church in Sewell, NJ the Arlington Regia will conduct its 2008 Peregrinatio Pro Christo (PPC). For more information e-mail Jan at jlark6170@aol.com.

Legion Congress

The Tidewater Curia held a Congress on July 26 at St. Bede Catholic Church in Williamsburg, Virginia. Rev. Fr. Stephen McGraw from Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Fredericksburg, Virginia came down to serve as spiritual director of the Congress. Special thanks are also due to Our Lady of Walsingham Praesidium and their spiritual director Rev. Fr. John Abe, Pastor of St. Bede Catholic Church, for hosting the event. The Congress was a great success!

Handbook Study

The Patricians

"Its purpose is to build up the religious knowledge of the people, to teach them how to explain themselves and to encourage them to apostleship." (Handbook 38)

It is evident from the above that the establishment of branches of the PATRICIANS on a wide scale is very desirable. Praesidia, which do not have a branch, are encouraged to give serious consideration in their planning to the possibilities of setting up one. A study of chapter 38 of the handbook on the PATRICIANS might be taken as a first step. It may be useful to quote here some points from that chapter:

"Analysis shows the PATRICIANS to be a true child of the Legion, for it contains the various characteristic elements which combine to form the Legion itself; it is a projection of the legion system into the sphere of religious education. In this department Mary presides. It was she who brought Jesus down and gave him to the world. She has charge of all subsequent communications of him to men. This dominance of hers is signified by the altar which must form the center point of the Patrician meeting. The Patricians gather round her to talk about the Church in all its aspects, that is, about Jesus who is present in their midst according to his promise."

"In the praesidium, the primary requirement is the obtaining from each member of a verbal report. The PATRICIANS strikes the same note; its primary aim is the eliciting of a vocal contribution from everyone."

"If the family spirit is established in which the "smallest people" feel at home, then the Patrician foundation has been laid. Each contribution will tend to 'spark off' another one, as each link of a chain draws another along. Gaps in knowledge are filled in, detached items are formed into the

mosaic of Catholic doctrine. As knowledge and interest grow, the individuals merge more into the oneness of the Mystical Body of Christ and are penetrated by its life. In its other features, too, the Patrician procedure represents the application of legionary doctrine and technique. It is important that the legionaries should fully realize this so that they will throw into the working of the Patricians the same sort of conviction that they give to the praesidium."

"The PATRICIANS is a society controlled by the Legion. Each branch must be affiliated to a praesidium, and the chairperson must be an active legionary. A praesidium may have charge of several branches. A branch must have a Spiritual Director approved by the Spiritual Director of the praesidium. A Religious may act as Spiritual Director and (where ecclesiastical authority permits) a lay person."

"The Patrician meeting is held monthly. Punctuality and continuity are essential. Meetings should not be omitted except it is genuinely impossible to hold them. It is not obligatory that a member attend every meeting. A system of reminding members of the next meeting will be necessary."

"There is no work obligation. No tasks are to be assigned from the meeting. Pressure is not to be put on the members to take on additional activities. But the friendly contacts which develop should be used to lead people on in every way, particularly into Legion membership, active, auxiliary or adjutorian. Wisely used, the PATRICIANS can send out such strong impulses as will give benefit to everyone in the community."

From Some Handbook Reflections

Divine Mysteries

Holy Movies

[CC. p.1]

The Needs of the Entire Catholic World

... It is, in fact, urgently necessary to make provision that in this field also the progress of the arts, of the sciences, and of human technique and industry, since they are all true gifts of God, may be ordained to His glory and to the salvation of souls and may be made to serve in a practical way to promote the extension of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Thus, as the Church bids us pray, we may all profit by them but in such a manner as not to lose the goods eternal: "sic transeamus per bona temporalia ut non admittamus aeterna". 2

Now then, it is a certainty which can readily be verified that the more marvellous the progress of the motion picture art and industry, the more pernicious and deadly has it shown itself to morality and to religion and even to the very decencies of human society.

The directors of the industry in the United States recognized this fact themselves when they confessed that the responsibility before the people and the world was their very own. In an agreement entered into by common accord in March, 1930, and solemnly sealed, signed, and published in the Press, they formally pledged themselves to safeguard for the future the moral welfare of the patrons of the cinema.

It is promised in this agreement that no film which lowers the moral standard of the spectators, which casts discredit upon natural or human law or arouses sympathy for their violation, will be produced.

Promises not carried out

Nevertheless, in spite of this wise and spontaneously taken decision, those responsible showed themselves incapable of carrying it into effect and it appeared that the producers and the operators were not disposed to stand by the principles to which they had bound themselves. Since, therefore, the above-mentioned undertaking proved to have but slight effect and since the parade of vice and crime continued on the screen, the road seemed almost closed to those who sought honest diversion in the motion picture.

In this crisis, you, Venerable Brethren, were among the first to study the means of safeguarding the souls entrusted to your care, and you launched the "Legion of Decency" as a crusade for public morality designed to revitalize the ideals of natural and Christian rectitude. Far from you was the thought of doing damage to the motion picture industry: rather indeed did you arm it beforehand against the ruin which menaces every form of recreation which, in the guise of art, degenerates into corruption.

The "Legion of Decency" Pledge

Your leadership called forth the prompt and devoted loyalty of your faithful people, and millions of American Catholics signed the pledge of the "Legion of Decency" binding themselves not to attend any motion picture which was offensive to Catholic moral principles or proper standards of living. We are thus able to proclaim joyfully that few problems of these latter times have so closely united Bishops and people as the one resolved by cooperation in this holy crusade. Not only Catholics but also high-minded Protestants, Jews, and many others accepted your lead and joined their efforts with yours in

restoring wise standards, both artistic and moral, to the cinema.

It is an exceedingly great comfort to Us to note the outstanding success of the crusade. Because of your vigilance and because of the pressure which has been brought to bear by public opinion, the motion picture has shown an improvement from the moral standpoint: crime and vice are portrayed less frequently; sin is no longer so openly approved and acclaimed; false ideals of life are no longer presented in so flagrant a manner to the impressionable minds of youth.

A Useful Impetus

Although in certain quarters it was predicted that the artistic values of the motion picture would be seriously impaired by the reform insisted upon by the "Legion of Decency," it appears that quite the contrary has happened and that the "Legion of Decency" has given no little impetus to the efforts to advance the cinema on the road to noble artistic significance by directing it towards the production of classic masterpieces as well as of original creations of uncommon worth.

Nor have the financial investments of the industry suffered, as was gratuitously foretold, for many of those who stayed away from the motion picture theatre because it outraged morality are patronizing it now that they are able to enjoy clean films which are not offensive to good morals or dangerous to Christian virtue.

When you started your crusade, it was said that your efforts would be of short duration and that the effects would not be lasting because, as the vigilance of Bishops and faithful gradually diminished, the producers would be free to return again to their former methods. It is not difficult to understand why certain of these might be desirous of going back to the sinister themes which pander to base desires and which you had proscribed. While the representation of subjects of real artistic value and the portrayal of the vicissitudes of human virtue require intellectual effort, toil,

ability, and at times considerable outlay of money, it is often relatively easy to attract a certain type of person and certain classes of people to a theatre which presents picture plays calculated to inflame the passions and to arouse the lower instincts latent in the human heart.

An unceasing and universal vigilance must, on the contrary, convince the producers that the "Legion of Decency" has not been started as a crusade of short duration, soon to be neglected and forgotten, but that the Bishops of the United States are determined, at all times and at all costs, to safeguard the recreation of the people whatever form that recreation may take.

II. THE POWER OF THE CINEMA

Recreation, in its manifold varieties, has become a necessity for people who work under the fatiguing conditions of modern industry, but it must be worthy of the rational nature of man and therefore must be morally healthy. It must be elevated to the rank of a positive factor for good and must seek to arouse noble sentiments. A people who, in time of repose, give themselves to diversions which violate decency, honour, or morality, to recreations which, especially to the young, constitute occasions of sin, are in grave danger of losing their greatness and even their national power...

It must be Elevated

Since then the cinema is in reality a sort of object lesson which, for good or for evil, teaches the majority of men more effectively than abstract reasoning, it must be elevated to conformity with the aims of a Christian conscience and saved from depraving and demoralizing effects.

Everyone knows what damage is done to the soul by bad motion pictures. They are occasions of sin; they seduce young people along the ways of evil by glorifying the passions; they show life under a false light; they cloud ideals; they destroy pure love, respect for marriage, affection for the

family. They are capable also of creating prejudices among individuals and misunderstandings among nations, among social classes, among entire races.

On the other hand, good motion pictures are capable of exercising a profoundly moral influence upon those who see them. In addition to affording recreation, they are able to arouse noble ideals of life, to communicate valuable conceptions, to impart a better knowledge of the history and the beauties of the Fatherland and of other countries, to present truth and virtue under attractive forms, to create, or at least to favor understanding among nations, social classes, and races, to champion the cause of justice, to give new life to the claims of virtue, and to contribute positively to the genesis of a just social order in the world.

It Speaks not to Individuals but to Multitudes

These considerations take on greater seriousness from the fact that the cinema speaks not to individuals but to multitudes, and that it does so in circumstances of time and place and surroundings which are most apt to arouse unusual enthusiasm for the good as well as for the bad and to conduce to that collective exaltation which, as experience teaches us, may assume the most morbid forms.

The motion picture is viewed by people who are seated in a dark theatre and whose faculties, mental, physical, and often spiritual, are relaxed. One does not need to go far in search of these theatres: they are close to the home, to the church, and to the school and they thus bring the cinema into the very center of popular life.

Moreover, stories and actions are presented, through the cinema, by men and women whose natural gifts are increased by training and embellished by every known art, in a manner which may possibly become an additional source of corruption, especially to the young. Further, the motion picture has enlisted in its service luxurious

appointments, pleasing music, the vigor of realism, every form of whim and fancy. For this very reason, it attracts and fascinates particularly the young, the adolescent, and even the child. Thus at the very age when the moral sense is being formed and when the notions and sentiments of justice and rectitude, of duty and obligation and of ideals of life are being developed, the motion picture with its direct propaganda assumes a position of commanding influence.

It is unfortunate that, in the present state of affairs, this influence is frequently exerted for evil. So much so that when one thinks of the havoc wrought in the souls of youth and of childhood, of the loss of innocence so often suffered in the motion picture theatres, there comes to mind the terrible condemnation pronounced by Our Lord upon the corrupters of little ones: "whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone be hanged about his neck and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea".

It must not be a School of Corruption

It is therefore one of the supreme necessities, of our times to watch and to labor to the end that the motion picture be no longer a school of corruption but that it be transformed into an effectual instrument for the education and the elevation of mankind.

And here We record with pleasure that certain Governments, in their anxiety for the influence exercised by the cinema in the moral and educational fields, have, with the aid of upright and honest persons, especially fathers and mothers of families, set up reviewing commissions and have constituted other agencies which have to do with motion picture production in an effort to direct the cinema for inspiration to the national works of great poets and writers.

It was most fitting and desirable that you, Venerable Brethren, should have exercised a

special watchfulness over the motion picture industry which in your country is so highly developed and which has great influence in other quarters of the globe. It is equally the duty of the Bishops of the entire Catholic world to unite in vigilance over this universal and potent form of entertainment and instruction, to the end that they may be able to place a ban on bad motion pictures because they are an offence to the moral and religious sentiments and because they are in opposition to the Christian spirit and to its ethical principles. There must be no weariness in combating whatever contributes to the lessening of the people's sense of decency and of honour.

This is an obligation which binds not only the Bishops but also the faithful and all decent men who are solicitous for the decorum and moral health of the family, of the nation, and of human society in general. In what, then, must this vigilance consist?

III. A WORK FOR CATHOLIC ACTION

The problem of the production of moral films would be solved radically if it were possible for us to have production wholly inspired by the principles of Christian morality. We can never sufficiently praise all those who have dedicated themselves or who are to dedicate themselves to the noble cause of raising the standard of the motion picture to meet the needs of education and the requirements of the Christian conscience. For this purpose, they must make full use of the technical ability of experts and not permit the waste of effort and of money by the employment of amateurs.

But since We know how difficult it is to organize such an industry, especially because of considerations of a financial nature, and since on the other hand it is necessary to influence the production of all films so that they may contain nothing harmful from a religious, moral, or social viewpoint, Pastors of souls must exercise their vigilance over films wherever they may be produced and offered to Christian peoples.

To the Bishops of all Countries

As to the motion picture industry itself, We exhort the Bishops of all countries, but in particular you, Venerable Brethren, to address an appeal to those Catholics who hold important positions in this industry. Let them take serious thought of their duties and of the responsibility which they have as children of the Church to use their influence and authority for the promotion of principles of sound morality in the films which they produce or aid in producing. There are surely many Catholics among the executives, directors, authors, and actors who take part in this business, and it is unfortunate that their influence has not always been in accordance with their Faith and with their ideals. You will do well, Venerable Brethren, to pledge them to bring their profession into harmony with their conscience as respectable men and followers of Jesus Christ.

In this as in every other field of the apostolate, Pastors of souls will surely find their best fellow workers in those who fight in the ranks of Catholic Action, and in this letter We cannot refrain from addressing to them a warm appeal that they give to this cause their full contribution and their unwearyingly and unflinching activity.

From time to time, the Bishops will do well to recall to the motion picture industry that, amid the cares of their pastoral ministry, they are under obligation to interest themselves in every form of decent and healthy recreation because they are responsible before God for the moral welfare of their people even during their time of leisure.

The Moral Fiber of a Nation

Their sacred calling constrains them to proclaim clearly and openly that unhealthy and impure entertainment destroys the moral fiber of a nation. They will likewise remind the motion picture industry that the demands which they make regard not only the Catholics but all who patronize the cinema.

In particular, you, Venerable Brethren of the United States, will be able to insist with justice that the industry of your country has recognized and accepted its responsibility before society.

The Bishops of the whole world will take care to make clear to the leaders of the motion picture industry that a force of such power and universality as the cinema can be directed, with great utility, to the highest ends of individual and social improvement. Why indeed should there be question merely of avoiding what is evil? The motion picture should not be simply a means of diversion, a light relaxation to occupy an idle hour; with its magnificent power, it can and must be a bearer of light and a positive guide to what is good.

And now, in view of the gravity of the subject, We consider it timely to come down to certain practical indications.

A Yearly Promise from the Faithful

Above all, all Pastors of souls will undertake to obtain each year from their people a pledge similar to the one already alluded to which is given by their American brothers and in which they promise to stay away from motion picture plays which are offensive to truth and to Christian morality.

The most efficacious manner of obtaining these pledges or promises is through the parish church or school and by enlisting the earnest cooperation of all fathers and mothers of families who are conscious of their grave responsibilities.

The Bishops will also be able to avail themselves of the Catholic Press for the purpose of bringing home to the people the moral beauty and the effectiveness of this promise.

The fulfilment of this pledge supposes that the people be told plainly which films are permitted to all, which are permitted with reservations, and

which are harmful or positively bad. This requires the prompt, regular, and frequent publication of classified lists of motion picture plays so as to make the information readily accessible to all. Special bulletins or other timely publications, such as the daily Catholic Press, may be used for this purpose.

Were it possible, it would in itself be desirable to establish a single list for the entire world because all live under the same moral law. Since, however, there is here question of pictures which interest all classes of society, the great and the humble, the learned and the unlettered, the judgment passed upon a film cannot be the same in each case and in all respects. Indeed circumstances, usages, and forms vary from country to country so that it does not seem practical to have a single list for all the world. If, however, films were classified in each country in the manner indicated above, the resultant list would offer in principle the guidance needed.

A National Reviewing Office

Therefore, it will be necessary that in each country the Bishops set up a permanent national reviewing office in order to be able to promote good motion pictures, classify the others, and bring this judgment to the knowledge of priests and faithful. It will be very proper to entrust this agency to the central organization of Catholic Action which is dependent on the Bishops. At all events, it must be clearly laid down that this service of information, in order to function organically and with efficiency, must be on a national basis and that it must be carried on by a single centre of responsibility. Should grave reasons really require it, the Bishops, in their own dioceses and through their diocesan reviewing committees, will be able to apply to the national list - which must use standards adaptable to the whole nation - such severer criterions as may be demanded by the character of the region, and they may even censor films which were admitted to the general list.

Films in Parish Halls

The above-mentioned Office will likewise look after the organization of existing motion picture theatres belonging to parishes and to Catholic associations so that they may be guaranteed reviewed and approved films. Through the organization of these halls, which are often known to the cinema industry as good clients, it will be possible to advance a new claim, namely that the industry produce motion pictures which conform entirely to our standards. Such films may then readily be shown not only in the Catholic halls but also in others.

We realize that the establishment of such an Office will involve a certain sacrifice, a certain expense for Catholics of the various countries. Yet the great importance of the motion picture and the necessity of safeguarding the morality of the Christian people and of the entire nation makes this sacrifice more than justified. Indeed the effectiveness of our schools, of our Catholic associations, and even of our churches is lessened and endangered by the plague of evil and pernicious motion pictures.

Care must be taken that the Office is composed of persons who are familiar with the technique of the motion picture and who are, at the same time, well grounded in the principles of Catholic morality and doctrine. They must, in addition, be under the guidance and the direct supervision of a priest chosen by the Bishops.

Exchange of Information

A mutual exchange of advice and information between the Offices of the various countries will conduce to greater efficiency and harmony in the work of reviewing films, while due consideration will be given to varying conditions and circumstances. It will thus be possible to achieve unity of outlook in the judgments and in the communications which appear in the Catholic Press of the world.

These Offices will profit not only from the experiments made in the United States but also from the work which Catholics in other countries have achieved in the motion picture field.

Even if employees of the Office - with the best of good will and intentions - should make an occasional mistake, as happens in all human affairs, the Bishops, in their pastoral prudence, will know how to apply effective remedies and to safeguard in every possible way the authority and prestige of the Office itself. This may be done by strengthening the staff with more influential men or by replacing those who have shown themselves not entirely suited to so delicate a position of trust.

Painstaking Vigilance

If the Bishops of the world assume their share in the exercise of this painstaking vigilance over the motion picture - and of this We who know their pastoral zeal have no doubt - they will certainly accomplish a great work for the protection of the morality of their people in their hours of leisure and recreation. They will win the approbation and the approval of all right thinking men, Catholic and non-Catholic, and they will help to assure that a great international force - the motion picture - shall be directed towards the noble end of promoting the highest ideals and the truest standards of life.

That these wishes and prayers which We pour forth from a father's heart may gain in virtue, We implore the help of the grace of God and in pledge thereof We impart to you, Venerable Brethren, and to the Clergy and people entrusted to you, Our loving Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, at St Peter's, the 29th day of June, Feast of SS Peter and Paul, in the year 1936, the fifteenth of Our Pontificate.

PIUS PP. XI.

See www.usccb.org/movies for Catholic movie reviews

Legion Spirit

The Visitation and the Legion

Recently we celebrated the feast of the Visitation. This led me on to thinking about the place of home visitation in the vision and apostolic life of the Legion. The Handbook has much to say about home visitation. It begins by saying: 'Though not its initial venture, the visitation of homes has been traditionally the preferred work of the Legion, its special occupation everywhere and its avenue of greatest good. It is a characteristic of the Legion. Through this visitation, personal contact can be made with a great many people and the Church's concern for every person and every family can be shown.'

In his letters Frank Duff points out on numerous occasions the centrality of home visitation in the Legion scheme of things. So for instance he writes to Fr. Wesseley, the first Spiritual Director of the Legion in Austria and whose cause for beatification has been introduced, as follows: 'We see that the basic work of the Praesidium will be the visitation of homes in the parish of St. Charles. This is good, for visitation is the principal work of the Legion, the foundation of all other things, which grow out of it. You will find it a remarkable way of bringing souls to God. In fact I am sure that you will be astonished by the fruits of grace, which you will observe to proceed rapidly from this work. I trust that the Parish Priest will thus be rewarded for his goodness and his enterprise in permitting the Legion to take its first roots in his territory.' Recently we had the good news that the book 'Mary Shall Reign' has been reprinted and there

you will find the chapter on the 'The Spirit of Home Visitation'. It really is a masterpiece of insight and presentation. Every Legionary should read it again and again.

The importance of the home is so obvious and yet so neglected. The overwhelming number of those who have given up the practice of the faith have passed through Catholic schools and been given some kind of religious education. But they have come from prayerless homes. I will quote just one paragraph from our Founder on his view of the matter. 'So I voice two ideas: First, religion taught in a cold, official way has no higher place in the children's minds than any other school subject. Second, even religion admirably taught in the school has too much to contend with in the world to be able to stand unaided. Here is the tale of a heroic experiment. In France during the last century, faith was pinned on the schools as the means of bringing back the nation to the Church. Prodigious effort and sacrifice were thrown into the building and running of Catholic schools. Calculation showed that by pouring out each year so many children who would marry and multiply, the Catholicising of the country would inevitably be accomplished. It did not work out thus. Great good was done, but the total theory was found to be a delusion. The children lived in their Godless homes, and it was the homes that decided the issue. And so I talk to you about the Home, the fortress of society, and the privilege you have of being able to enter it.'



legionary must bring Jesus into the home. He must talk religion at some stage. He is in the business of saving souls.

At the Visitation we see an example of Mary as Mediatrix of all Graces. It is the Child Jesus who is the source of the grace that brings joy to John in the womb of Elizabeth but Our Lord uses Mary as his instrument. It is at the sound of her voice that the child leaps in the womb of Elizabeth. As legionaries we must allow Mary to use us as her instrument in the visitation of homes.

Finally, I want to stress that it is at the Visitation that we have the revelation that the dominant characteristic of Mary is her faith: 'Blessed are you who has believed'. As the Legion of brothers and sisters who work with Mary and through her, faith must be the hallmark of our lives and apostolate too. But it must be a faith inseparable from charity. As we pray in the concluding prayers of the Tessera for 'a lively faith animated by charity that will enable us to perform all our actions from the motive of pure love of you, and ever to see you and serve you in our neighbor'. Dear legionaries make sure that at least some members of every praesidium are doing home visitation in the spirit of Our Lady of the Visitation. There is so much at stake in this apostolate.

The above is the text from an Allocutio given by Rev. Fr. Bede McGregor O.P. the Spiritual Director of Concilium.

A listing of each month's allocutio by Rev. Fr. Bede McGregor's for Concilium meetings can be found online at: www.legion-of-mary.ie.

To access the them click on "Concilium News" and then click on "Allocutio."

But let me go back to the feast of the Visitation because it gives us an example of how Mary herself made a home visitation and after all we legionaries do our visitation in the spirit of Mary and with her. First she goes simply to be of help in whatever way is possible. Then she brings Jesus into the home of Zachary and Elizabeth, this is the greatest blessing of all to the home. Isn't this what every legionary wants ultimately to do as well, namely bring our Lord to homes together with Mary? It is while meditating on the Visitation that John Paul II refers to Mary as the First Evangelizer. No sooner has she received God into her womb and heart at the Annunciation than she begins the work of bringing Him to others. The visitation of the Legionary is not simply a social visit although its immediate object is to establish friendship and trust. Ultimately the

Special Excerpt

Elections and the Right to Life

Fr. Frank Pavone
National Director, Priests for Life

Another election season is upon us, and our bishops have given us valuable guidance in how to assess the issues and the candidates. The document of the US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics* (1998) and the document of the Administrative Board of the USCC, *Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium*, are so helpful in this regard that Priests for Life is making them available free of charge, and has also prepared camera-ready bulletin inserts containing excerpts from them.

A few key points they make are that a) active and informed participation in the political process is a virtue which we should foster, and every vote counts; b) we must embrace a consistent ethic of life, but within that ethic, realize that abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent issues because they directly attack innocent human life; c) one cannot be considered a practicing Catholic as long as he/she publicly advocates a pro-choice position.

I would like to focus on point "b" for the purposes of this article, drawing additional assistance from the key spokesperson for the consistent ethic, who was Joseph Cardinal Bernardin.

The "consistent ethic of life" is a critically important but widely misunderstood teaching. Cardinal Bernardin began his public reflections on this theme in the context of the work he did on the US Bishops' pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace*, and of his position as Chairman of the Pro-life Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. He saw that in order to effectively articulate the Christian response to a wide range of menacing threats to human life, brought about by a new kind of interconnection between the forces of destruction made possible by modern technologies, it was necessary to highlight the interconnection of the many and varied efforts to defend human life. He noted that progress in the defense and protection of life in one arena meant progress for the defense of life in all arenas.

Some object to the idea of the consistent ethic because they interpret "consistency" to mean "of equal importance or urgency." But that is not what the teaching means, as the Cardinal himself made clear many times.

What links the many issues of human life is that such life is sacred: it comes from God, it belongs to God, it returns to God. All human beings have equal dignity, and nobody may ever directly destroy the innocent. These principles apply whether we are talking about abortion, capital punishment, war, poverty, drug abuse, street violence, or any other of the multitude of problems we face in society. But that does not mean that these issues are morally equivalent. Each issue, along with the overall principles which we have already stated, has its own particular principles and moral considerations which need to be brought into the discussions whenever one treats of that particular issue. These particularities could conceivably result in divergent opinions about what specific policies should be implemented, while at the same time those who disagree acknowledge the same essential principles.

Nor do all of these issues constitute an emergency of equal gravity and urgency. Some do more damage and claim more victims than others.

Living the Gospel of Life explains the situation this way: "Adopting a consistent ethic of life, the Catholic Church promotes a broad spectrum of issues^{1/4}. Opposition to abortion and euthanasia does not excuse indifference to those who suffer from poverty, violence and injustice. Any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care. Therefore, Catholics should eagerly involve themselves as advocates for the weak and marginalized in all these areas. Catholic public officials are obliged to address each of these issues as they seek to build consistent policies which promote respect for the human person at all stages of life. But being 'right' in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life. Indeed, the failure to protect and defend life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the 'rightness' of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 23).

This assertion is not new for the bishops. In the 1985 Reaffirmation of the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, the bishops wrote, "Because victims of abortion are the most vulnerable and defenseless members of the human family, it is imperative that we, as Christians called to serve the least among us, give urgent attention and priority to this issue of justice¼ This focus and the Church's firm commitment to a consistent ethic of life complement each other. A consistent ethic, far from diminishing concern for abortion or equating all issues touching on the dignity of human life, recognizes the distinctive character of each issue while giving each its proper role within a coherent moral vision"(p.3-4).

Furthermore, in their 1989 Resolution on Abortion, the bishops declared, "Abortion has become the fundamental human rights issue for all men and women of good will."

The 1999 statement Faithful Citizenship expressed it this way: "Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. The conviction that human life is sacred and that each person has inherent dignity that must be respected in society lies at the heart of Catholic social teaching. Calls to advance human rights are illusions if the right to life itself is subject to attack. We believe that every human life is sacred from conception to natural death; that people are more important than things; and that the measure of every institution is whether or not it enhances the life and dignity of the human person" (Administrative Board, US Bishops, Faithful Citizenship, 1999, p.13).

"Faithful Citizenship" is the latest in a line of statements on political responsibility issued every four years since the mid-1970's. In 1984, Cardinal Bernardin had this to say about the role of such statements: "The purpose is surely not to tell citizens how to vote, but to help shape the public debate and form personal conscience so that every citizen will vote thoughtfully and responsibly. Our "Statement on Political Responsibility" has always been, like our "Respect Life Program," a multi-issue approach to public morality. The fact that this Statement sets forth a spectrum of issues of current concern to the Church and society should not be understood as implying that all issues are qualitatively equal from a moral perspective¼ As I indicated earlier, each of the life issues—while related to all the others—is distinct and calls for its own specific moral analysis. Both the Statement and the Respect Life program have direct relevance to the political order, but they are applied concretely by the choice of citizens" (A Consistent Ethic of Life: Continuing the Dialogue, The William Wade Lecture Series, St. Louis University, March 11, 1984).

Notice that the Cardinal stated that not all issues are qualitatively equal from a moral perspective. A consistent ethic recognizes that there is justification for placing priority emphasis on certain issues at certain times. To ignore the priority attention that the problems of abortion and euthanasia demand is to misunderstand both the consistent ethic and the nature of the threats that these evils pose. To again quote Cardinal Bernardin, "A consistent ethic of life does not equate the problem of taking life (e.g., through abortion and in war) with the problem of promoting human dignity (through humane programs of nutrition, health care, and housing). But a consistent ethic identifies both the protection of life and its promotion as moral questions"(Wade lecture, as above). "The fundamental human right is to life—from the moment of conception until death. It is the source of all other rights, including the right to health care" (The Consistent Ethic of Life and Health Care Systems, Foster McGaw Triennial Conference, Loyola University of Chicago, May 8, 1985).

On Respect Life Sunday, 1 October 1989, Cardinal Bernardin issued a statement entitled "Deciding for Life," in which he said, "Not all values, however, are of equal weight. Some are more fundamental than others. On this Respect Life Sunday, I wish to emphasize that no earthly value is more fundamental than human life itself. Human life is the condition for enjoying freedom and all other values. Consequently, if one must choose between protecting or serving lesser human values that depend upon life for their existence and life itself, human life must take precedence. Today the recognition of human life as a fundamental value is threatened. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of elective abortion. At present in our country this procedure takes the lives of over 4,000 unborn children every day and over 1.5 million each year."

The numbers are staggering. Comparing them, for example, to capital punishment (which we must also actively oppose), we find that more babies are destroyed by abortion in the course of five days (about 20,000) than have ever been executed by capital punishment (close to 19,000) in the entire history of our nation.

Disputes among candidates about how to best secure rights that we agree people have (to food, clothing, shelter, education, protection from crime, etc.) are quite different from the fundamental dispute as to whether they have any rights in the first place or even belong to the human community (i.e. the status of the unborn before the law). No issue is more important to the political process than who belongs to the political community.

Making these assertions and clarifying these principles is not equivalent to partisan politics or campaigning for candidates, because any candidate of any party at any time is free to embrace and defend the right to life. In this election season 2000, let our pulpits, our pens, and our public and private conversations proclaim louder than ever before that protecting the right to life is the first obligation of any public official -- or, as someone expressed it to me more simply, "Father, if those politicians can't respect the life of a little baby, how are they going to respect mine?"

For more information about Priests for Life go to www.priestsforlife.org.