



Mary's Notebook

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The Christmas Spirit

What is special about Christmas? Who is Santa Clause? What is the real meaning of the song the 12 days of Christmas? What is the Icon of the Nativity? Find out in this special Christmas Catechism. *(Continued on page 7)*

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. *(Continued on page 2)*

Special – Legion Retreat

Legion of Mary Arlington Regia 2009 Annual Retreat for Active Legionaries will be held from February 13 – 15, 2009 at the Washington Retreat House, 4000 Harewood Rd., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1595. The retreat master will be the Reverend Fr. Thomas Collins, the spiritual director of the Richmond Curia. The retreat is open to active members of the Legion of Mary, and to "special" auxiliaries. Each praesidium can define "special". For more information, see page 10, or e-mail webmaster@arlingtonregia.com. *(Continued on page 10)*

Divine Mysteries: The Rosary

Among the 15 promises of the Rosary is that, *“Whoever recites my Rosary devoutly reflecting on the mysteries, shall never be overwhelmed by misfortune. He will not experience the anger of God nor will he perish by an unprovided death. The sinner will be converted; the just will persevere in grace and merit eternal life.”*

Rosary is a “weapon of mass salvation,” and we encourage our readers to pray the Rosary daily, and to encourage others to pray it as well.

Servant of God Fulton Sheen was Archbishop of New York and host of the television show “life is worth living,” and “the Fulton Sheen Program,” as well as a writer. Here is an excerpt taken from "Roses and Prayers," in the book 'The World's First Love,' by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. *(Continued on page 9)*

News and Events

Please Pray For:

Pope's Prayer Intentions

December

Pope Benedict's general prayer intention is: That in the face of a spreading of a culture of violence and death the Church through her apostolic and missionary activity may promote with courage the culture of life.

Pope Benedict's mission prayer intention is: That especially in mission countries Christians may show with acts of fraternal love that the Child born in the stable at Bethlehem is the luminous Hope of the world.

January

Pope Benedict's general prayer intention is: That the family may become more and more a place of training in charity, personal growth and transmission of the faith.

Pope Benedict's mission prayer intention is: That the different Christian confessions, aware of the need for a new evangelization in this period of profound transformations, may be committed to announcing the Good News and moving towards the full unity of all Christians in order to offer a more credible testimony of the Gospel.

Also Please Pray for:

Br. Mike Brown, president of the Richmond Curia, in your prayers. He has a medical condition which has caused him to cease Legion activities. Let's all pray for a cure.

Keith Hoyt who relocated recently to Myrtle Beach SC and is having a difficult time finding employment. Please pray that he finds gainful employment.

Joseph, my 6 months old who is having trouble gaining weight. He's been diagnosed "failure to thrive" and had to endure lots of doctor visits and nasty tasting food. Please pray he is able to gain a good deal more weight.

Retreat for Active Legionaries Feb. 13-15

The retreat is open to active members of the Legion of Mary and to "special" auxiliaries. Each praesidium can define "special". It will be from February 13 – 15 and will be held at the Washington Retreat House, 4000 Harewood Rd., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1595. For more information, and a registration form see page 10.

'09 Holy Days of Obligation

- Sundays
- January 1, 2009 Feast of Mary the Mother of God
- November 1, 2009 Feast of All Saints
- December 8, 2009 Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- December 25, 2009 Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

Handbook Study

Mary Teaches Us

This month I would like to focus our attention on Lourdes on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady there.



Lourdes is a sacred place, one of the great shrines in the Christian world, a place of pilgrimage. It is a place that has many memories for the Legion. But it is much more. It is a school and the principal teacher is Mary. It is true that we do not have to go to Lourdes to meet and converse with Our Lady. We can meet her anywhere and at any time simply by stopping where we are and quietly turning to her. Our relationship to Mary is not limited to any place or time. She is our Mother and is

never absent from us. Her maternal heart is always and everywhere focused on each one of us. But Mary herself has made Lourdes extra special. She has made it a place of intense education in the faith, of profound healing and conversion but above all a meeting place with Jesus and involvement with the work of redemption.

Mary teaches us with signs and words and by her very presence. Today, following the example of Pope Benedict at Lourdes, I wish to concentrate on one of those signs. You remember the scene. At the first sight of the apparition, Bernadette instinctively tries to make the sign of the Cross but she couldn't raise her arm no matter how she tried. Then Mary blessed herself with the sign of the Cross and Bernadette was then able to make it too. At the beginning of all eighteen appearances of Our Lady they begin the Rosary together with this simple, yet profound, sign of our Faith. Bernadette was never to forget the way Mary made the sign of the Cross and this sign became very precious to her. We too as legionaries begin everything with the sign of the Cross. Five times we bless ourselves in the course of every Legion meeting. It would be good to reflect on its meaning and formative value.

Let me quote Pope Benedict from one of his homilies at Lourdes: 'This is the great mystery that Mary also entrusts to us this morning, inviting us to turn towards her Son. In fact, it is

significant that, during the first apparition to Bernadette, Mary begins the encounter with the sign of the Cross. More than a simple sign, it is an initiation into the mysteries of the faith that Bernadette receives from Mary. The sign of the Cross is a kind of synthesis of our faith, for it tells how much God loves us; it tells us that there is a love in this world that is stronger than death, stronger than our weaknesses and sins. The power of love is stronger than the evil which threatens us. It is this mystery of the universality of God's love for men that Mary came to reveal here, in Lourdes. She invites all people of good will, all those who suffer in heart or body, to raise their eyes towards the Cross of Jesus, so as to discover there the source of life, the source of salvation.' One of the great truths that Mary teaches us at Lourdes is the centrality of the Cross of Christ in our lives. Everything is given to us on the Cross. There is nothing more to give. The sign of the Cross is the sign of our redemption. This simple sign tells us that the infinite treasures of the Heart of Christ are offered to us.

Like the Church as a whole so the Legion, in particular, must be riveted on the Cross of Christ. "In order to be healed from sin, gaze upon Christ crucified!" said Saint Augustine (Treatise on Saint John XII, II). By raising our eyes towards the Crucified one, we adore him who came to take upon himself the sin of the world and to give us eternal life. And the Church invites us proudly to lift up this glorious Cross so that the world can see the full extent of the love of the Crucified one for mankind, for every man and woman. She invites us to give thanks to God because from a tree, which brought death, life has burst out anew. On this wood Jesus reveals to us his

sovereign majesty, he reveals to us that he is exalted in glory. Yes, "Come, let us adore him!" In our midst is he who loved us even to giving his life for us, he who invites every human being to draw near to him with trust.

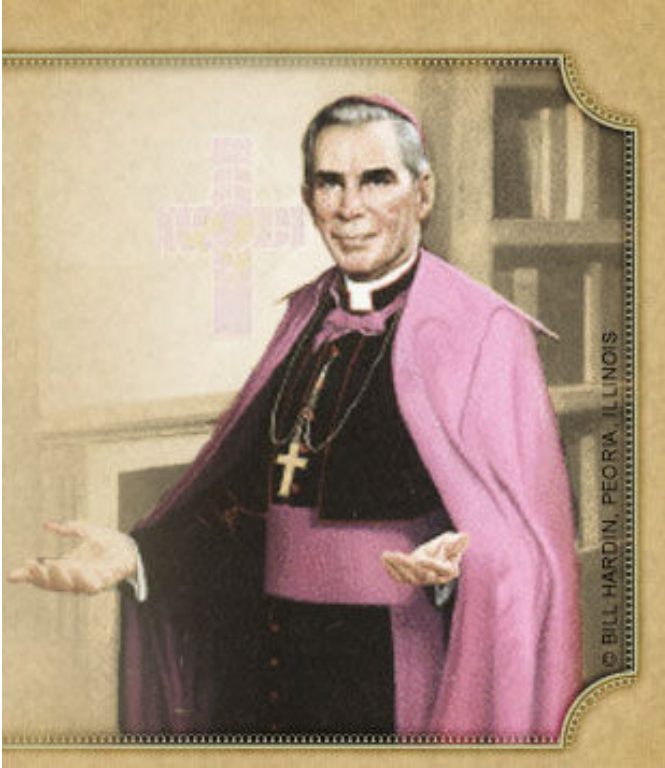
The Cross of Christ is central to our prayer life through the Mass and the Sacrament of Penance, the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross and the frequent blessing of ourselves. But it is also an instrument in our work of evangelization. We remember the little story that our Founder tells in several articles and letters: 'A Protestant had been attending some of our functions for a long time. One day Bro Hanratty said to him: "Is it not a peculiarity that a good man like you should refuse to make the Sign of the Cross which has always been the acknowledged symbol of our Redemption". The next time they met, the other solemnly blessed himself and said: "You made a point there, John. It is time I step into the Church". Sequel: a daily Communicant who valued his new faith supremely. God makes use of every little circumstance to lead people into the Church, but we must provide those circumstances. Operation must enter in somewhere.' Mary stood by the Cross and she wanted the whole world to look to the sign of the Cross at Lourdes and surely this is a major part of the apostolate of the Legion. We need to be able to explain the meaning of the Cross to those we meet especially the non-Christian person and we must enable them one day to bless themselves with the sign of the Cross.

*Concilium Allocutio September 2008
by Fr. Bede McGregor O.P.
Spiritual Director to the Legion of Mary*

Divine Mysteries

Praying the Rosary

by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen



From the earliest days, the Church asked its faithful to recite the one hundred and fifty Psalms of David. This custom still prevails among priests, who recite some of these Psalms every day. However, it was not easy for anyone to memorize the one hundred and fifty Psalms. Then, too, before the invention of printing, it was difficult to procure a book of the Psalms. That is why certain important books like the Bible had to be chained like telephone books are today; otherwise people would have run off with them.

Incidentally, this gave rise to the stupid lie that the Church would not allow anyone to read the Bible, because it was chained. The fact is, it was chained just so people could read it. The Mary's Notebook

telephone book is chained, too, but it's more consulted than any book in modern civilization!

The people who could not read one hundred and fifty Psalms wanted to do something to make up for it. Therefore, they substituted one hundred and fifty Hail Marys. They broke up these one hundred and fifty, in the manner of the Akathist, into fifteen decades, or series of ten. Each part was to be said while meditating on a different aspect of the Life of Our Lord.

To keep the decades separate, each one of them began with the Our Father and ended with the Doxology of Praise to the Trinity.

St. Dominic, who died in 1221, received from the Blessed Mother the command to preach and to popularize this devotion for the good of souls, for conquest over evil, and for the prosperity of Holy Mother Church and thus gave us the Rosary in its present classical form.

The Black Death, which ravaged all Europe and wiped out one-third of its population, prompted the faithful to cry out to the Mother of Our Lord to protect them, at a time when the present moment and death were almost one.

The Black Death has ended. But now the Red Death of Communism is sweeping the earth (circa 1950). I find it interesting that, when the Blessed Mother appeared at Fatima in 1917 because of the great decline in morals and the advent of godlessness, she asked that, after the

"Glory be" we add "have mercy on all souls; save them from hell and lead us to heaven."

It is objected that there is much repetition in the Rosary because the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary are said so often; therefore some say it is monotonous.

That reminds me of a woman who came to see me one evening after instructions. She said, "I would never become a Catholic. You say the same words in the Rosary over and over again, and anyone who repeats the same words is never sincere. I would never believe anyone who repeated his words and neither would God."

I asked her who the man was with her. She said he was her fiancé. I asked: "Does he love you?" "Certainly, he does," "But how do you know?" "He told me." "What did he say?"

"He said 'I love you.'"

"When did he tell you last?"

"About an hour ago."

"Did he tell you before?"

"Yes, last night."

"What did he say?"

"I love you."

"But never before?"

"He tells me every night."

I said: "Do not believe him. He is repeating; he is not sincere."

The beautiful truth is that there is no repetition in, "I love you." Because there is a new moment of time, another point in space, the words do not mean the same as they did at another time or space.

Love is never monotonous in the uniformity of its expression. The mind is infinitely variable in its language, but the heart is not. The heart of a man, in the face of the woman he loves, is too poor to translate the infinity of his affection into a different word. So the heart takes one expression, "I love you," and in saying it over and over again, it never repeats. It is the only real news in the universe. That is what we do when we say the Rosary, we are saying to God, the Trinity, to the Incarnate Savior, to the Blessed Mother: "I love you, I love you, I love you."

Each time it means something different because, at each decade, our mind is moving to a new demonstration of the Savior's love.

The Rosary is the best therapy for these distraught, unhappy, fearful, and frustrated souls, precisely because it involves the simultaneous use of three powers: the physical, the vocal, and the spiritual, and in that order.

The Rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadow of this world, and open on the substance of the next. The power of the Rosary is beyond description."

If you wish to convert anyone to the fullness of the knowledge of Our Lord and to His Mystical Body, then teach him the Rosary. One of two things will happen. Either he will stop saying the Rosary — or he will get the gift of faith.

Legion Spirit

The Christmas Spirit

What is special about Christmas?

Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of our lord and savior Jesus Christ.

For many reasons it is very important and special that God became man, some include:

- By his birth, after having taken human form, at the annunciation, God made Himself accessible to the visible senses of man. Before Christmas no one knew what God looked like; now we can draw pictures, write Icons, and make statues of God, for he has now made himself visible to us.
- His birth in Bethlehem fulfils the ancient prophecy.
- His choice of birth in a manger to a poor family shows us the value of humility and the unimportance of wealth.

Who is Santa Clause?

Santa Clause is another name for St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas lived from 270 – 342. He was the son of wealthy parents who died when he was young. He was a very devout Greek-Catholic who practices extreme devotion and piety.

When a man in town had lost all his money and, that man was going to put his daughters in the prostitution business to put food on the table. St. Nicholas took a bag of his gold, snuck in at night, and threw the gold into an open window in the house as a dowry for the eldest daughter. Later he did the same for the other two daughters, allowing them to have a proper marriage, rather than turn to prostitution. After his death, people in his town, Myra, eventually realized that he had given a large number of similar gifts anomalously. In Myra, even some time after his death, the people of Myra would often give unanimous gifts to those in need saying they were from St. Nicholas. From this comes the tradition of St. Nick or Santa Clause leaving presents. Namely, that the presents come from an anonymous source, giving the gift out of his love of Christ.

St. Nicholas was not likely fat. Although he was well off, he was a very modest eater. He not only kept the traditional Eastern Fasts on Wednesday and Friday, but, even from the earliest age he ate only one meal on Wednesdays and Fridays.

St. Nicholas served as the Bishop of Myra, as was never married, but did have a beard.

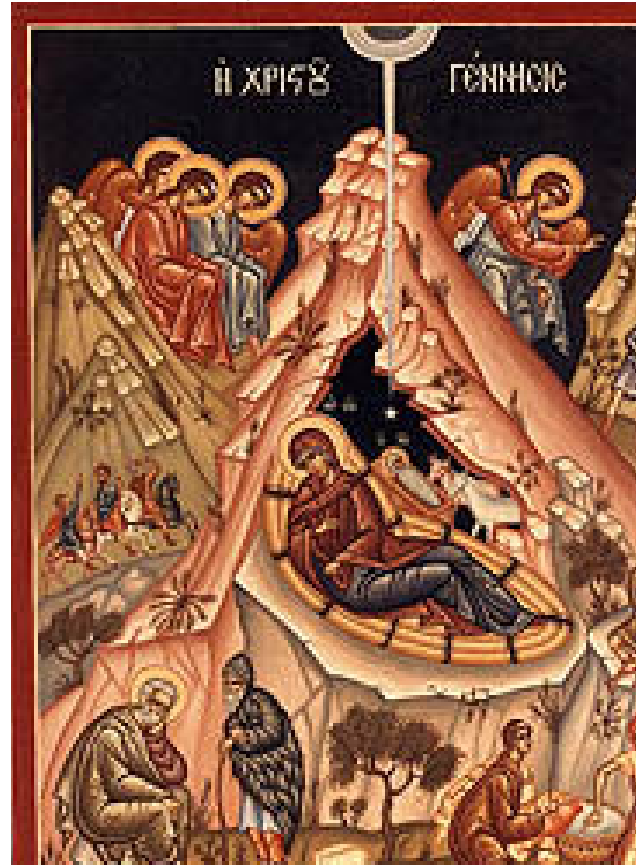
What is the real meaning of the song the 12 days of Christmas?

From 1558 to 1829, when Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" was written as a catechism song for young Catholics. The hidden meanings of the song's gifts were intended to help the children remember lessons of their faith. The "true love" mentioned in the song refers to God Himself. The "me" who receives the presents is every baptized person. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge, which feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings. The meanings of the other symbols are:

- Two Turtle Doves - the Old and New Testaments
- Three French Hens - Faith, Hope, and Charity
- Four Calling Birds - the four Gospels
- Five Golden Rings - the first five books of the Old Testament The Pentateuch
- Six Geese A-Laying - the six days of creation
- Seven Swans A-Swimming - the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Eight Maids A-Milking - the eight Beatitudes
- Nine Ladies Dancing - the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Ten Lords A-Leaping - the Ten Commandments
- Eleven Pipers Piping - the eleven faithful disciples
- Twelve Drummers Drumming - the twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed

(The answer above is excerpted from A Handbook of Catholic Sacraments, by Ann Ball and published by Our Sunday Visitor.)

What is the Icon of the Nativity?



The Star represents that Jesus is the Light of the world and came down from Heaven. Midwives wrap Jesus in swaddling cloth, showing He became man and was born by the normal way (and thus needed to be cleaned after birth). The Magi, who worshiped the stars, were led to the true light of the world; all who search for truth find Christ. They brought Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh; gold because Jesus is king; frankincense because He is high priest; myrrh because He will die for our sins. The angels spread the good news to the shepherds, as Jesus is the true shepherd and He, in the Eucharist, is the unity of Christians. The cave in the center shows that Jesus is born into a world of darkness,

unbelief, and doubt, which we must struggle though. Mary is in the center, with Jesus, as the mother of the light. She looks towards Joseph, who is at the bottom left, to strengthen him. Joseph, an old man and a widower is shown as and weighed down by doubts of the origins of Christ, which he overcomes. Satan is depicted as an old man in rags with a cane tempting Joseph, who is the protector of the Holy Family.

How does the Christmas tree fit into Christmas?

The Christmas tree is an ancient tradition that exalts the value of life, for in the winter season the evergreen fir becomes a sign of undying life. Christmas gifts are usually placed on the tree or arranged at its base. The symbol thus also becomes eloquent in a typically Christian sense: it calls to mind the "tree of life" (cf. Gn 2: 9), a figure of Christ, God's supreme gift to humanity.



The message of the Christmas tree is consequently that life stays "evergreen" if we make a gift of it: not so much of material things, but of life itself: in friendship and sincere affection, in fraternal help and

forgiveness, in time shared and reciprocal listening.

(The answer above in an excerpt taken from Pope John Paul II's Angelus message on Fourth Sunday of Advent, 19 December 2004)

When is the Christmas Season?

For Catholics following the ordinary form of the Latin rite (this includes the vast majority of Catholics in the U.S.), the Christmas Season starts on Christmas Eve, the evening of December 24th. It ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This falls on the Sunday closest to January 13th.

Was Christmas ever Illegal in the U.S.?

From 1647 to 1660, when the Puritans governed England (and U.S. colonies were part of England) the English outlawed Christmas. Christmas was also outlawed from 1659 to 1681 in Boston. The Boston law read:

For preventing disorders, arising in several places within this jurisdiction by reason of some still observing such festivals as were superstitiously kept in other communities, to the great dishonor of God and offense of others: it is therefore ordered by this court and the authority thereof that whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labor, feasting, or any other way, upon any such account as aforesaid, every such person so offending shall pay for every such offence five shilling as a fine to the county."

*From the records of the General Court,
Massachusetts Bay Colony
May 11, 1659*



Legion of Mary Arlington Regia
2009 Annual Retreat for Active Legionaries
February 13 – 15, 2009



Retreat Master
The Reverend Fr. Thomas Collins,
Spiritual Director, Richmond Curia.

LOCATION: Washington Retreat House, 4000 Harewood Rd., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1595
DIRECTIONS: North on N. Capital St. Right onto Michigan Ave. Left onto Harewood Rd.

OPTIONS:

- 1) \$150 Full Weekend:** (no senior discount)
 Includes: 6 meals - Friday & Saturday overnight accommodations.
 Linens and towels provided. Bring your own alarm clock.
 Check In: Between 5:00-6:00pm on Friday evening (Dinner at 6:30pm)
 Departure: After noon meal on Sunday
 Reservation: Complete reservation form below. Send with \$25 deposit check payable to:
Washington Retreat House to above address.
 Balance (cash or check only) due upon arrival.
- 2) \$30 All-day Saturday:** 8am - 10pm
 Includes: 3 meals – Breakfast served promptly at 8am. Lunch at noon. Dinner at 6pm.
 Reservation: Complete reservation form below. Send with \$30 check payable to:
Washington Retreat House to above address.
- 3) \$20 Partial-day Saturday:** 8am - 1pm
 Includes: 2 meals – Breakfast served promptly at 8am. Lunch at noon.
 Reservation: Complete reservation form below. Send with \$20 check payable to:
Washington Retreat House to above address.

After February 3rd, call the Retreat House (202-529-1111) for space available.

INFORMATION: e-mail webmaster@arlingtonregia.com

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Reservation Form

Legion of Mary Arlington Regia 2009 Annual Retreat for Active Legionaries - February 13 – 15, 2009

Name: _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

Choose ONE below

- 1) ___ \$150 Full Weekend** (check any that apply)
 ___ Enclosed is my \$25 non-refundable deposit.
 ___ I have trouble with stairs, and request a room near an elevator.
 ___ Require a special food diet.
 ___ If possible, assign me an adjoining room with _____
- 2) ___ \$30 All-day Saturday** (8am - 10pm). Enclosed is my check for \$30.
- 3) ___ \$20 Partial-day Saturday** (8am - 1pm). Enclosed is my check for \$20.