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Souvenir Edition Celebrating 100 years of the Legion of Mary and its remarkable founder

# The Irish Catholic

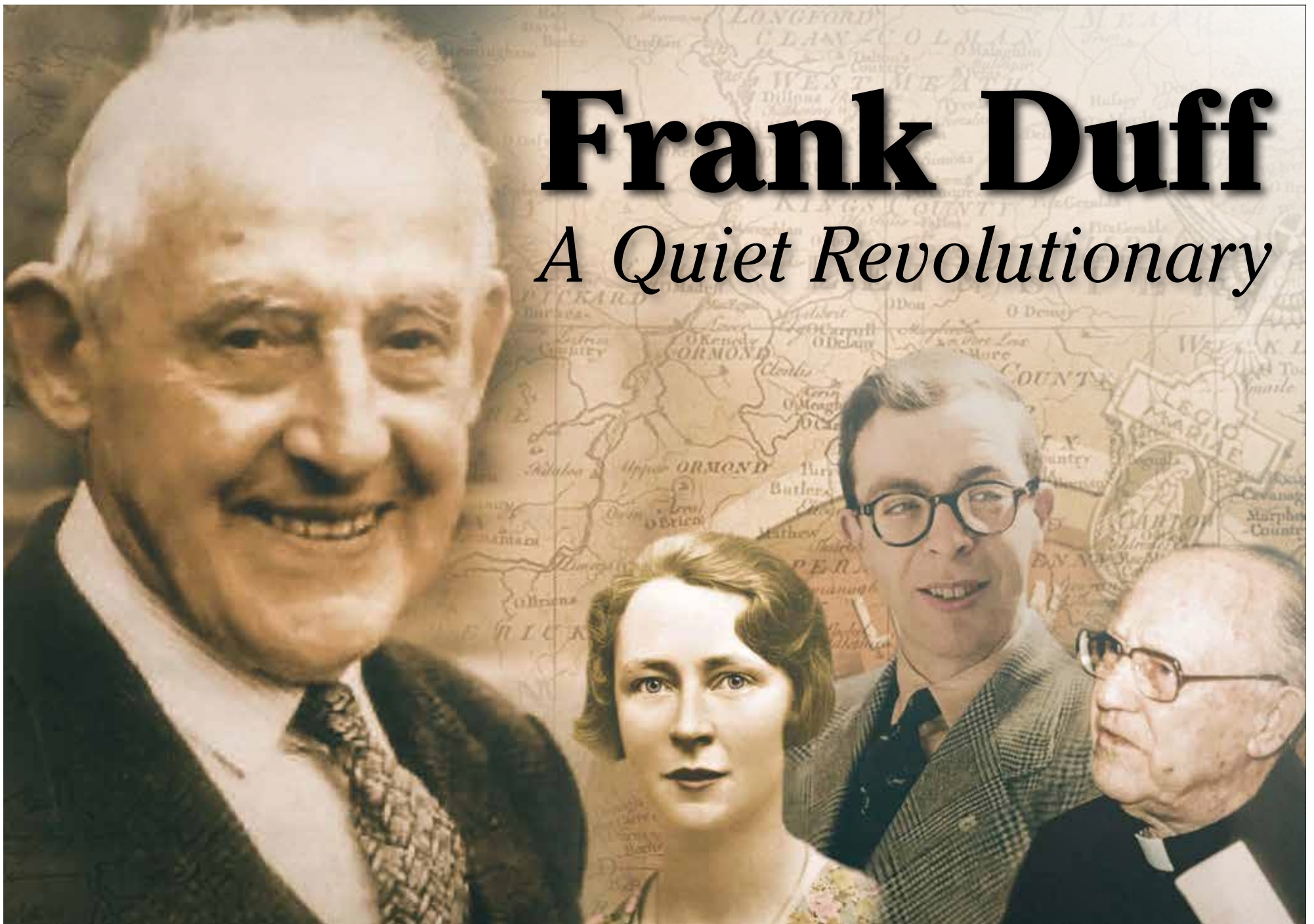
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**Managing Editor:** Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie  
**Deputy Editor:** Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie  
**Northern Correspondent:** Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie  
**Multimedia Journalists:** Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie  
 Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie  
**Newsroom:** news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026  
**Books Editor:** Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie  
**Advertising:** advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094  
**Accounts:** accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020  
**Magnificat:** magnificat@irishcatholic.ie  
**Shop:** shop@irishcatholic.ie

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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return next week

# Someone is coming

**The Sunday Gospel**

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



**T**he entrance antiphon for Mass on the Third Sunday of Advent sets the tone for coming closer to Christmas. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near." Today is known as *Gaudete* Sunday, a day of special rejoicing.

The second reading is worth repeating in full and remember that Paul wrote these thoughts to the Philippians at a time when he was in prison. Paul was a man of compulsive activity, yet he found a new depth of faith and peace when locked up in prison. "I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus."

Paul has suggested two important steps towards happiness. "Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near." For the person of deep faith, the Lord is as near as the person beside or before us. Tolerance means accepting this person as God's creation even if one is difficult and offensive.

Paul then suggests that the answer to worry is prayer. And he adds that prayers of thanksgiving are very impor-

tant because gratitude keeps one alert to the everyday gifts of God. Indeed, it is suggested that gratitude is the heart of prayer.

**Loved by God**

Pope Francis is a great believer in the joy of religion. He is all against what he calls "sourpuss religion". One has only to look at the titles of his great documents: *The Joy of the Gospel: Rejoice and be Glad*, which is a simplified application of the previous document; and his document of family life is called *The Joy of Love*. Here is a very important piece of advice he gives. "Do not be afraid to set your hearts higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit" (*Rejoice and be Glad*, 34).

One common mistake is to think that we must first prove worthy of God's love by the perfection of our own efforts. We wrongly imagine that one day we will advance from the petty squabbles and tatty agitation of the familiar world, and then, in that pure, anaesthetised life we shall have become a home worthy of God. It reminds me of the little boy who went into hiding the first day he was to go to school because he could not read and write like his older brothers and sisters. Love begins in God, not in what we do.

**John the Baptist**

The great Advent figure, John the Baptist, was called to prepare a way for the Lord. His preaching was good news for many people who were given no hope by the religious institutions of the day. The word of God which he proclaimed stirred up in



The *Gaudete* candle is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent.

people a surprising willingness to mend their ways. They asked him what they should do. People who were wealthy were told to give to those who lacked the essentials of life. In sharing with others, they would experience the joy of giving. Tax collectors were told to be totally honest in their dealings. Soldiers were told, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!"

In contrast to the preaching of John the Baptist, those who congratulated themselves on the merit they accumulated by their religious observance were not ready to hear. They did not know their need for a Saviour. They had no need of Advent, or so they thought.

**The Holy Spirit and fire**

John the Baptist celebrated the repentance of sinners with a ceremonial washing called baptism. A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people. They were beginning to think that John might be the

promised Messiah. But John told them, "I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

**Spirit-filled evangelisers**

Pope Francis, the joyful believer, has taken up the idea of his predecessors, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, in saying that what the world of today needs are spirit-filled evangelisers. Our society and our Church are experiencing the darkness of a winter of the spirit. But Advent raises our hope because first it was Jesus at the Nativity, and then it was the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, who fulfilled the prophecy of the Baptist that someone is coming. Remember that St Paul was in prison when he exhorted people to be happy, always happy in the Lord: the Lord is very near. And, as Pope Francis said, let yourself be loved and liberated by God.

**Advent Prayer**

*O God, may I always know you as Someone-is-Coming. May I experience my prison of loneliness as a space for your nearness, my darkness as the stretching of my sight to your vastness, my coldness as the need for your warmth, my inertia as the sleep that restores, my winter as enriching the earth for spring's excitement.*

*Take me and use me, Lord, to be someone-coming for others. Make me more caring for those who are neglected, and sensitive towards all who are hurt. Use me as good news for those caught up in the sadness of sin, and as the spark of joy for those who feel down and depressed.*

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 7-9PM Monday, Dec. 20



# 'Fr Alec for Pope!' Gerry Adams wrote about peace priest Fr Reid

**Chai Brady**

Gerry Adams said the IRA's 1994 ceasefire would not have been possible without Fr Alec Reid CSSR, according to a letter he wrote to the rector of the Clonard Monastery at the time.

Then Sinn Féin president, Mr Adams praised the whole Belfast-based Clonard Redemptorist community for their role in the peace process, signing off the letter "Fr Alec for Pope!"

**Revealed**

The correspondence was revealed for the first time in TG4's *Sagairt na Síochána [Priests of Peace]*. The documentary focuses on the good works of three Redemptorist priests who were key to forging peace in the North.

The letter was sent to Clonard rector at the time Fr Kevin Browne.

Mr Adams wrote: "Please excuse this scribbled effort of thanks to you and the entire Clonard community, from your fellow priests, the cooks, to the receptionists for all your help over this last years of the peace process.

"A special commendation from me for Fr Alec. Without him we would not be opening up this potentially historic opportunity."

He adds that "the road ahead will not be easy but I know that Clonard will continue to offer a sanctuary and a beacon for us all".

There are contributions in *Sagairt na Síochána* from former President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, former Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern and more.

**Peacebuilding**

In addition to Fr Reid, the documentary also looks at the peacebuilding of two other Redemptorists, Archbishop Patrick Clune and Fr Ciarán O Callaghan.

Archbishop Clune, from Co. Clare, acted as an intermediary between Sinn Féin leaders and then British Prime Minister Lloyd George. His work towards securing a truce was thwarted by a demand from the British Government that the IRA surrender their arms before negotiations.

Fr O'Callaghan continues the Redemptorist's work to this day, about 100 years later, through the Clonard Peace and Reconciliation Mission, which is greatly influenced by priests such as Fr Reid who promoted dialogue and Christian unity.

## Maynooth carol service to go ahead on December 15

**Staff reporter**

The traditional highlight of the Maynooth year will go ahead later this month with people being invited to join the carol service online from the historic college chapel.

Following revised public health guidance,

a much-reduced congregation will attend this year's carol service, which will be livestreamed on Wednesday December 15 at 7.30pm on [www.maynoothcollege.ie](http://www.maynoothcollege.ie).

The ceremony will be led by the college president Fr Michael Mullaney. Fr Mullaney said: "I am

truly delighted that this year's Christmas carol service can go ahead with a small in-person audience.

"I extend an invitation to everyone who can to join us online and enjoy hymns sung by our three talented choirs for this beautiful and moving celebration of the eternal

message of Christmas," he said.

The carol service will include the College Chapel Choir, directed by Dr John O'Keefe; the Schola Gregoriana, led by Dr Darina McCarthy; and Maynooth University Chamber Choir, under the direction of Dr Michael Dawson.

## A light for Our Lady



As the Year of St Joseph draws to a close, Sr Anthony-Mary of the Poor Clare Monastery, Cork, prepares for vespers of the solemnity of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception.

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# Euro bishops warn PC culture turning people away from EU

Jason Osborne

European bishops have warned that attempts to suppress religion damage the image of the EU and its institutions, and support for the "European project in the member states".

This comes after an internal European Commission document was picked up by Italian newspaper *Il Giornale* which showed guidelines that proposed replacing "Christmas period" with "holiday period" in an effort to use more inclusive language.

The guidelines were withdrawn in response to widespread criticism.

The European Commission guide advised officials to "avoid assuming that everyone is Christian".

"Not everyone celebrates the Christian holidays, and not all Christians celebrate them on the same dates," the document said.

It encouraged staff based in Brussels and Luxembourg to avoid a phrase such as "Christmas time can be stressful" and instead say "Holiday times can be stressful."

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) welcomed the withdrawal, saying it "cannot help being concerned about the impression that

an anti-religious bias characterised some passages of the draft document".

President of COMECE, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ said: "Neutrality cannot mean relegating religion to the private sphere. Christmas is not only part of European religious traditions but also of European reality. Respecting religious diversity cannot lead to the paradoxical consequence of suppressing the religious element from public discourse."

Pope Francis also criticised the withdrawn document, saying that it was an "anachronism", and that many ideologies have attempted to pull up Europe's Christian roots

in the past.

"In history many, many dictatorships have tried to do it. Think of Napoleon: from there... Think of the Nazi dictatorship, the communist one... it is a fashion of a watered-down secularism, distilled water... But this is something that throughout hasn't worked," the Pope said.

"The European Union must take in hand the ideals of the founding fathers, which were ideals of unity, of greatness, and be careful not to take the path of ideological colonisation," the Pope told reporters at the end of his recent visit to Cyprus and Greece.

## Dublin Diocese to start synod discussions in New Year

Chai Brady

The Archdiocese of Dublin has announced that a synodal process of discussion and discernment will begin across the diocese in the New Year, according to a letter sent by the archbishop.

Archbishop Dermot Farrell also announced that a taskforce aimed at developing their pastoral plan has been created.

He said: "It is my intention to invite the whole diocesan family, and every parish, to begin the process of discussion and discernment early in the New Year, and, with the help of the pastoral strategy group, to provide guidelines and suggestions to support this journey, which will be, in itself, an expression of the synodal path on which the

Church has embarked."

The initiation of the synodal discussion process in the archdiocese aims to prepare it for the upcoming national synod which will involve all the dioceses of Ireland.

The 'Pastoral Strategy Implementation Group' will advise the archbishop and will develop the archdiocese's pastoral plan having regard for the recommendations of the wide-ranging 'Building Hope' taskforce and the 'Sacraments Implementation Group', which focused on the sacraments with young people and their families.

"The strategy that has been recommended involves principles to guide our renewal, a process of engagement that would involve the whole diocesan family, and a framework to guide discussion and discernment," Dr Farrell said.

## Giving thanks for kindness and support



Archbishop Michael Neary and Fr Richard Gibbons, rector of Knock Shrine, are pictured with a mosaic of Our Lady, gifted to Dr Neary to mark his retirement as archbishop of Tuam, December 5. Photo: Sinéad Mallee.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New head chaplain appointed for Irish army

Fr Paschal Hanrahan has been appointed head chaplain to the Irish Defence Forces, and will commence his duties from March 1, 2022.

Fr Hanrahan is currently serving in the same role for the British Defence Forces. He will succeed Fr Seamus Madigan who has held the position for six years.

The son of Gertie and the late Paschal, Fr Hanrahan was ordained in 1998 for the Diocese of Kilaloe and his first appointment was as curate in Kilrush, Co. Clare.

The Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan wished Fr Hanrahan every blessing as he takes up the role.

## Senator decries China's 'mistreatment' of Christians

Staff reporter

A senator has criticised the Chinese government's regulations on religion which he

says are leading to "churches being raided and closed".

Speaking in the Seanad, Independent Senator Victor Boyhan called on the Minis-

ter for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney to publicly express concern regarding the "mistreatment" of Christians.

His comments came after a motion was put forward last week by Senator Michael McDowell calling on the Government to act against human rights abuses in the country.

Mr Boyhan said: "I would like him to publicly express concern about the way Christians are being mistreated under the Chinese authorities' new regulations for religious affairs, including crosses being removed, churches being raided and closed and pastors and spiritual leaders being arrested.

"I ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs to raise the matter with the Chinese ambassador to Ireland."

## Pandemic of abuse exacerbated by lockdown – Bishop Nulty

Domestic abuse and "silent stonewalling" are a much deeper pandemic which were exacerbated by Covid-19 lockdowns, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty said during a graduation address to Accord counsellors and facilitators.

"Accord's first concern always must be to heal the wounded," Bishop Nulty told the graduates.

"Pope Francis regularly uses the image of the Church becoming a 'field hospital'," Bishop Nulty said, continuing, "This image resonates superbly with our ministry in Accord, namely: the calling of the counsellor to accompany; the call of the facilitator to deliver, and the call of the centre member to be present for and with one another."

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by Mary Varilly

## Were you involved in pro-life campaigning, activism, counselling or work in the 1980s or 1990s?

I would love to speak to you about your memories.

I am an historian researching the history of the pro-life movement in Ireland. The voices of men and women who took part in pro-life activism have been left out of the historical narrative and there is no balanced account of their work. It is really important that the experiences of people who took part in this work are recorded, especially for future generations.

If you are interested in taking part in an oral history interview with me or would like more information, please email [L.e.kelly@strath.ac.uk](mailto:L.e.kelly@strath.ac.uk), or write to: Dr Laura Kelly, School of Humanities, University of Strathclyde, Level 4, Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0LT, Scotland.

Interviews can be anonymous if you wish and your memories will be treated with the utmost sensitivity and respect.



# The many aspects of Frank Duff's life and mission

Sometimes it takes a long arc of history for a remarkable person and his work to be fully acknowledged and recognised. A hundred years after he founded the Legion of Mary in Dublin, Frank Duff is now seen as not merely a devout and altruistic man, but enlightened and well before his time in his pioneering caring work.

In an era when unmarried mothers were often forced to yield their babies for adoption – not just in Ireland, but elsewhere – Frank Duff championed the entitlement of single mothers to keep their babies, even though, before welfare benefits were available, it was often difficult to do so.

He was a much more complex character than sometimes realised, as Finola Kennedy's fine biography has shown. A cultivated reader, he had been influenced by George Moore's sympathetic portrait of an outcast unmarried mother, *Esther Waters*.

Frank Duff's own mother, Lette, was highly intelligent: she had won a prize for science and she daily completed the brainy crossword in the



## Mary Kenny

London *Times*. Unusually, for the 1890s and 1900s, Frank Duff's parents had a shared bank account.

His best friend at Blackrock College was Michael Davitt, son of the founder of the Land League. Duff was a moderate Irish nationalist but never brought politics into his Legion work.

His brother John, a member of the Irish bar, and a gregarious clubman didn't really share Frank's concern for the poor. Frank's sister Ailish was mortified when the Duff family moved to De Montfort House – which had been part of the old North Dublin Union workhouse. "Just imagine," she told Léon Ó Broin, "how embarrassing it will be to ask Switzer's [the posh Grafton Street shop] to send something to an address like that!"

After the British administration transferred to the Irish State's civil service, Frank was briefly Michael Collins' private secretary. Duff was an excellent civil

servant and an able mathematician, and at one point was sent to London to consult with Treasury mandarins over the knotty issue of annuity redemption tables.

The controversial writer Ulick O'Connor was an unexpected admirer of Duff – especially because Duff was such an athlete, cycling prodigious distances and swimming vigorously into old age. Ulick called Frank Duff "the first Irish ecumenist of real mettle" when he died.

Writers were sometimes disparaging about Duff and the Legion of Mary. This is seen in the work of several Irish authors, including Nuala O Faoláin, who disliked what she called the 'Holy Joes' of the Legion, and John Banville, who referred, pejoratively, to Éamon de Valera as a "scrofulous Catholic, with his Legion-of-Mary pieties".

And yet Frank Duff launched a social organisation, during World War Two,



Mary and Bill Peffley talk with Frank Duff, the founder of the Legion of Mary, while visiting New York City, in this 1956 photo. Photo: CNS

to arrange *soirées* with writers – one of his many ecumenical gestures. The gatherings included such luminaries as Conor Cruise O'Brien, Brinsley MacNamara, and Seán O Faoláin. The only rule was that courtesy should be shown amid disagreements. Duff also valiantly sought to bring Protestants and Jews into

dialogue with Irish Catholics, which promised to be a fruitful exchange (and Irish Jews, aware of the perils of Hitler's Germany, were keen to attend). Regrettably, John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, dissolved the association.

Duff was a man of deep spirituality – early on he was inspired by Louis de

Montfort – and dedicated to the rosary. But the practical as well as the spiritual was always important to him: he cared for the 'down and outs', the street prostitutes – who yearned to quit their way of life – the homeless, the drinkers. A hundred years on, Duff and his work is surely a national inspiration.

## Abortion isn't banal

There was a key debate in the French national assembly on November 30 about extending abortion from 12 weeks to 14: it passed by 79 votes to 36, with eight abstentions. There is continuing pan-European pressure to extend abortion margins, and the European Parliament has passed a motion describing abortion as a 'fundamental human right' and describing inaccessibility to abortion as 'gender-based violence'.

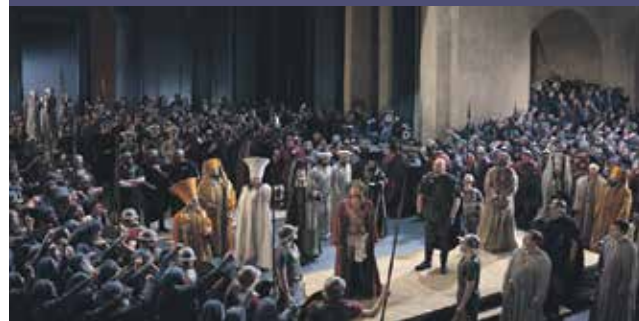
Yet there was also a significant debate in the French parliament about the right to conscientious objection, with the left-leaning ecologist Albane Gaillot contending that doctors and nurses should not have the 'right of con-

science' in the abortion procedures, lest it 'stigmatises' women. Other female deputies defended the rights of conscience, and Anne-Laure Blin said that "abortion is not a medical act like any

other since it consists of bringing an end to a human life" – it shouldn't be "banal". The conscience clause – supported by all the major medical associations – was retained.



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● A woman I knew died in a London nursing home last week. She had no family relations. "But," said a mutual friend, "right up until the end she was cared for by her lovely Irish Catholic carers, who were there for her when she died in the night." Brave!



# Heroism of the Legion's Chinese members



Chinese newspapers across the country declared the Legion to be an anti-revolutionary, subversive organisation in 1951, writes David Quinn

In 1956, Ignatius Kung, the Catholic bishop of Shanghai, was brought before a crowd of thousands in the local dog racing stadium, bound and dressed by his captors in a pajama suit. He had been arrested the previous year as part of a general crack-

down on the Catholic Church in China.

Bishop Kung's captors wanted him to publicly confess his 'crimes' against the communist revolution. Instead, the diminutive prelate, only five feet tall, leaned into the microphone and declared to those present in a loud voice, "Long live Christ the King, long live the Pope".

The Catholics in the crowd responded, "Long live Christ the King, long live Bishop Kung". It was one of the great acts of defiance and a great declaration of an indomitable faith.

Bishop Kung was dragged away by his captors and sentenced to prison. He was not released until 1988. Much of his time behind bars was spent in solitary confinement.

Bishop Kung was the first bishop of the diocese of Shanghai and an early member of the Legion of Mary in China.

## Celebrating

The Legion is, of course, currently celebrating the centenary of its founding by the remarkable Frank Duff. The organisation found its way to China in 1937 when Columban missionary, Fr Aedan McGrath, was asked by Bishop Edward Galvin to establish a presidium

in his parish in China where he lived at the time.

Bishop Galvin told Fr McGrath that the lay workers of the Legion could help him in his work.

Within six months, Fr McGrath had set up six presidia consisting of 135 volunteers who he described as "first-class".

After World War II, the papal nuncio to China, Archbishop Riberi, asked Fr McGrath to establish branches of the Legion in other parts of the country and he set about doing this in 1948.

**“It is easy now to forget the essential heroism of many Legion members”**

Incredibly, by January 1951, more than 1,000 presidia had been founded in 90 different Catholic dioceses across China, with Shanghai as a particular focus. Bishop Kung had become the bishop of Shanghai the previous year.

The Legion managed to expand rapidly even though a ferocious civil war was raging between the nationalist forces



The late Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-mei of Shanghai, China, in Connecticut in 1999. He lived in the US from 1987 after spending 30 years in Chinese prisons. Photo: CNS.

led by Chiang Kai-shek, and the communists, led by Mao Tse Tung.

The communists prevailed and seized power in 1949, formally establishing the People's Republic of China in October of that year. Ironically, the Chinese Communist Party had been founded at almost exactly the same time as the Legion of Mary back in 1921.

## Remarkable

It is remarkable in retrospect to think that an organisation founded by a former civil servant in a tiny country like Ireland should be declared an enemy of the most populous country in the world only a few decades later. But that is exactly what happened.

Very soon after taking power, Mao began a long war on religion and a particular target was the Catholic Church, which was seen as a foreign interloper controlled from Rome and therefore a dangerous presence in a country where the communist party wanted to be seen as sole source of authority.

Legion members in China believed that priests and religious would become the first victims of the crackdown, but to their amazement, the government turned first of all on them, perhaps regarding them as a softer target.

On October 8, 1951, newspapers across the country declared the Legion to be "running dogs of the US imperialists under the cloak of religion, and an anti-revolutionary, subversive organisation".

It was ordered to be disbanded and Legion members were told to renounce their membership and register with the government.

Bernadette Chien remembered the time. She wrote in 1999, "We were under pres-

sure from all sides. We were like mice crossing the street open to the abuse of everyone".

Thousands of members refused to buckle, risking losing their jobs, being expelled from school or even arrested and facing time in prison.

Francis T.S. Shen, president of the Senates of the Legion of Mary in Shanghai was one of the first to be arrested in 1951. He was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment. In 1960, things took an even darker turn. He was tried in public and sentenced to death for preaching the Gospel to fellow inmates. He was publicly executed in November 1963.

**“It was ordered to be disbanded and Legion members were told to renounce their membership and register with the government”**

Another of those arrested during the initial crackdown was Fr McGrath himself. He spent two and a half years in prison, in brutal conditions, before being expelled from the country.

## Promoting

He spent the rest of his life promoting the Legion dying only in 2000, aged 94.

It is easy now to forget the essential heroism of many Legion members.

How many Catholics today would be willing to undergo the persecution and suffering of the mainly young members of the Legion of Mary in China had to suffer in the middle of the last century? Our faith is now thin gruel compared with that.

One of the great 'might-have-beens' is what could have happened if the Legion had been able to grow unimpeded. It would surely be going too far to say China would now be a Catholic country, but we can say with a considerable amount of certainty that the Church in China would be far bigger than it is today, and it would be thanks chiefly to Frank Duff and his organisation.

## Released

As for Bishop Kung, when he was finally released from prison in 1988, he had to leave behind his beloved country.

Shortly before that, however, he was allowed to meet Cardinal Jaime Sin of the Philippines at a banquet. They were not allowed to talk directly, but Bishop Kung sang the words "*Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam*" (You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church). He was telling Cardinal Sin he had not lost his faith.

In 1991, Pope John Paul II gave Bishop Kung the red hat of a cardinal in Rome in front of an audience of thousands. He had been made a cardinal *in pectore* (that is, in secret) in 1979.

Cardinal Kung, by now 90 and very frail, returned to his wheelchair after being given the red hat and received a seven-minute standing ovation from the crowd in honour of his great faith and the suffering he had endured. He died nine years later, aged almost 100.

The prolonged standing ovation he received that day in Rome was not only a testament to him. It was also a tribute to the Legion and the heroism and self-sacrifice of so many of its Chinese members. They should never be forgotten.

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## Frank Duff – Celebrating his life and legacy

## Frank Duff – ‘Old reliability’



Frank Duff valued the virtue of reliability above all others, writes Ruadhán Jones

**U**nique; courageous; friendly; loving; reliable. Read this list, and consider which of these you would like to be remembered by. They are none of them bad things. No doubt the glamour of courage or the affability of friendliness jump out; equally, our desire to stand out and be unique or to be loving and loved in return. But what of the last one? Reliable – a virtue for sure, but doesn't it fall a little flat?

And yet, though any of the above descriptions could be ascribed to Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary, it was reliability that he took the most pride in and felt to be the most challenging. ‘Old reliability’ was the nickname his mother gave him when he was 15. ‘He was always there when you need him’, she said, without realising that she was laying down a challenge he spent his life trying to meet.

As you read through this special edition, you will come to understand the vast influence he had on Ireland and the Church. ‘A quiet revolutionary’ is how Fr John S. Hogan describes him, while Finola Kennedy – Duff's biographer – reminds us that in his work as a civil servant, he was never less than diligent and often highly inventive. Equally, in his commitment to providing comfort and shelter for men, women and children, he reached out to the margins of his time in a manner encouraged by Pope Francis today.

### The Legion

Reading through the accounts of his work for the Legion, now the largest lay Catholic association in the world, you will no doubt see that he was a force to be reckoned with. From 1921, when the Legion was founded, right up to his death on November 7, 1980, he remained at his post. Ann Murray, a legionary who knew

Duff, remembers that even on the morning of the seventh, he attended a legionary's funeral, shaking hands and giving his attention to anyone he met.

He spent his life tirelessly promoting the lay apostolate, as well as invigorating and reinvigorating its mission – to convert the world for God with Mary. It's not that his mission was easy. The difficulty with being ‘ahead of your time’ is that those around you do not easily understand. It wasn't until Vatican II that Duff started to get the recognition he merited, as Fr John Harris OP shows in his article.

He was a tireless worker, a voracious reader and a monumental writer – 33,000 letters are his legacy, as well as numerous articles, talks, books and more. The articles that follow are peppered with witty and wise words from Duff. Perhaps even more notable is the patience and time he devoted to everyone he met or with whom he corresponded. He took everyone at their level, listening attentively. He spoke only when it was necessary, offering some simple words of encouragement or sage advice.

**“‘Old reliability’ was the nickname his mother gave him when he was 15. ‘He was always there when you need him’”**

Through all this, he remained his mother's faithful son. As Dr Evie Monahan notes in her own article, Duff never married, and one of the reasons for this was his desire to support his mother. Even later in life, he would take her out to the pictures, or have guests over – amid the great and global demands the Legion made of him, he made time for his mother. To the end, and in all things, he was reliable. He didn't rest until God called him home.

How appropriate it is, after all, that such an everyday virtue would light up the mind of one of Ireland's greatest sons, and the Church's devoted servant. In *Can we be saints?*, his first published work, he set out a vision of sanctity situated in the everyday. A saint, he says, is “One who, with the object of pleasing God, does his ordinary duties extraordinarily well”.

And then, quoting St John Henry Newman, he writes:

“If you ask me what you are to do in order to be perfect, I say, first do not lie in bed beyond the time of rising; give your first thoughts to God; make a good visit to the Blessed Sacrament; say



Frank Duff

the angelus devoutly; eat and drink to God's glory; say the rosary well; be recollected; keep out bad thoughts; make your evening meditation well; examine yourself daily; go to bed in good time, and you are already perfect.”

### Virtue

It is no surprise that Duff believed everyone can be a saint – who is this description beyond? The answer, looking at the reality of sin, is many more than should be the case. Try to live your life even in this way, and you will understand how difficult it is to be reliable, to be always there when your mother or father, sister or brother, son or daughter, a stranger or God himself needs you. You will understand why reliability is the virtue Duff so much treasured, a virtue that requires a lifetime to perfect – and even then, only by the grace of God.

It is with great thanks, then, that I praise the reliability of all the contributors to this edition. They kindly dedicated their time to researching and writing a number of excellent articles on Duff, the Legion and some its luminaries. With Duff then, let us pray that we can too be reliable to the end:

“And then to crown the rest, dear Jesus, I beg of You to give me this... fidelity to the end... to be at my post when the final call comes, and to take my last weary breath in your embrace. A valiant life . . . and faithful to the end. A short wish, dearest Jesus, but it covers all” (*Can we be saints?*).

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# The quiet revolutionary



Frank Duff was a truly Catholic revolutionary, in his own quiet way, writes Fr John S. Hogan

In a 1943 correspondence with Fr Michael Toher, a collaborator with Frank Duff in the foundation of the Legion of Mary, Archbishop John Charles McQuaid offered his assessment of Frank Duff's character. The archbishop accepted that Frank was intelligent, a deep and wide student of Mariology, devoted to the point of "utter self-sacrifice" and had an organising ability which had arrayed great forces of workers in the cause of the Church's apostolate.

However, Archbishop McQuaid opined, he lacked a sense of ecclesiastical authority; this was due, the archbishop surmised, to a lack of theological training. Fr Toher took his time to reflect and respond; when he did, he assured the archbishop that Frank was "a chosen soul", a man with a great mission, with special gifts, natural and supernatural, to help him carry out that mission. While he did have faults, these faults emerged from his greatness. Fr Toher deftly reminded the archbishop that "A prophet has honour except in his own country". Archbishop McQuaid

took some time to embrace this view, but later, in 1963, he praised Frank, describing him as "utterly loyal" to the papal nuncio to Ireland.

## Disagreements

Though they had disagreements, the relationship between Frank and Archbishop McQuaid was not as bad as painted. Over the years, as they collaborated on many projects together, the archbishop came to appreciate him and had the insight to see that Duff was indeed an extraordinary man. Archbishop McQuaid, a good man, but also a man of his time, found it difficult to control Frank: he was dealing with what some might call a free spirit, a man of unrestrained zeal; a man who was in fact, a revolutionary.

## “Frank’s quiet revolution extended in particular to the role of women in the Church”

Revolutionary is not a term that immediately comes to mind when one thinks of Frank Duff. As a conservative Catholic and civil servant, he seemed to be grounded in the establishment. Externally, he was the quiet Irishman, going about his daily business; a bachelor living with his mother, caring for her until she died and then living alone, rarely travelling outside Ireland. This is a pattern we often see both in rural and urban Ireland. He liked reading and could have been understood as an amateur intellectual who, once you got him going on a topic that fascinated him, could talk for hours,

albeit with a marked humility.

But Frank Duff cannot be confined so easily. Within this man there was a vision that gradually formed in his mind and led him to rock the boat of the Irish ecclesiastical establishment. He was utterly loyal but ahead of his time in his thinking. He was an avid and deep reader. Contrary to Archbishop McQuaid's assessment, Frank was probably one of the best-read laymen in Ireland on theological and spiritual matters.

## Insights

This reading, his insights and his prayer led him to root himself in the Church's tradition of the apostolate, the very mission, innovative and radical by nature, which led to the conversion of the Roman empire – apostles, clergy and laity working together to proclaim the Gospel. Later, the Second Vatican Council reiterated this in its teaching on the mission of the Church, but in a time when aspects of the Church's life had become staid and perhaps overbearing clerical, it was revolutionary.

Frank was exposed to new ideas at an early age. His comfortable upbringing fell apart as his father's health failed and the young man's hopes for third level education unravelled. The civil service, often the refuge of those in need of stable employment, opened its doors to him. The determined administrations that governed the Irish Free State following independence, and the precarious economic state of the country, offered challenges for Frank to think outside the box politically and economically. Finola Kennedy in her fine biography reveals his ingenuity as a civil servant. However, the system required conform-



Frank at Kanturk.

ity, and Frank proved to be less of a conformist than a thinker and experimentalist.

One of the major influences on his life was Joe Gabbett, a former soldier and cobbler whose distinctive evangelical work captured Frank's attention and imagination. The relationship between Frank and Gabbett is reminiscent of the one between the young Karol Wojtyła, the future St John Paul II, and the Venerable Jan Tyranowski, a devout Cracovian layman and mystic.

## New world

Like Tyranowski for Wojtyła, Gabbett opened up a whole new world for Frank in his work for the poor, his campaign against proselytism and his reading. In conversation with Gabbett and in their activism together, Frank was pushed out of his comfort zone to eventually embrace the ingenuity, exposure and even the loneliness which often accompanies a radical apostolate. His thirst to serve was first satiated in the Society of St Vincent de Paul which proved a valuable apprenticeship. His reading of St Louis Marie de Montfort's *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, and

subsequent engagement with Catholic women who wanted to participate in the Church's apostolate, opened a new door.

## “Frank may have also understood that the days of the sodalities and confraternities were coming to an end”

The foundation of the Legion of Mary occurred against the backdrop of the Catholic Action movement. Clerical understanding of lay Catholic activism was very much formed by this movement which was endorsed by popes and utilised by bishops for evangelical purposes. Serving the bishops, members of Catholic Action fulfilled their work under the direction of the clergy, even if they were headed by laity. The Legion did not quite fit in here. Understood as Catholic Action, there was a streak of autonomy in the Legion that disturbed some clerics, this was one of the reasons Dublin's Archbish-

ops Byrne and McQuaid were so uneasy with it and with Frank.

What Frank was trying to achieve was later understood and taught by the Vatican II, that all the baptised were mandated to share in the mission of the Church by virtue of their Baptism and according to their state in life, for many clergy in the 1920s, this was suspect. Frank may have also understood that the days of the sodalities and confraternities were coming to an end. The laity would always want prayer groups and spiritual gatherings, but there was a thirst for engagement in the Church's social work; they could not be confined to prayers and preached missions. This was borne out by the rapid growth of the Legion within Dublin, and later in Ireland, as the sodalities began to wane; this led to bitter hostility with some clergy in Ireland, the Jesuits in particular.

Frank's quiet revolution extended in particular to the role of women in the Church. The Legion was founded to provide a means to allow Catholic women engage in social work. Excluded from the Society of St Vincent de Paul, which was exclusively male until 1960s, the Vincentian Ladies of Char-



Archbishop John Charles McQuaid of Dublin is seen waving to people outside the city's pro-cathedral in the 1960s. Photo: CNS.



ity did not appeal to the first women legionaries. Elizabeth Kirwin (the first Legion president) and her companions wanted to be on the front line, going into those places where few would venture to find those most in need of help. They started in the cancer ward of the South Dublin Union but quickly moved to the brothels and the red-light district of Dublin.

**“Frank resisted Archbishop McQuaid’s efforts to turn them into a means of Catholic proselytism”**

As many had qualms about this, Frank understood that these women had the zeal, energy, insight, and pastoral charity to be of real service to the Church and her mission. Though many balked, he was determined to assist these women in their efforts – they too are members of the Church. When new praesidia were founded, young women were sent out to guide them and ensure they were faithful to the Legion system, a practice considered improper, as one letter of complaint to Archbishop Edward Byrne of Dublin in 1935 decried. As the Legion grew, it was women who governed it until men were admitted in 1929. Then, to the unease of Archbishop Byrne, women and men collaborated together in the same praesidia carrying out the same works: Frank and his co-workers seemed to be demolishing the barriers of decency. Today this would be seen as nothing more than basic equality, in 1920s Catholic Ireland, where men and women sat on different sides of the Church for Mass, it was revolutionary.

**Works**

Among the Legion’s most famous works are the hostels for the poor and the hostel for former prostitutes. The story of the clearing of the Monto red-light district in 1925 has assumed mythic proportions, but the hidden life and struggles of the hostel at 76 Harcourt Street have yet to be fully explored. In an Ireland when ‘fallen women’ were confined in Magdalen asylums, realising these institutions were a hindrance to the solution of the

problem of prostitution rather than a solution, Frank and his co-workers sought to provide a temporary home for women to help them begin a new life.

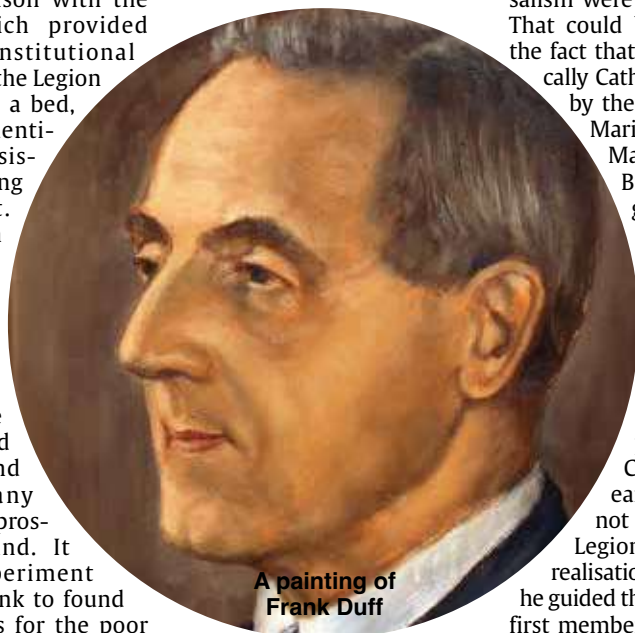
In comparison with the asylums which provided long-term institutional confinement, the Legion hostel offered a bed, meals, confidentiality, and assistance in finding employment. Though often strapped for cash and subject to the usual difficulties inherent in human nature, the hostel proved a success and helped many women leave prostitution behind. It was an experiment which led Frank to found similar homes for the poor while confirming his distaste for Ireland’s default institutional approach to social problems.

He was scathing in his criticism of industrial schools, and while initially seeing some benefit in the mother and baby homes, when he set up his own mother and baby unit within the Regina Coeli Hostel, it was very different from the norm in Ireland. There, mothers and babies were not separated; a crèche system was established to allow mothers find employment and lay the groundwork for a new life. None of Frank’s foundations were perfect, conditions could be hard because funds were scarce and at times specialist training for staff lacking, but they revealed an approach that was different, more compassionate than was usual in Ireland and many other countries at the time.

**Critics**

Despite the view of some of the Legion’s critics, Frank had no time for proselytism. His early evangelical work, under the tutelage of Joe Gabbett, included challenging a Protestant Sunday kitchen which fed the Catholic poor in return for attendance at a service and further contact. The Legion took up this work later. However, this did not conflict with his ecumenical efforts in the 1940s and 1950s when he nurtured the Mercier and the Pillar of Fire societies, forums for dialogue with Protestants and Jews. Both

societies came into conflict with Archbishop McQuaid who initially favoured them cautiously, but later became concerned because they allowed non-



A painting of Frank Duff

Catholics to present papers and ideas on an equal footing with Catholics.

**“As many had qualms about this, Frank understood that these women had the zeal, energy, insight, and pastoral charity to be of real service to the Church and her mission”**

Frank resisted Archbishop McQuaid’s efforts to turn them into a means of Catholic proselytism; for one it would turn away non-Catholics, but also impede what he hoped would be a fruitful dialogue which could lead in time to conversions to Catholicism. He regarded proselytism, be it Catholic or Protestant, as underhanded. Frank was interested in hearing from those of other faiths, building bridges as a means of introducing them to the Catholic Faith; but also aware that those he engaged with were authentic in their faith, rational and committed. If the Church was to evangelise, he realised she had to find new ways to do it. His understanding here was also later confirmed by Vatican II, but as he struggled to keep these early ecumenical efforts alive, he had little

episcopal support and a lot of opposition.

From its foundation, the Legion was not Irish; from its beginning the seeds of universalism were already present. That could be explained by the fact that it was authentically Catholic and perhaps by the influence of the Mariology of St Louis Marie de Montfort. But it was Frank’s growing vision grounded in a spirituality and ideas that transcended nationalism which ensured the Legion would not become the product of ‘Irish Catholicism’. In the early years he was not regarded as the Legion’s founder, that realisation came later; but he guided the foundation, the first members turned to him to lead, and it was his growing understanding of what the Legion was that formed its system and mission.

**Post-revolutionary**

This was revolutionary in post-revolutionary Ireland which was drawing on its distinctiveness to consolidate the foundations of its sovereignty. Politics were banned from the Legion; tensions created by the civil war dominated

Irish life and divided people, and Frank could not permit that to seep into the Legion. But there was more to it than that. The Legion was Catholic, it had to be if it was to grow throughout the world. In the late 1920s and early 1930s as the Legion was extending into Britain, it appealed to English bishops who were concerned about pastoral care more than nationalism.

**“Frank Duff has been called the greatest Irishman of the 20th century”**

In this context, Cardinal Francis Bourne of Westminster, no friend of Irish nationalism, was perhaps Frank’s greatest episcopal ally. The Legion was not meant to be translated into the life of the Church in other countries and cultures, by its very nature it was already designed to fit in. The nomenclature was not Irish, but Roman and therefore Catholic. Even matters such as the patron saints of the Legion were important. Despite pressure from priests and members, Frank resisted including Irish Saints among the official patrons; with the exception of the Frenchman, St Louis Marie de Montfort, whose theology was at the heart of it all,

the saints chosen were those considered universal. This had another advantage. Though Catholic Ireland was considered insular and puritan, the Legion was meant to be more outward looking. Its concerns were pastoral – the salvation of souls – that transcended nationalism.

Frank Duff has been called the greatest Irishman of the 20th century. There is little doubt that he was Irish, but one cannot help but think that, looking at Ireland in his time and ours, he wears that designation like an ill-fitting suit; it is too tight. Frank transcends what it means to be Irish. He is Catholic in both its universal and ecclesiastical senses. That means he was also revolutionary.

What the Gospel teaches does not conform, ultimately, to the expectations of the world, it is by its very nature radical, and the Gospel helps us understand Frank Duff. He was utterly convinced by Christ’s life, mission and teaching, and he found the vision and challenge for his life and work in Christ. And like Christ, he was a revolutionary – by all means a quiet revolutionary, but one nonetheless.

**i** Fr John Hogan is currently undertaking doctoral research of Frank Duff at Dublin City University

**“Within this man there was a vision that gradually formed in his mind and led him to rock the boat of the Irish ecclesiastical establishment”**

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# Frank Duff - 'I was a civil servant'



He was part of a new generation of public servants in the new State, writes **Finola Kennedy**

**W**hen EP McCarron, former Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, died in 1970, Frank Duff wrote an Appreciation in *The Irish Times*. He said that his aim was to cast a true light on "a largely hidden career which stands the risk of being buried in oblivion". The phrase 'a largely hidden career' could be applied to Frank Duff's own career in the civil service.

When Frank Duff retired from the civil service on October 1 1934, he was aged forty-five. It was the midpoint of his life. He had entered the civil service at the age of nineteen in 1908 and spent twenty-six years as a civil servant. Duff once remarked that "it was in my family to be a civil servant", as his mother, father, brother and uncle had all been. Frank's brother, John, became Secretary of the Department of Justice shortly before his relatively early death in 1949.

## Schoolboy

In 1903 when Frank was a fourteen-year-old schoolboy at Blackrock College, both he and his father contracted typhoid fever. While Frank recovered fully, his father did not and, as a result of the illness, was forced to retire from the civil service the following year, at the age of forty-three. Frank's father, Jack Duff, lived until 1918 when he died of cancer. The school year at Blackrock

College 1903/04 was a tough one for Frank. The impact of his father's early retirement on the family finances was compounded by the collapse in value of Mrs Duff's railway shares in which she had invested a legacy.

In an interview with Spiritan priest, Fr John Aherne, Frank said that after Blackrock he would normally have proceeded to university but "From the first minute my money was of great importance". Since his father's death "and even before it, I had to be the mainstay... I had the fullest sense of responsibility for my brother and my sisters". On leaving Blackrock College Frank enrolled in Skerry's College on Stephen's Green where he prepared for civil service entrance exams.

Duff's life in the civil service began on May 27 1908 when he went to work in the offices of the Land Commission at 23-26 Upper Merrion Street as a Second Division Clerk. He started at the bottom of the salary scale.

**“While he held the rank of Junior Executive Officer in the Department of Lands, Agriculture and Fisheries, Frank hoped for substantial promotion because of the fact that he worked directly for the Minister”**

The land question was the key policy issue for the British government at the time and the Land Commission was central to that policy. Its aim was the transformation of tenants into owner-occupiers. A *Land Act (1909)*, known as the *Birrell Act* after the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, was in preparation when Duff joined the Land Commission. The way the land purchase scheme operated was that the government gave landlords Land Bonds plus a cash bonus and financed these transactions by collecting annuities from the tenant purchasers. It was the work of the collection department to which Duff was assigned to calculate the annuities year by year

and to collect the amount due. A Belfast man, Jack O'Callaghan, was requisitioned to work with Frank as a team. Neither Duff nor O'Callaghan could understand the methodology in use, so Duff got down to serious study and developed a novel methodology, involving cost savings, for the calculation of annuities. This attracted the attention of his superiors and Duff was invited to the National Debt Office in London on February 2, 1911 where he spent three days explaining his methodology and answering questions.

## Recruited

In 1913 Jack O'Callaghan recruited Frank into the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP). Others had earlier proposed membership, but he had declined. Then, as he explained, O'Callaghan "succeeded where others had not succeeded, and that was because I liked him so much". Duff was exposed to the chilling poverty of the tenements and a pathway was being forged which would lead to the foundation in 1921 of the Association of Our Lady of Mercy, soon renamed the Legion of Mary. The story of the Legion has been told elsewhere. What is recalled here is the heavy workload that Frank was carrying in the civil service, the financial dependency of his family on his earnings and the simultaneously demanding work associated with the Legion of Mary.

In 1922 Duff moved to the Department of Lands, Agriculture and Fisheries where he worked directly for the Minister, Patrick Hogan. In 1923 four million acres, much of it untenanted, remained to be dealt with. A new Land Bill was required. Duff's work for Hogan centred on this Bill and the subsequent 1923 Land Act, according to León Ó Broin, "was to a degree Frank's work". In the Aherne interview mentioned earlier, Frank said that he "sat in the Dáil during the whole of the passage of the Irish Land Bill, 1923".

In a 27-page memorandum written in 1922, much of which is of a technical nature, Duff sets out the system of land purchase and the methodology to be followed. Duff retained a file of over 200 foolscap pages of carbon copies of memos and other material which he prepared for Hogan. It is an impressive body of work. The file also



Frank Duff 1915 coloured.

includes three newspaper articles which Duff drafted for the Minister. One was for publication in various American newspapers; the other two were for the *Manchester Guardian* and the *United Irishman*. The article for the American papers deals with 'The future of Agriculture in Ireland'. In the article for the *Manchester Guardian*, entitled 'Ireland and the Land Acts', tribute was paid to the achievement of the Acts under which 400,000 homesteads had been established. Behind the statistics lay "the regeneration of a people".

## Junior executive

While he held the rank of Junior Executive Officer in the Department of Lands, Agriculture and Fisheries, Frank hoped for substantial promotion because of the fact that he worked directly for the Minister. However, this was not to be. On

April 1, 1923, Duff was promoted to Higher Executive Officer on an acting basis pending permanent transfer to the Department of Finance. In comparison to other employments, such as secondary teaching, the salary was quite good. The Department of Finance sanction for Duff's promotion, dated December 18, 1923, was signed by Cornelius Gregg. Gregg, a graduate of UCD, had been two years ahead of Frank in Blackrock College and had come to Dublin on loan from Inland Revenue to London to help with the establishment of the Irish civil service. The offer came as a disappointment to Duff.

These were unusual times and it seems that Hogan may have raised Duff's expectations beyond what it was feasible for him to deliver, once a civil servant of Gregg's outlook and knowledge of the traditional civil service came on the scene. Duff accepted Gregg's offer by letter on

**“The secret of all success with others lies in the establishment of personal contact, the contact of love and sympathy”**





Frank at Blackrock College in Dublin with Éamon de Valera, Cardinal John D'Alton and other prelates.

Post and Telegraphs, came first in the examination.

Following Duff's further promotion, on a temporary basis, to Assistant Principal in 1928, he was supported by two Administrative Officers, Ó Broin and PJ McDonogh. Ó Broin said that it was a "privilege to share Frank's company in this way and to be given an opportunity of seeing something of the double life that he was living". It was the beginning of a life-long friendship between the two men and a close involvement by Ó Broin in the work of the Legion of Mary. On July 31 1929 the permanent promotion of Duff to Assistant Principal in the Supply Division was sanctioned. He would work in that division and at that rank for the remainder of his civil service career.

By the early 1930s it was clear to Duff that his 'double life' would have to end. He could not continue in a demanding day job and give the attention to the Legion of Mary which it required and which he desired to give. When Duff decided to leave the civil service in 1934, he said "I never realised how painful a process it was to tear up one's roots".

**“Duff ‘liked the work immensely’ in the Department of Finance, describing it as ‘all thinking work’, and constructive work”**

By the time Duff resigned, his youngest sister, Ailish, was established in her medical career, so his earnings were of less vital consequence to his family. Nonetheless, he ran an enormous risk in giving up his job in the midst of a severe economic recession and when the Legion had not yet received official sanction from the Dublin Archdiocese. His pension was modest. The risk he took represented an act of pure faith. However the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 1932, described by Duff as the 'Epiphany of the Legion' was a ray of great hope. Archbishops, bishops

and priests from overseas discovered the Legion and brought it back to the countries from whence they came.

Research in the National Archives provides evidence that Duff thought deeply about many vital issues which affected the development of Ireland. In addition to a considerable volume of work in the Department of Finance which might be described as routine, Duff wrote a number of substantial memoranda on a range of subjects. These include *Post Treaty British/Irish Financial Settlement* (1924), *Examination of Dublin Corporation Accounts for 1922/23* (1924) – which led to the suspension of the corporation – *Electricity Supply* (1926), the *Foreign Investment of State Funds* (1929), *Irish in the Garda Síochána* (1930), and *Breaking the Link with Sterling* (1933). Duff's memoranda display mastery of the facts, a keen grasp of the concepts involved and an ability to present his argument in cogent terms.

#### Affected

Duff's leaving affected a varied staff in a personal way: those who knew him best admired him greatly and, in that company, were office messengers as well as many who were subsequently to reach the heights of distinction. He never forgot that he was 'a Finance man', and would always talk affectionately of the happy times that he had had there. In a letter to Seán Ó Faoláin, written in 1944, ten years after he left the civil service, he speaks of the influence of the civil service on him, saying simply "I was a civil servant".

In the *Handbook* of the Legion of Mary, written by Duff, it is said that "The secret of all success with others lies in the establishment of personal contact, the contact of love and sympathy". This involves real friendship. Some of the friendships developed by Duff at school and in the civil service had far-reaching consequences for the development of the Legion. Duff himself credited the friendship of Jack O'Callaghan for his joining the Vincent de Paul Society. EP McCarron facilitated Duff's meeting with WT Cosgrave in the summer of 1922 which led to the granting of 76 Harcourt Street as a refuge for women.

Group for the Diplomatic Corps at her home on Ailesbury Road. León Ó Broin, as mentioned, became a close friend and wrote a biography of Duff. Other friendships from Duff's civil service days included John Leydon, later Secretary of Industry and Commerce. Duff was best man at Leydon's wedding. John (Seán) Moynihan who was Secretary to the Government in the 1920s was an active Legionary.

**“Research in the National Archives provides evidence that Duff thought deeply about many vital issues which affected the development of Ireland”**

Duff's friendship with WT Cosgrave was unique. Not only did Cosgrave provide premises for the hostels but he opened the way to Rome via the Papal Nuncio, Pascal Robinson. In 1931, Duff was received in Rome by Pope Pius XI, four years before he was received by the Archbishop of Dublin. When Cosgrave died in November 1965, Duff was in Rome for the Second Vatican Council. The last letter which Cosgrave wrote was to Duff who received it in Rome following Cosgrave's death.

Duff was a regular visitor at the Nunciature. One memorable occasion was a farewell dinner hosted by Archbishop Riberi who was leaving Ireland to take up a new posting. Among the very small number of guests was Duff. Two other guests were WT Cosgrave and Éamon de Valera. Another 'Finance man', TK Whitaker, was also present.

**📌 Dr Finola Kennedy is a goddaughter of Frank Duff and author of Frank Duff: a life story.**

#### Active Legionary

Celia Shaw, the first woman administrative officer in Department of Finance and friend of Ailish Duff, became an active Legionary. In 1933 Shaw went on an exploratory visit to the US on behalf of the Legion. She later hosted a Patrician Discussion



Frank writing letters.

December 31 and began work in the Department of Finance in the Finance and Supply Division, reporting to the Principal Officer, Arthur Dean Codling, an English Methodist, on January 18, 1924.

#### Immensely

Duff "liked the work immensely" in the Department of Finance, describing it as "all thinking work", and constructive work: "The Irish State was being built up and in the Department of Finance you were in the very centre of things." In April 1925, Duff's appointment as Higher Executive Officer (Acting) was made substantive. In 1925 a competitive examination to recruit university graduates to fill administrative posts was introduced which would impinge on the promotion prospects of Duff and others of his rank. León Ó Broin, later Secretary of the Department of





The Irishman had key insights about the lay vocation ahead of his time, writes **Fr John Harris OP**

**I**n this age of synodality within the Church, it is opportune for us to recall the importance of the laity in the Church and there is no better champion or challenger of this cause than Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary.

In the Church's long history, no representatives of the laity were ever asked to attend a general council. This changed at the second session of Vatican II in 1963. In 1965 Frank Duff was invited by the then Pope Paul VI to attend the final session. The late Cardinal Suenens of Belgium wrote in his short biography of Frank Duff, *Frank Duff – Pioneer of the New Evangelisation* how he had the joy of having the Pope invite Frank to the Vatican Council.

**“Cardinal Suenens in his biography recalls the moment when Frank entered St Peter’s basilica, which had become the synodal chamber for the Council”**

Duff, like all other lay and ecumenical representatives were invited as observers rather than active participants. However, this does not mean that Duff was not active during the 97 days he spent in Rome. According to his biographer Finola Kennedy, Duff gave thirty-two addresses to various groupings of bishops, heads of religious orders, seminarians and legionaries. On one occasion, he addressed the one hundred English-speaking bishops and the French speaking bishops.

Cardinal Suenens in his biography recalls the moment when Frank entered St Peter’s basilica, which had become the synodal chamber for the Council. Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster, was addressing the cardinals and bishops when he noticed that Duff had taken his place among the other ecumenical and lay auditors. The cardinal interrupted his address and publicly announced the arrival of Frank Duff. Immediately the 2,500 bishops present rose to their feet and gave him a warm and moving ova-

tion. Cardinal Suenens says of that moment, “It was an unforgettable moment: the thanks of the universal Church to the pioneer of the lay apostolate”.

Many commentators have said that St John Cardinal Henry Newman was the theological mind-set behind the Second Vatican Council. While acknowledging the significance of the thought of Fr Yves Congar OP to the theology of the laity, I think the case can be made that Frank Duff’s vision of the role the laity in the life of the Church had a significant impact on the bishops’ meeting in solemn council. Their standing to applaud Duff’s entry into the Council Hall was much more than a simple courtesy, it was an acknowledgment of his vision of an active laity in the life of the Church.

### Salvation

At the time of the Council the majority of the world’s bishops would have known not just the work of the Legion but Frank himself either personally or through correspondence. By the mid-1960s the Legion of Mary was present in 1,300 dioceses across the world, over half of all the dioceses in the church. It was present on all continents and major cities. The Legion of Mary, which Duff founded, has significantly influenced more people than any other movement to come from Dublin. The role, which the Legion of Mary has played in the Catholic world, cannot be over-estimated. Through the mission of the Legion of Mary, millions of souls have been brought to God and to salvation.

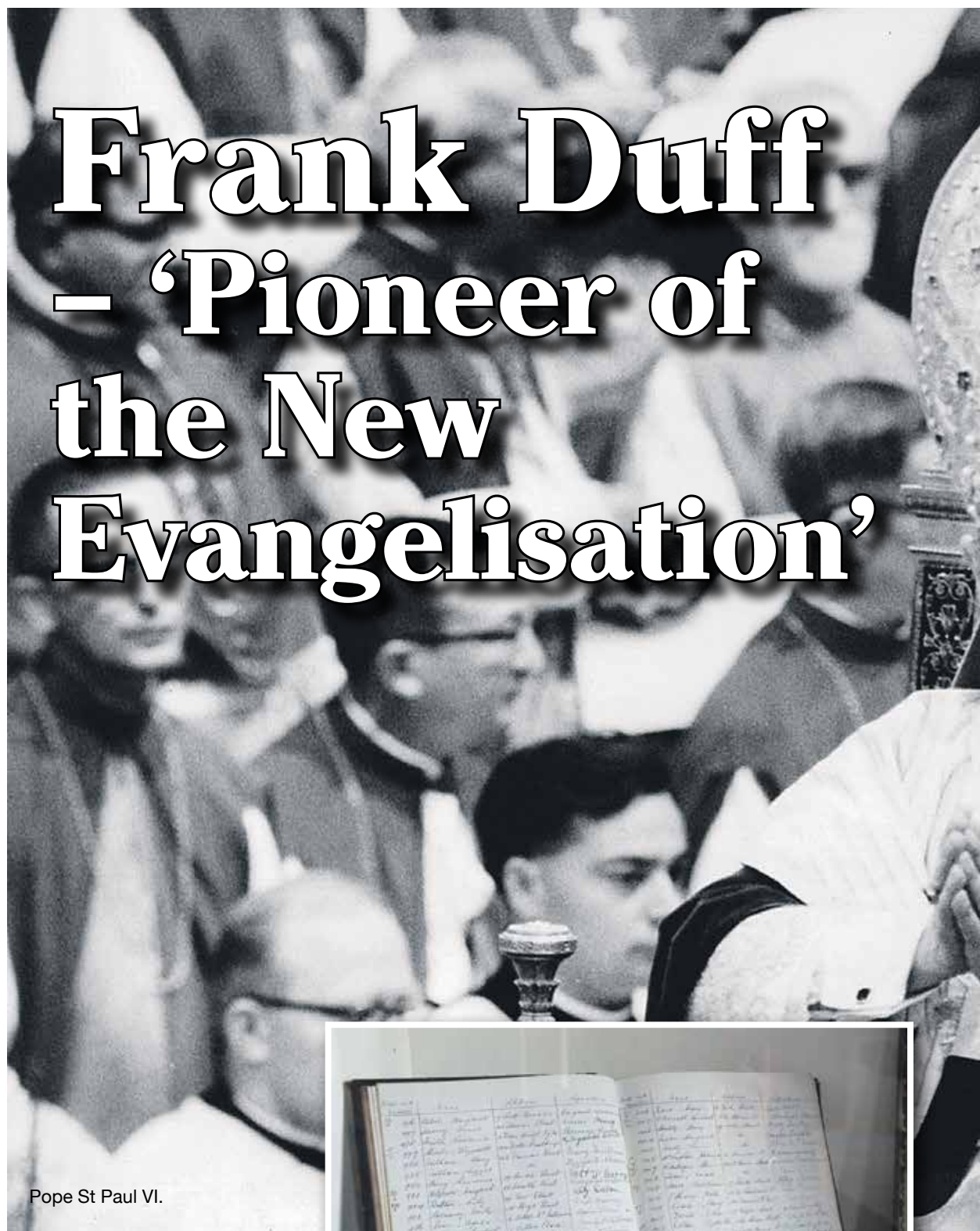
The recognition by the Conciliar Fathers of Frank Duff is a testimony not simply to the work of the Legion and of Frank Duff but truly it was the moment when the bishops of the Church publically acknowledged the presence of the laity in the life of the Church as united with them in the mission of evangelisation. Frank Duff and the Legion does not represent a silent, non-active presence of the laity in the Church. It is a committed and vibrant lay movement within the Church, seeing itself as having a real role in the Church’s mission of saving souls.

At its foundation the Legion of Mary did not receive the support it deserved from the bishops in the Church in Ireland. They failed to appreciate what Duff was offering the Church. In a Church awash with vocations to the priesthood and religious life, there was no real engagement with the active role the laity could play in the Church’s mission.

### Irish hierarchy

For some, at least, of the Irish hierarchy, Duff and the Legion was an irritation. As the present Archbishop of Dublin acknowledged at the Mass celebrating the cente-

**“It is easy to document the initial opposition of the bishops to the work of the laity in the Church and her mission of evangelisation”**

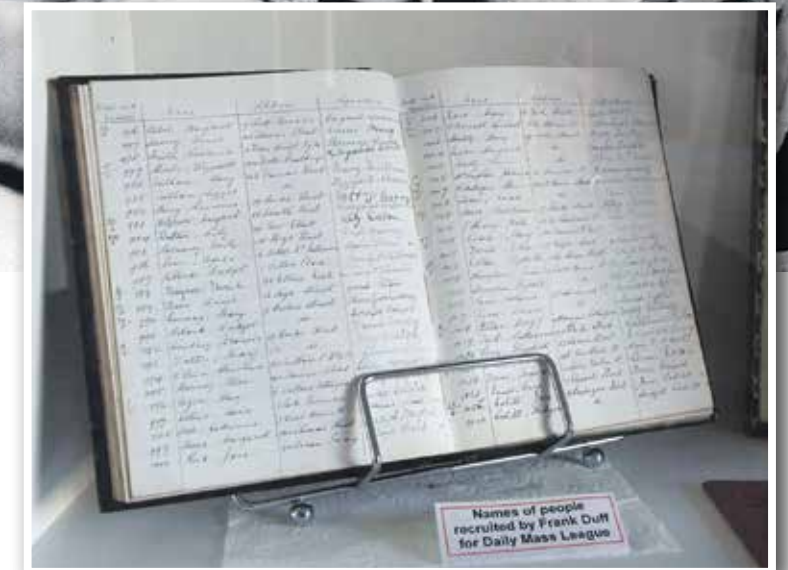


Pope St Paul VI.

nary of the founding of the Legion, Frank and the Legion had an audience with Pope Pius XI in 1931 long before being granted an audience by the then archbishop of Dublin.

Opposition never faded Duff. The salvation of souls was his one desire and out of love for his neighbour, no hierarchy was going to stop him or his co-workers. The Legion was never about Frank. It is about giving people the opportunity to meet Christ in his Church, most directly through the sacraments.

In Duff’s vision, the *True Devotion to Mary* was the engine behind the drive towards evangelisation. The work of the Legion was in Duff’s eyes the love of a mother



for her children. Frank Duff would be the first man to say that all of the blessings brought through the Legion of Mary come from Jesus through Mary. The well-spring of his devotional life and the theology of the Legion is the fruit of his reading of and accepting of the *True Devotion to Mary*, as presented in the writings of St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort.

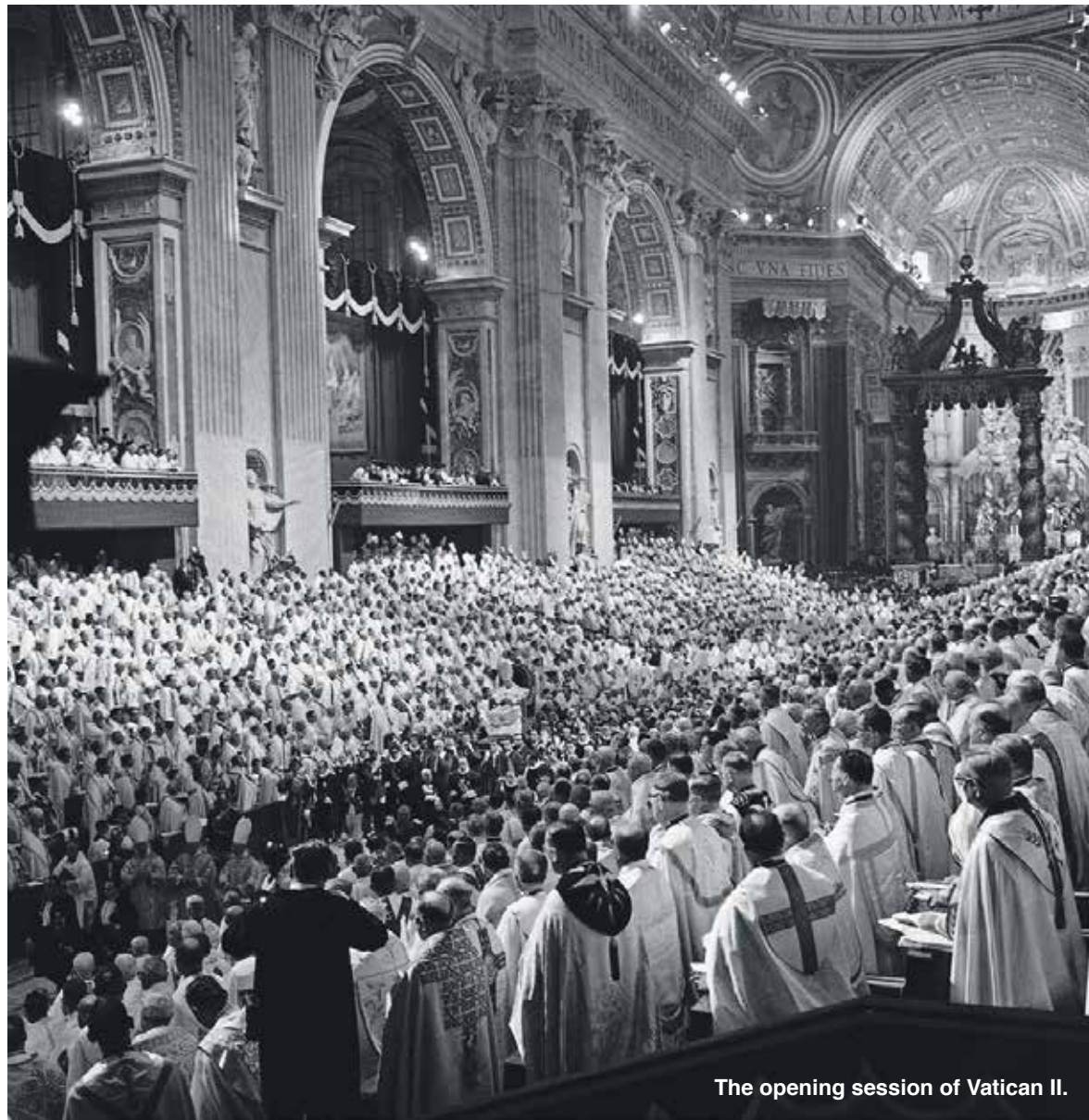
This book written by the 17th century priest has influenced two of the most important evangelical figures in the Catholic Church in the last 100 years, St Pope John Paul II and Frank Duff. The saintly pope’s motto “Totally Yours, O Maria” encapsulates the theology, which allowed these men to be

alive with the Gospel and the care for souls. Very often we read and hear about the New Evangelisation but it is forgotten that the inspiration which drove these two Apostles of the New Evangelisation was the *True Devotion to Mary*. To Jesus through Mary is the secret of the New Evangelisation as proposed by Pope John Paul II and lived out by Frank Duff.

### Laity

I say this because Duff’s vision of the role the laity plays in the Church is also a challenge to the laity. It is easy to document the initial opposition of the bishops to the work of the laity in the Church and her mission of evangelisation.





The opening session of Vatican II.

We can look back in derision and say that for many bishops and clerics in the Church at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role of the laity was “to pay, pray and obey”. This was challenged by Duff and it was ultimately toppled by the theology of the laity as given by Vatican II.

## “This theological vision of the Church feeds the vision the laity play in the life of the Church”

But his vision of an active laity in the life of the Church challenges also those who may see the role of the laity as one of opposition to the bishops or of pushing their own agenda not based on a solid theological understanding of the Church or her mission of evan-

gelisation. Very often, it can be portrayed as a power play within the Church, bishops versus laity, women versus men, progress versus retreat into an idealised past. This was never Duff’s vision and neither is it the vision of Vatican II.

### Communio

The vision of “communio” inspires all that the Council says about the Church. In his Angelus address on October 22 1995, Pope St John Paul II said “The Church is a mystery because she is grafted onto Christ and rooted in the Trinitarian life... A sublime mystery, which binds the baptised together and spurs them to continuous conversion, to the very heights of holiness. So, this is the Church: a people journeying through history, its gaze fixed on the goal of Christ’s second coming”. This theological vision of the Church feeds the vision the laity play in the life of the Church. We can never see the Church purely in political or secular categories.

The Council teaches us that all of us as baptised into Christ and as such, we share each in our own way, in the priestly, prophetic and

kingly role of the Christ. The Council teaches that the laity have a specific secular character, “by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will” (*Lumen Gentium* 33).

## “The lay Faithful are called, having a true vocation, to be out in the world bringing Christ to the world and the world to Christ”

The laity is not simply an arm of the hierarchy but by their Baptism and Confirmation they share fully in the life of the Church and specifically are her presence in the secular sphere. The vision of the Council does not reduce the role of the laity to the sacristy or the sanctuary. The lay Faithful are called, having a true vocation, to be out in the world bringing Christ

to the world and the world to Christ. At times it is much easier to be having arguments in the sacristy where we can all feel safe rather than to be exposed to the mission to the secular world of our families, our businesses or our social groupings and to the wider society.

The Council document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* specifically teaches that the laity are “given the special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them she can become the salt to the earth. Thus every layperson, through those gifts given to them, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the Church itself” (*LG*, 33).

### Margins of society

Duff is the very embodiment of such a commitment to the world. Within the Legion, he organised outreach to non-Catholics, the Jewish community, those on the margins of society. We know of his commitment to keeping mothers and their babies together when this was not the practice of other Church bodies. The earliest outreach of the Legion was to the prostitutes in Dublin city centre. The Legion was one of the first Church organisations to hold out the hand of friendship to homosexuals.

Often Duff and the Legion are portrayed as the very epitome of a

sacristy-centred Church. Nothing could be further from the truth. The world of the Legion is on the streets. Pope Francis says he wants us to be a Church on the margins, it is precisely there that Duff and his co-Legionaries are to be found.

Here is where Duff presents us all with the very stark challenge of Vatican II. The Church’s mission is the presence of Christ. The role the laity have in the life of the Church is to bring Christ to the secular world and the secular world to Christ. Frank saw the calling of the laity as bringing this person to Christ and Christ to this person. Duff never lost sight of the person in the big picture.

This year we are celebrating 100 years since the founding of the Legion, but the vision of Duff has marked the self-understanding of the Church in a profoundly revolutionary way. The applause that day in the Council Hall when Duff was recognised did not simply break the silence of hundreds of years but it announced the age of a Church united, laity and clergy, men and women in the mission of evangelisation for the salvation of souls.

*Fr John Harris OP is Prior Provincial of the Irish Dominicans.*



# Converting the world through



Legion of Mary president Mary Murphy tells Ruadhán Jones about the Legion's growth and desire to convert the world

**T**he Legion of Mary's beginnings were, as founder Frank Duff put it himself, quite inconspicuous. A small group including Duff gathered on September 7, 1921, in Myra House on Francis St, the date which marks the beginning of what is now the largest lay Catholic association, spanning 170 countries and 14 million members.

Duff never lacked ambition for the Legion, or for the laity. To anyone who would listen, he advocated for the lay association's virtues and gave evidence of its progress in converting people to the Faith. As the Legion's current president Mary Murphy explains, there was simply no other apostolic organisation when Duff founded the Legion.

"It is true to say that of course, there were many more religious people involved in the Church [in Ireland] at that time," Ms Murphy continues. "And many didn't see the need for an apostolic laity. However, Frank Duff was convinced of the role of the lay member, that through our Baptism all of us have a role to play in the Church and we are all part of the mystical body of Christ whose job it is to build the Church."

Duff believed that it was the duty of an apostolic laity to fulfil Christ's call to "make disciples of all nations" and hoped that, through Our Lady's intercession, the Legion could bring the world and all its peoples to God.

## Two groups

Although his hopes were grand, the Legion's approach is deceptively simple.

"The Legion is made up of two groups," Ms Murphy begins. "We have the active members, who attend the weekly meeting and do apostolic work each week. The active members join the Legion of Mary in a praesidium. They commit to attending a weekly meeting and to undertake two hours of apostolic work each week, which is assigned at the meeting. The Legion is available for all forms of Catholic action, assigned to them by the local priest, with the one exception of giving material relief. Our sister organisation, the St Vincent De Paul society, that's their apostolate. We're involved



President of the Legion of Mary, Mary Murphy, shows Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell pictures of the Legion's envoys, September 5, 2021.

more in promoting devotion to the Faith and encouraging people in the Faith and being available to people."

The active members make up four million of the Legion's membership, the other 10 million made up of auxiliaries, the praying members: "These are people who undertake to say the rosary daily and all the prayers on our Legion *tesserae*, which involves the rosary, what would be known to most people as the Magnificat – we call it the *Catena* – and we have a concluding prayer.

**“The first place it opened outside Dublin was in Waterford, and it soon had roots down in every Irish diocese.”**

"They're our prayers and auxiliary members undertake to say those prayers on a daily basis, and we have about 10 million of those throughout the world. Because we promote devotion to the rosary, we promote devotion to Our Lady of course, and we encourage people to advance in their faith."

From its humble beginnings in Myra House, the Legion spread quickly through Ireland. The first place it opened outside Dublin was

in Waterford, and it soon had roots down in every Irish diocese.

## Every diocese

"We are in every diocese in Ireland, some much more advanced than others," Ms Murphy says. "The cities you see, if you take Cork, Galway, Belfast, Derry, Tuam, all of those places would have very strong Legion membership at this time, along with Limerick, Wexford, Waterford; all the cities where you have a lot of population, would lend itself to that. But then in small rural areas, we also have large groups of members. We have Thurles, Tipperary, a lot of those places would have quite an amount of legionaries."

The Legion are well placed to know and see the effects of the declining Catholic population in Ireland, priests and laity, and Ms Murphy believes the Legion has an especially important role to play in light of that decline.

"It's the time of laity really, the Vatican council saw that when they invited Frank Duff to be a lay observer in 1965. They saw the role of the laity coming. Internationally, the Church has grown – in Ireland now we're just going through a phase where we have less vocations.

"However, there is of course from the Legion quite a number of religious vocations. That's ongoing still in the Church. If we continue to

grow, please God, we'll also help to fulfil that need for the Church. We always have a good number of people going to the Church and we're always happy for that, always happy to give our best."

The Legion president believes that the lay apostolate is needed everywhere, not just in Ireland, due to its personal approach: "For people to be having outreach, Frank Duff was very strong on the personal contact, reaching out to the individual. Very often when we think of lay people in the Church, we look at groups of people and crowds and all that. The idea of the Legion is that we'd reach out to each individual and that we'd uplift the individual soul. That would be our apostolate."

## Expanding

While the Church is contracting in Ireland, the Legion have set themselves the challenge of expanding during their centenary year. The target they are aiming for is to gain 300 new members for Dublin.

"We're working on that, and we certainly are getting people in. There is an interest among the younger people in coming into the Legion at this time. In the last year or so, especially since Covid, we have certainly noticed that quite a number of people are coming into the Legion membership. We're

hoping that we'll make the 300 during our centenary year, and that that growth will be ongoing. People throughout the country will do the same, we'll keep encouraging people," Ms Murphy states.

The Church continues to grow globally, with Catholics making up roughly 17% of the world's population. The Legion has taken part in and promoted that growth, with the Eucharistic Congress held in Ireland in 1932 proving a catalyst for its global spread.

"Following the spread of the Legion in Ireland then it went on and it started in Scotland," Ms Murphy says. "Then gradually, it started in Nigeria in 1933, I think – the missionaries would have brought it. But the big springboard for the development of the Legion was the Eucharistic Congress in 1932, when many bishops from all over the world came, and many of them would have had a great need in their areas for people to be involved.

**“The cities you see, if you take Cork, Galway, Belfast, Derry, Tuam, all of those places would have very strong Legion membership at this time”**

"They were at the forefront of the missionary time and they of course saw the potential of having local people involved in an organised way working in their parishes. And from the Eucharistic Congress of course,

**“Frank Duff was convinced of the role of the lay member, that through our Baptism all of us have a role to play in the Church”**



# Our Lady



Mary Murphy pictured with the original legion altar, from their first meeting, September 7, 1921.

many of the bishops returned to their dioceses throughout the world and set about starting up the Legion."

## Developed

Over time, the Legion developed its own system for spreading its presence. The first of their 'envoys' – legionary ambassadors sent around the world to establish its presence – was Mary Duffy, who went to the United States in 1934.

"When she was leaving, Frank Duff said, 'there goes our hope,'" says Ms Murphy, who was herself an envoy. "She was the first. To date we've had 95 legion envoys. The most notable of course were the Venerable Edel Quinn and the Servant of God Alfie Lambe.

"But in all there were 95 of us. And we would have gone to various countries and helped to establish the Legion in all those countries, and helped to motivate the local people into the apostolate. Their work continues today in different parts of the world and that's a big way how the Legion grew, through the work of the envoys and extension workers."

Ms Murphy's term as an envoy was spent in Kenya from 1973 to 1976, following in the footsteps of Venerable Quinn.

## Leadership

"I was there at a time when the British population and the Indian population were leaving East Africa, and it was a time really of the Africans coming into their own and taking over the leadership and that kind of thing,"

she explains. "I was there to support them in that role, and then to go into areas where the Legion hadn't yet progressed or whatever and to establish the Legion there.

**“Their work continues today in different parts of the world and that's a big way how the Legion grew, through the work of the envoys and extension workers”**

"That work continues and I was very happy the other day to see in the minutes coming from Nairobi a reference to a priest up in Meru Diocese [in Kenya] translating the Legion *Handbook* into their language. I was smiling to myself, saying, before I came home, I set up the Legion there and here we are 40 years later, they're translating the *Handbook* – so the work continues."

## Duff's dream

One of Duff's particular dreams was the conversion of Asia, with China receiving much of his attention. You can read about the Legion's exploits in the great Eastern nation on page 30. Asia is now a stronghold for the Legion.

"In Korea, we have three *senatus* there and we have very many legionaries," Ms Murphy says with pride. "When they were here at

one time recently with us, they said that 10% of the population of Korea is Catholic and that 10% of that membership are legionaries.

"I know when I was at Rome for one of the ecclesial meetings, Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko said that when they were in the orient, they were absolutely amazed at the growth of the Legion there. In all countries like Taiwan, Vietnam, all those countries would have the Legion. India itself of course would have a strong legionary presence. They do assist, they sometimes would undertake visitation of the councils there on behalf of the *concilium*. They're all part of us here, even though they're far away from us. They're very much part of us."

## Foothold

There aren't many countries left that the Legion doesn't have a foothold in. Despite this, they have no intention on resting on their laurels.

"We're in over 170 countries now," Ms Murphy explains. "Our hope is always, where people are available of course, to expand. It depends at the time what resources we have and personnel to do this, because people have to give their time to go and to volunteer. It comes in different phases... Sometimes people give time, but they may prefer to go indoor here at our hostels. But then people who would like maybe to be a bit more adventurous and to spread out into the deep, they head to the bush or wherever – it's great."

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# Duff's insight into the



Frank Duff treated women with absolute equality in his relationships and his views, writes **Dr Evie Monaghan**

**F**ranks Duff's outreach to marginalised women has long been recognised. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Legion of Mary, the organisation founded by Duff and a group of lay women in 1921, was its mission to 'street girls'. Duff's first encounter with the prostitutes who worked in the Monto, Dublin's red light district, was one that left a strong impression on him.

While undertaking visitation as a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Duff found himself unexpectedly in a room in a lodging house where some of these street girls lived. He was by his own admission, shocked. He remembered being "so confused, so doubtful about where I stood at all, I backed out of the place, almost without saying a word". He considered that his hasty retreat from the lodging house was "typical of the attitude to the problem at the time". The scene had however "made its mark on me and filled me with the notion that something had to be done with those girls".

**“Duff seemed to have a unique ability to appreciate the hidden character of individuals, when others saw only exterior flaws”**

The solution became known as 'rescue work' and involved making contact with the street girls, inviting them to take part in an enclosed retreat and providing them with accommodation afterwards. The Legion established a hostel for this purpose in 1922, the Sancta Maria Hostel, at 72 Harcourt Street. Two women, Josephine Plunkett and Rose Scratton, were appointed 'matrons' of the hostel and it continued to be a place of refuge for women until 1974.

In the first three years of the initiative the Legion dealt with over 200 women and Duff reported that they induced about two-thirds of that number to leave prostitution.



The first anniversary meeting of the Legion of Mary in 1922, commemorating its foundation. Frank Duff can be seen in the middle of the second row.

The women were encouraged to seek treatment for venereal disease and their rehabilitation usually involved assistance with employment and housing. Many of the women went on to marry, find employment or were reconciled with their families.

## Matrons

Plunkett and Scratton, the two 'matrons' of the Sancta Maria, were two of many female friendships Duff cherished. One of his life-long friends, and a legionary from its early days, Celia Shaw, described how while walking her back to her accommodation after Legion meetings, Duff confided "all his plans and his hopes and his fears" for the Legion. Duff's reaching out to Shaw after a disagreement between them at a meeting signifies a deep appreciation of their friendship. He recognised that their mutual propensity for obstinacy "is something that you and I should be very careful about ... there is always present the possibility of extreme harm .... If one or the other has not the good sense or courage to strike against it at once".

Duff seemed to have a unique ability to appreciate the hidden character of individuals, when others saw only exterior flaws. In an obituary for Elizabeth Kirwan, the first president of the Legion, he detected that beneath her reputed "disciplinarian" exterior was an individual whose "spirit, her will, her courage, her whole character was strength, strength softened by holiness and charity and by sympathetic understanding". This capability, he argues, was what was needed above everything else "in a guardian of that new movement into which enthusiastic, heroic youth was about to throw itself in such numbers".

The new movement was of course the Legion of Mary, founded as a women's counterpart to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, which at the time only admitted men as members. The Legion soon grew into an organisation with its own unique apostolic vision and men became more involved as active members of the Legion after the opening of the Morning Star hostel for the care of destitute men in 1927.

Because the Legion came about

to enable women to undertake active apostolic work, the duties undertaken were naturally comprised of social work targeted at women. It began with visitation to the sick in the female cancer wards of the South Dublin Union Hospital but quickly expanded to include other, often more challenging work. As well as the rescue work with the street girls, the Legion became increasingly concerned at the plight of unmarried mothers in the city.

**“The new movement was of course the Legion of Mary, founded as a women's counterpart to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society”**

The Regina Coeli hostel, established by the Legion in 1930, quickly began to cater to these unmarried mothers. From the beginning, the Legion, and Frank Duff, were adamant that the hostel would be

a place where mothers could keep their children, a feature in striking contrast to most other institutions operating at the time. Duff had a deep appreciation of the maternal bond between mother and child. Writing to a priest in 1948 he said that it was "one of the great joys of my life to look at the mothers and their children and to see the natural play of affection between them. I realise so fully every time I witness it that there is nothing on earth that can supply for it". He credited this system of keeping mother and child together as being the reason why "none of our children [from the hostel] have got into trouble, and I would very strongly believe that few or none of them will".

## Motherhood

His vision of motherhood was an idealistic one, and likely born of the very strong bond he had with his own mother. Like Duff, Lettie Duff (nee Freehill) had been a civil servant prior to her marriage. Describing his relationship with his parents, Duff recalled that "they treated me seriously always ... I would be consulted about things and told about things, and both of them made a companion of me". His father died in 1918 leaving Duff, as the eldest son, with financial responsibility for the family. While Duff seemed uninterested in marriage, even from a young age, his responsibility to his mother was undoubtedly a contributing factor to why he remained single.

**“The Regina Coeli hostel, established by the Legion in 1930, quickly began to cater to these unmarried mothers”**



# beauty of womanhood



Frank Duff with a statue of Our Lady.

He explained: “there was a very extraordinary bond between my mother and myself. I suppose it would be hard to imagine two people more tied up with each other than we were. I could never have conceived the idea of leaving her. Any system of life which would mean pensioning her off or anything of that description like you hear of in marriages would be quite inconceivable to me.”

**“Woman is one of the grand instruments of which providence makes use to prepare the way for civilisation”**

Duff took his mother to the theatre once a week until his hearing loss made the experience untenable. They also went on holidays together, once to Paris and often to London where they went to the theatre and his mother enjoyed looking around the shops. His mother lived with Duff until her death and looked on with both appreciation and apprehension as Duff's time became more and more occupied with the Legion.

She called him ‘Old Reliability’ and it was a nickname that Duff felt a responsibility to live up to. But Duff recalled how she felt keenly the exhaustion that came from his workload – “I look back over things and see the unutterable patience that she bore all these things with, because I really believe that her emotion at times was that of looking on at me committing suicide”. In his biography of Duff, Fr Robert Bradshaw considered that through his relationship with his mother, Duff acquired “wonderful and enrich-

ing insights into the meaning and beauty of true motherhood”.

Duff's deep appreciation of motherhood and the role of women in the spirituality of the Church can be seen throughout his writings. In an entry in his personal diary, Duff had a heading ‘Women's Influence’, under which he recorded some quotations from texts he was reading. The first, from the counter-Enlightenment philosopher, Joseph de Maistre, stated that “In the whole evangelical history women play a very remarkable part and in all the celebrated conquests made by Christianity, either over individuals or over nations, there has always been some woman's influence”.

## Influence

The second quotation, from a *Life of St Bernard* by Théodor Ratisbonne, underscores this fundamental influence of women in society: “It is above all, by means of a woman that piety is first awakened and spreads its mysterious influence over society. ... woman is one of the grand instruments of which providence makes use to prepare the way for civilisation; she bears within herself the seed of the future moral being of nations; and should she prove false to her high mission, society would perish.”

These ideas can be traced in Duff's own writing, and can be understood more fully in the context of his deep Marian spirituality. Women he says “are specially well placed for this idea of going to the Divine Persons with Mary - possibly as compensation for the fact recently pointed out to me by a 7-year old maiden - that this is a man's world! You can the more easily associate your states and occupations with those of Our Lady”.

While Duff articulated a nuanced position on women in the Church, his ideas were not incongruous with others in the Church at the time. One of the priests who helped Duff with the street girl initiative and who was the first spiritual director of the Concilium (the governing body of the Legion), Fr Michael Creedon, certainly shared Duff's appreciation for the potential of women's participation in pastoral work. At a Catholic Truth Society conference on 1923, Fr Creedon gave a paper on ‘Catholic women in Social Service’ in which he contended that women were an under-used resource in the Church and that there was an opportunity for a lay organisation of women because women were so “excellently equipped for social work”. Here he was in perfect agreement with Duff's thinking, who felt that “women have something in their mental equipment which is able to give that ‘practising formula’ a meaning and an attraction which it does not possess for the men”.

## Quotation

This latter quotation is taken from an article written by Duff in 1957 entitled ‘The Legion of Mary for Men’, which as the title suggests was a call to include greater numbers of men in the Legion. Duff fervently believed that the Legion was one that was suitable for men, even though it had a reputation as being a women's organisation. Duff's attitude was thoroughly egalitarian, that the presence of men and women in the Legion was crucial to its claim to be a genuine means of lay apostolate. In the same essay he goes on to say that both sexes had their “own distinctive contribution to make, without which the character of the Legion would be incomplete ... it is not merely a case of two necessary ingredients side by side in the one organisation, but a mixture in which each has reacted happily on the other”.

**“Duff's deep appreciation of motherhood and the role of women in the spirituality of the Church can be seen throughout his writings”**

In this belief, Duff was perfectly in agreement with papal sentiments of the time. A year before Duff published ‘The Legion of Mary for Men’, Pope Pius XII proclaimed in a similar vein “absolute equality in personal and fundamental values, but different functions which are complementary and superbly equivalent” in an address on ‘The Dignity of Women’ in 1956. This equality could be seen readily in the Legion's governing membership, with women frequently being elected president of the Legion and selected for envoyship. The most famous legionary envoy was of course Edel Quinn,

who travelled to East Africa where she worked tirelessly establishing praesidia in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi. She died in Nairobi from tuberculosis in 1944, after eight years of missionary work in Africa.

Frank Duff had been apprehensive at sending Edel to Africa and some were critical of the decision to send someone in her physical condition on such a mission. He felt this criticism keenly, but respected that Edel herself wanted to go. Both Duff and Legionary authorities were unaware of the seriousness of her failing health and a letter he wrote to her a month before her death, full of Legion news and plans, indicates that he had little inkling of her physical frailty at the time.

**“Frank's friendship with women was not confined only to fellow legionaries, he was an ever-present feature in the Regina Coeli hostel”**

The unexpected news of her death “came with crushing force; so much so that it took many readings of the wire tendering the sympathy of the Nairobi Curia ... to bring to me realisation of what had happened. Even still I can only consider it with absolute pain”. Edel had recognised that the decision to send her to Africa was a difficult one and she wrote to Duff shortly after her arrival in Africa thanking him, saying “it is good to feel one is trusted and it will be a help in the

days to come”. Duff saw Edel as “a wild bird” who must be “given her chance ... [she] is going to make history, if she is let”.

## Friendship

Frank's friendship with women was not confined only to fellow Legionaries, he was an ever-present feature in the Regina Coeli hostel. He was a ‘tribune’ (the name given to the male liaison officer for female praesidia in the early Legion) to the hostel for many years and because he lived next door was constantly visiting the hostel, where he often took his meals. He knew the women residents well and took great interest in their children's welfare. On occasion he acted as security, handyman and peacemaker for the hostel.

The fact that the position of women in the Church is a topic that is mentioned little in Duff's correspondence suggests that the inclusion of women on an equal footing with men in the organisation was taken for granted, he accepted the talents of women as obvious, and not requiring special consideration. For the Legion, equality of membership is a fundamental principle. The *Handbook* of the Legion recognises that because of its origins as an organisation of women, they occupy “a place of honour in the organisation” but Duff was adamant that the Legion was an opportunity for both men and women to take up active apostolate. It was to be reflective of the universal Church, of Christ's Mystical Body and of his belief that ordinary men and women would do heroic things for Christ “if they are shown the way”.



Frank's mother, Lettie Duff.



# 'One of God's dearest friends'



Frank Duff's rosary.



## Fr Bede McGregor OP on Frank Duff's vision of a laity called to sainthood

**O**n September 7 2021, the Legion of Mary celebrated 100 years of existence. Of course, we will also be celebrating the life and message of the Founder of the Legion, the Servant of God Frank Duff (1889 – 1980). In this article I will concentrate on one major theme, namely, the contribution of Frank Duff and the Legion of Mary to the understanding and living out of the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and the modern world.

I would like to begin with an episode that took place at the Second Vatican Council as recorded by Cardinal Suenens in his little biography of Frank Duff entitled, *Frank Duff – Pioneer of the New Evangelisation*. He writes: "I had the joy of having the Pope invite Frank Duff as

an auditor to the Vatican Council. When Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster, who held the floor at precisely the moment that Frank Duff took his place, saw him enter, he publicly announced the fact to the assembly. The 2,500 bishops rose to give him a warm and moving ovation. It was an unforgettable moment: the thanks of the universal Church to the pioneer of the lay apostolate."

### Affirmation

It really was a tremendous affirmation of what the Legion and Frank Duff stood for. At the time of the Council the majority of the world episcopate would have known the Legion and Frank himself either personally or through correspondence. At the time the Legion was present in 1,300 dioceses across the world. It was present on all continents and major nations. I do not want to get bogged down in statistics but, it is good to remember that the Legion was honoured with the witness of many martyrs, young men and women, especially in China and parts of Africa. She continues to be present in some of the most difficult situations of the world today. She continues to grow worldwide

and faces new problems on a massive scale almost everywhere. The Legion is providing a truly remarkable lay missionary outreach to the whole world today.

**“In the heart of every right-thinking Catholic, God has implanted the desire to become a saint”**

But let us get to the important question. What is the basic spirituality of Frank Duff and the Legion? What is his conviction concerning the essential elements of the vocation of the laity? Well, first of all let me start with a booklet Frank wrote roughly in 1916 at the age of 28 in the midst of a very busy life entitled *Can we be Saints?* He answers that question with a resounding yes!

The very first published words of Frank Duff are as follows:

"In the heart of every right-thinking Catholic, God has implanted the desire to become a saint. Yet few make a serious attempt to answer the invitation. The cause for this is to a large extent discouragement, due to a misunderstanding of what a saint really is."

**“At the time of the Council the majority of the world episcopate would have known the Legion and Frank himself either personally or through correspondence”**



Frank Duff

Frank then goes on to describe the usual response to the question 'what is a saint'? It boils down to the implicit assertion that it is practically impossible for the average layperson to become a saint and therefore they don't even try to be one. Then he gives his own definition of a saint which goes as follows:

"One who, with the object of pleasing God, does his ordinary

duties extraordinarily well. Such a life may be lived out without a single wonder in it, arouse little notice, be soon forgotten and yet be the life of one of God's dearest friends."

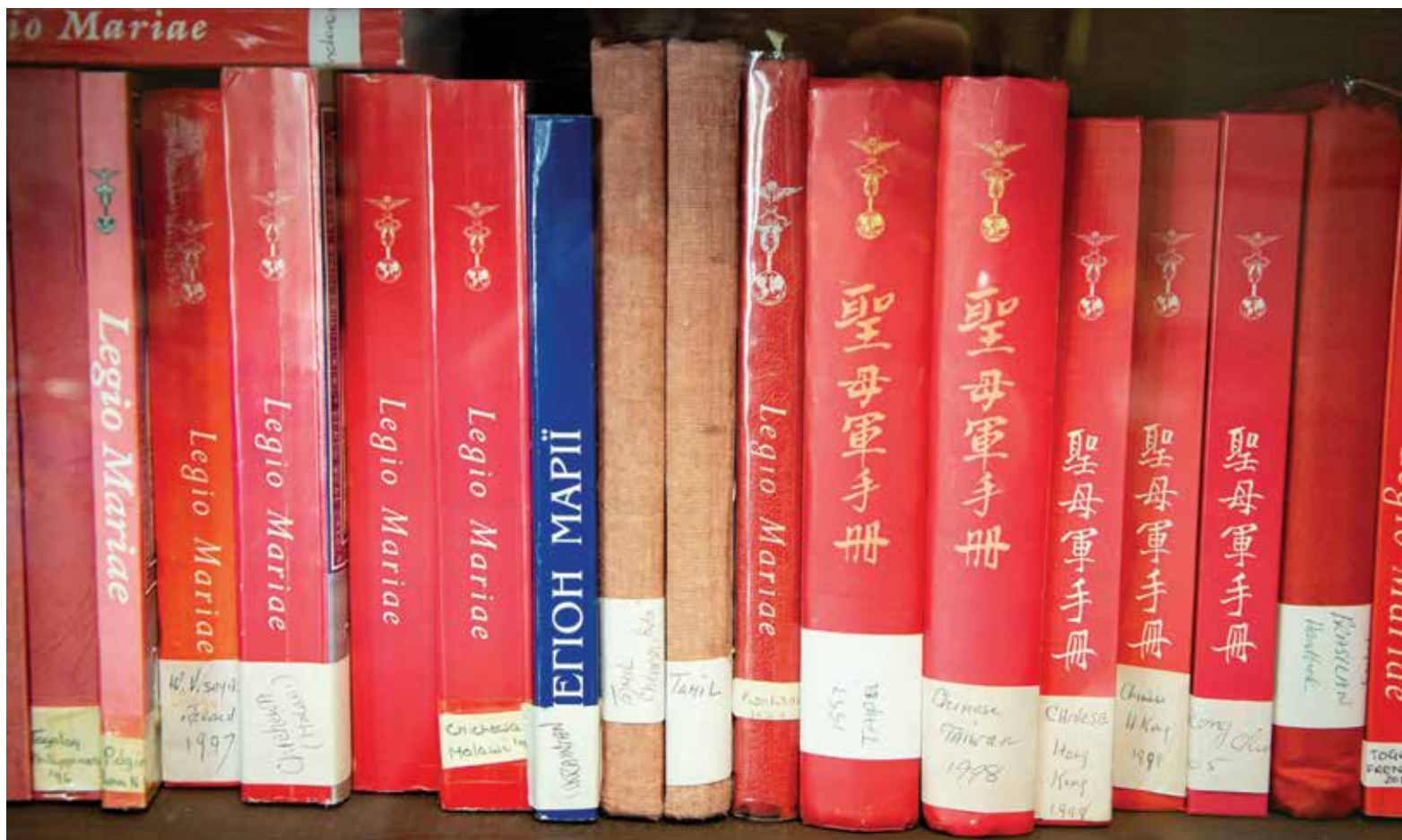
Frank then goes on to repeat a basic teaching of our Catholic Faith:

"Every person that is born is called to be a saint. It is equally a fact that to those who seriously try to respond to the invitation, he gives help sufficient to carry them to the goal."

### Primary goal

So, the primary goal of the life of Frank Duff and the Legion was to get as many souls as possible into heaven with God's grace and human cooperation with that grace.





The Legion of Mary Handbook, written by Frank Duff and translated into more than 100 languages.

I would like to quote the whole booklet but that is not practical in a relatively short article but let me quote a prayer he composed that comes straight from his heart and sums up most of what he tries to say in the rest of his booklet. It goes in part as follows:

“I do not ask for the big things – the life of the missionary or the monk or those others I see around me so full of accomplishment. I do not ask for these; but simply set my face to follow out unswervingly, untiringly, the common life which day by day stretches before me, satisfied if in it I love You, and try to make you loved.

**“Frank simply quotes Sacred Scripture: ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world but lose his soul’ (Mark 8:36)?”**

“Nature rebels against this life with its never-ending round of trivial tasks and full of the temptation to take relief in amusement or change. It seems so hard to be great in the small things, to be heroic in the doing of the commonplace, but still this life is your will for me. There must be a great destiny in it. And so, I am content.

“And then to crown the rest, dear Jesus, I beg of You to give me this... fidelity to the end...to be at my post when the final call comes, and to take my last weary breath in your embrace. A valiant life...and faithful to the end. A short wish, dearest Jesus, but it covers all.”

So, for Frank the most fundamental element of the vocation of the laity is the call to be a saint. The most important question in our life is where we shall spend eternity. As spiritual writers say: the only real tragedy in life is not to be a saint.

Frank simply quotes Sacred Scripture: “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world but lose his soul” (Mark 8:36)?

That is Gospel realism, the deepest spiritual common sense. The call to be a saint is the pivotal point in the message of Frank Duff and the Legion and indeed every true Catholic. But inseparably linked to the universal call to holiness in the vision of Frank Duff and the Legion is the universal call to the apostolate or evangelisation.

About 1917 a very significant development took place in the inner life of Frank Duff. He discovers St Louis-Marie de Montfort and his little book *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*. The teaching of de Montfort became central to the life of Frank Duff and the Legion. But it did not come easily to him. He read the book several times under the urgings of a colleague in the Civil Service but, he found it very extravagant or over the top as we would say today and he left it aside.

But Tom Fallon, another good friend, persuaded him to read it once more. This time grace intervened and he suddenly became utterly convinced that every word of De Montfort’s book was true. Sometimes Frank was asked did he ever have any private revelations or locutions, or mystical experiences and he always answered no.

### Special graces

But he did admit that God gave him some special graces and one of them was the deep conviction about the truth of promoting this teaching and it is one of the gifts that the Legion offers its members and as many other people as possible. I came across a little note on a rough piece of paper written in his own hand to a lady called Mary McAndrew that sums up Frank’s convictions on this subject. It goes as follows:

“Dear Mary, this treatise on the True Devotion to Mary has the strange power – whether we under-

stand it fully or not – and whether we practise it or not – of helping us to understand and love Mary better. So, *tolle, lege* (take and read)” – Frank Duff. It is still his message to us today.

But how exactly does Mary fit into the vocation of every human being? Well, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God is the core mystery of the Christian faith, and Mary has a core place in it and not just a useful but optional role. It is of course true that Mary is a crea-

ture and compared with the Creator is nothing – the finite compared to the Infinite.

### Eternal Son

But God chooses Mary to be the Mother of His Eternal Son and of every single human person. It is Mary that gives Jesus to the world, puts him at the centre of human history and in the heart of every human being. Mary is absolutely Christocentric, and she enables the Church to be always Christocentric and empowers

each one of us to also be centred on Jesus. De Montfort puts the eternal plan of God in four words ‘to Jesus through Mary’. So, Mary has an essential part to play in the vocation of the laity and the lay apostolate.

In several letters and articles Frank expresses his great joy at the solemn teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the universal call to the apostolate. In the decree on the Laity, the Council states bluntly:

“The Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate.”

**“The Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God is the core mystery of the Christian faith, and Mary has a core place in it and not just a useful but optional role”**

Frank believed that Our Lady founded the Legion as a means for the laity in fulfilling this essential element of their vocation. In the *Handbook of the Legion*, Frank explains the roots of the Lay Apostolate in the doctrine of the mystical Body of Christ and the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, but especially as a consequence of true devotion to Mary. Frank gives us a beautiful section of the *Handbook* entitled ‘Real Devotion to Mary Obliges Apostleship’. He writes in another article:

“The mission of Mary is essentially maternal. She was constituted in the mind of the Trinity before all time as a mother. She was to bring forth the Lord and give Him to His mission and that she did. As part of the plan, she brings forth all his members, united to him and to her and to each other and she takes care of their lives. She is most truly a mother to them in every respect.”

### Devotion

Frank strove to move Catholics from a purely sentimental devotion of Our Lady to an active participation in her motherly care for souls. He wanted us to love and serve Mary with our sleeves rolled up and our hands out of our pockets. If we are not interested in working for the salvation of souls with Mary, we have to ask ourselves do we really love her at all.

When Frank died St John Paul II sent a telegram to the Legion which stressed Frank’s life long effort to promote the universal call to holiness and the universal call to the apostolate among the laity. He wrote:

“The Legion of Mary throughout the world mourns the death of its Founder Frank Duff. I join with the members in praying for the eternal repose of his soul. The association that he founded has made countless lay Catholics aware of their indispensable role in evangelisation and sanctification and has enabled them to fulfil that role zealously and effectively. To all Legionaries I impart the Apostolic Blessing as a comfort in their loss and as an encouragement in their future tasks.”

Let us pray that one day Frank may be set before the universal Church as an example of the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world.

**Fr Bede McGregor OP is a long-time promoter of Frank Duff.**



The painting Duff looked at as he died.



# Spread of

## 14 million mem



**1921** Frank Duff founds the Legion of Mary in Ireland.

**1928** Scotland

**1929** England

**1931** India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; Canada; USA

**1932** Australia

**1933** New Zealand; Africa

**1934** Mary Duffy goes to USA.

**1936** Venerable Edel Quinn goes to Africa.

**1937** Burma/Myanmar; Fr Aedan McGrath begins the Legion in China. Uganda

**1938** Costa Rica; Tanzania; Malawi and Panama

**1939** Malta

**1940** France; Greece; Yugoslavia; the Philippines; Ghana

**1942** Egypt; Syria; the Holy Land

**1943** Holland

**1944** Germany

**1946** South America

**1947** Sudan

**1948** Poland; Algiers; Indonesia; Japan; Vietnam

**1949** Belgium; Hong Kong

**1950** Spain; Colombia; Argentina



**1921** Frank Duff founds the Legion of Mary in Ireland.



**1934-1946** Mary Duffy (USA/Canada) is the first Legion envoy.



**1953-59** Servant of God Alfie Lambe heads to South America, including Uruguay and Brazil.



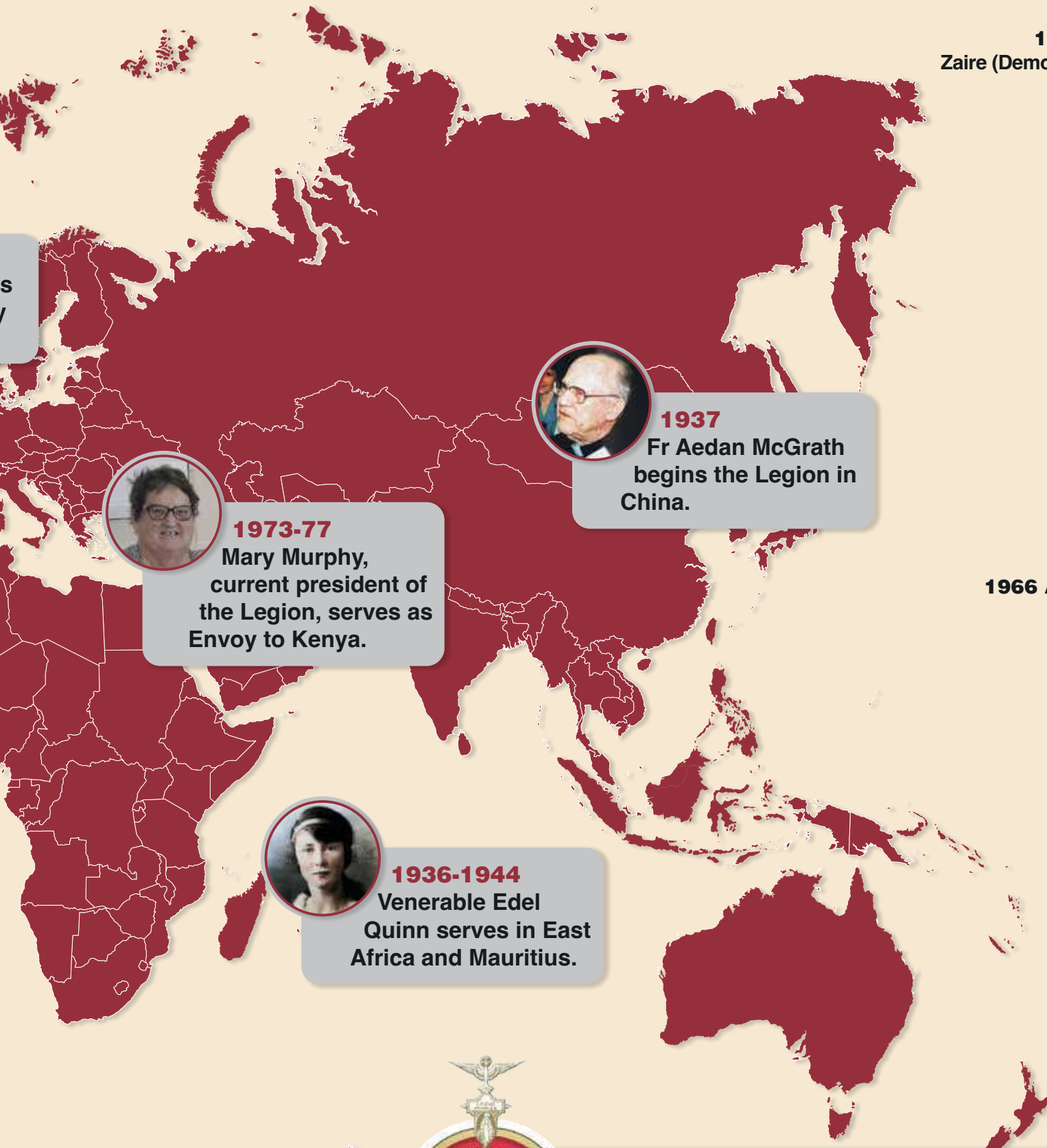
**1966-71** Ann Murray serves as envoy to Peru.

“If there be but faith enough, God will give us the power to conquer the world for him” - *Frank Duff*



# the Legion

## members worldwide



1951 Chile

1952 Macau; Switzerland

1953 Alfie Lambe goes to South America. South Korea

1954 Denmark; Ecuador

1955 Thailand; Laos; Haiti; Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo)

1956 Bolivia

1958 Norway

1960 Cambodia

1961 Madagascar

1962 Botswana

1964 Mozambique

1965 Bolivia; Nigeria

1966 Ann Murray goes to Peru.

1967 Zambia

1968 Ecuador

1973 Mary Murphy goes to Kenya.

1994 Papua New Guinea

2008-2011 Armenia; Kazakhstan; Nepal



**1937**  
Fr Aedan McGrath begins the Legion in China.



**1973-77**  
Mary Murphy, current president of the Legion, serves as Envoy to Kenya.



**1936-1944**  
Venerable Edel Quinn serves in East Africa and Mauritius.



**2011**  
Since 2011 the Legion of Mary has assigned many other extension workers to various parts of the world and that work continues to this day with good results.

LEGION OF MARY  
FOUNDED 7 SEPTEMBER 1921

will utilise  
Frank Duff



# Frank Duff – seeing his life through his possessions

**Ruadhán Jones**

Many of the great men and women of the Church can seem far distant from us, either because they lived in far flung parts of the world, or because they lived and died centuries ago. But our's being an incarnational religion, we invest time and effort in preserving the artefacts of their lives – for saints, their clothes, photographs and even their bodies become objects of veneration and prayer.

Although Frank Duff is not a saint, it is a great blessing to know that his belongings and

home have been treated with the respect they deserve. The Legion of Mary have worked hard to preserve the house on Morning Star Avenue that was Duff's home for many years.

In it, and in the Legion headquarters just down the road, many of Duff's belongings are displayed, from his books to his reading glasses, along with his bicycle and bed – both preserved as they were on the day he died, November 7, 1980.

What follows here are just a selection of the objects displayed, which give a unique and very personal insight into Duff's life.



An image of the Virgin Mary, one of many in the Legion headquarters that show Mary as seen by cultures from around the world.



Gifts sent to Frank by Venerable Edel Quinn.



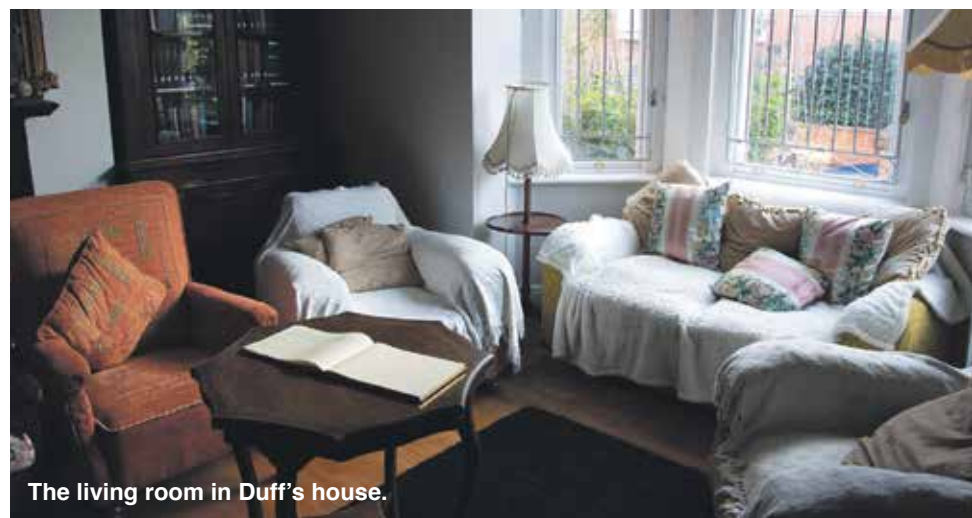
A family album belonging to Duff.



Gifts from Legion praesidia from around the world.



Frank Duff's house on Morning Star Avenue.



The living room in Duff's house.



Duff's bicycle, as it was on the day he died. That morning, Frank Duff had prepared the bike for a cycle trip he was hoping to undertake.

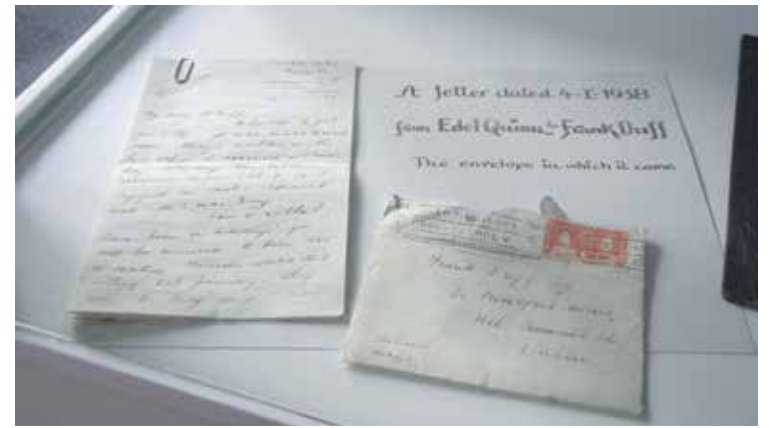
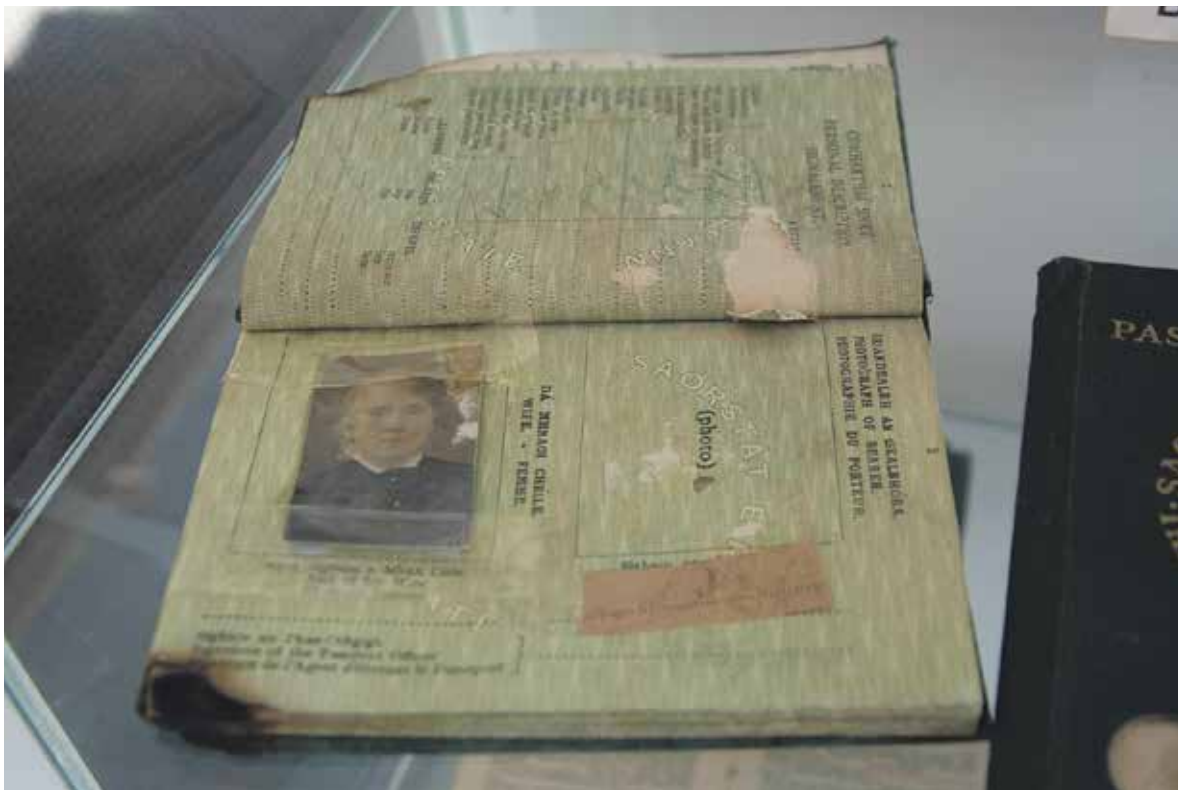


A display case in Duff's house, showcasing a number of his personal belongings.





Duff's passports. His mother's passport, (below).



A letter from Edel Quinn to Duff. Duff kept up an immense correspondence, writing more than 33,000 letters.



Duff's camera. He had a great love of photography, and frequently documented his cycle tours.



Frank leans on the gate outside his house.



The bed in which Duff died, still preserved in its original state.



The desk at which Frank wrote his volumes of personal correspondence, articles and books.



# ‘He had great trust in people’



**Ruadhán Jones** learns about Frank Duff from those who knew him personally

**H**aving read this far through the paper, you may have a sense of Frank Duff through his great achievements: the legacy of his lay apostolate; his remarkable outreach to the poor and vulnerable; and his spiritual vision. But what of Frank Duff, friend and fellow legionary, loving son and private man? I spoke to two women – Ann Murray and Moira Hayden – who knew Duff personally to get a sense of the man behind his actions.

**“He was one of these people who could see the goodness in people, he was so encouraging”**

Ann Murray joined the Legion in the 1960s, having just completed her Leaving Certificate, when a friend roped her into attending a meeting with the promise, “it doesn’t matter if you don’t come any other night”.

“I thought, that’s very strange, but I went with her anyway just to please her,” Ms Hayden tells me. “Apparently she had said the previous week that she needed to leave. They said to her, you can leave if you bring somebody next week.

She brought me! That’s 60 years ago. It’s been a wonderful blessing in my life, it gives a whole new focus to it. I still keep it up.”

Ann quickly progressed in the Legion, and was sent as an envoy to Peru from 1966-71: “That was a wonderful experience, I was only 24 at the time. It’s something that would never have happened to me otherwise. The Legion was there alright, it was set up and there were some wonderful people in it.”

## Active

Frank Duff was well into his 70s by that stage, but remained very active in the Legion. Ann attended the Concilium in Dublin, the world council meeting for the Legion. Duff would take part in those meetings every month, she remembers.

“He would have known me from the point of view of coming and going,” Ann says. “He would salute everyone, but more than that I didn’t know him. When I was nearer to going abroad, I had a great chat with him one evening. That was wonderful, one of the things I recognised at the time was how prepared he was to listen.

“He wasn’t telling a whole lot of things to do or watch out for or anything. He just listened and got to know me, to see what he should be saying to me. He was very, very

encouraging. Everybody he met meant something to him. He had great time, he’d listen to you and see where you were at and speak to you at that level. He was very good like that, very good.”

Although he didn’t flaunt it, Ann remembers him as being a very spiritual man.

“He went to early morning Mass and said the Office of the Church every day, in Latin. Needless to say, he had a great devotion to Our Lady and the rosary and things like that. He gave me some good pointers when I spoke to him. He told me to always remember that, ‘you may have ideas, but other people may do them a lot better than you, so watch out for the person who can’. That certainly manifested itself various times during my life.”

**“Ann attended the Concilium in Dublin, the world council meeting for the Legion. Duff would take part in those meetings every month, she remembers.”**

Duff gave her the example of the Morning Star, the men’s hostel that he started in 1927. He knew it was needed at the time, but also that it would have to be run by someone really capable.

“That man was Tom Doyle,” Ann explains. “Tom was a saint in his own way, a wonderful man. He ran that place for years, with a lot of voluntary help. But of course, he was the one with the charisma to do that. Frank said, ‘I couldn’t



have done it in a hundred years. I might have had the idea, but I couldn’t have done it. Somebody else had to do the job.’ He was always watching out for that – ‘you have ideas but you may not be able to do them, so get others to do them’.”

## Trust

Moira Hayden’s memory of Duff is very similar – he was a man who trusted people, and trusted Our Lady, completely. Moira joined the Legion around the same time as Ann, devoting her apostolic labours to the women’s hostel, the Regina Coeli.

“He had great trust in people,” Moira remembers. “He was one of these people who could see the goodness in people, he was so encouraging. He also had a pure trust in Our Lady. There was a crisis in the hostel in the early 1960s, really the buildings were in poor shape. There was this big huge building there backing onto Grangegorman and the authorities said that it wasn’t fit for human

habitation. They wanted to throw everybody out.

“He spent all day praying in the hostel. He had such trust in Our Lady and Our Lord, if he thought it could work, he knew they would step in and do it. It was the same when the hostel started. He was visiting the lodging houses over in the south side and he met these people sleeping in doorways and everything.

**“He spent all day praying in the hostel. He had such trust in Our Lady and Our Lord, if he thought it could work, he knew they would step in and do it”**

“He knew they needed a hostel and he just went for it. He asked the SVP would they take it on, but they said sure you’d need a million, you’d need the staffing – but everything is done up in that house.

**“When I was nearer to going abroad, I had a great chat with him one evening. That was wonderful, one of the things I recognised at the time was how prepared he was to listen”**



Ann Murray got to know Duff after joining the Legion in the 1960s.





Frank Duff on one of his many bike tours.

## “As well as his great interest and respect for each person he met, Duff had a love of learning that came out in his talks and in his conversation”

experience: “One time I brought up one of my little ones [to the Regina Coeli],” she begins telling me. “I was going to Mass or something and one of the indoor sisters, she said to leave my daughter there until I came back as she was asleep. When I came back, Frank had her up on a table and he says, ‘Moira I could talk to her all day long’.

“There he was talking to her, and she looking up at him, maybe 6 months or 8 months old or something. That’s the kind of a person he was. He had quite a love of children. We had lots of children up there [the Regina Coeli] at that time. The 1960s when I was there, there was well over 100 children.”

### Learning

As well as his great interest and respect for each person he met, Duff had a love of learning that came out in his talks and in his conversation. Although his speaking voice was quite slow, “the content was always A1”, Moira says.

### “He had a great interest in the sciences, he was an expert on everything. Photography as well”

“I would have known him a little outside of Legion matters,” she continues. “A lot of them went on cycling trips with him – I didn’t but my husband did one time. I’m from Donegal and one time they were on a Legion trip up there and the whole lot of them came to the house.

“It was quite interesting because my father was deaf and so was Frank, he was deaf. So we got into a big discussion about deafness, not that my father would hear, but my mother and siblings were there, and it was amazing what Frank knew about how the inner ear worked.

“He had a great interest in the sciences, he was an expert on everything. Photography as well, he always used to take pictures. He’d put on shows when he came back from his holidays, put on shows up in the hostel of the different places he was and all the scenery. It was a great night up there.”

Duff slept little, Ann says, but was always “tuned in and alert during the day.

“He spoke very slowly, but he did go into great detail,” Ann adds. “You had to be attentive to pick it up, but it was great. He wrote a little article which I read recently on Our Lady’s visitation to Elizabeth. You’d nearly think he walked the whole journey. He knew the distance, he knew what it was like on the way, it was extraordinary what books he read. He read into the night and even when he died of course the place is full of books. All the research he did to write some of his articles, he did it and got it into his head.”

### Funeral

Frank Duff died November 7, 1980, and the streets were thronged with people for his funeral. It took place November 13, with political and Church dignitaries all in attendance. Moira describes the

road leading up to Frank’s house on Morning Star Avenue as “one long line of people”.

“I met him that morning, we were at a legionary’s funeral,” she adds. “There was a meeting that evening and I heard that he had died. Gosh, there was a queue down the bottom of the avenue.”

### Attended

Ann also attended the legionary’s funeral with Duff, Moira and many others.

“A good number of us were there and he shook hands with everybody and asked us how we were and had a little word,” she tells me. “It was a freezing morning. I’m sure he was frozen, yet he stood around and he met people and met the family of the lady who died. Then he went home, around lunch time and he was tired more than hungry. He said to the ladies in the kitchen that ‘I’ll have a little rest then I’ll have my lunch’.

“He went up to his bed and died that evening. He just kind of passed on. Oh, thinking back, he must have been feeling very weak and delicate that day – and frail, he looked frail. But still, he just did what he had to do that day. He went to the funeral, talked to people and then just went home to his bed and died. I joined the throngs in the streets, and I was at the Mass in Westland row and up to Glasnevin cemetery [where Duff is buried].”

### “Frank Duff died November 7, 1980, and the streets were thronged with people for his funeral”

“He just did what he had to do” – this vision of Duff conveyed through the eyes of those who knew him is of a man who lived out his own understanding of sainthood: “One who, with the object of pleasing God, does his ordinary duties extraordinarily well. Such a life may be lived out without a single wonder in it, arouse little notice, be soon forgotten, and yet be the life of one of God’s dearest friends.”

And perhaps, although he is gone from this world on to the next and his cause is still underway, his works for the Legion continue on. “The one thing about him, he never clamoured for funds or anything,” Moira says. “It seems just to have come. And it’s still coming to this day. I had a phone call from this man the other day, and he’s making a big donation to the Regina Coeli hostel now.”

As Moira said herself, “he had such trust in Our Lady and Our Lord, if he thought it could work, he knew they would step in and do it”.

Really, it’s a miracle in slow motion. I really love the hostel. I really do. Because you see those poor women and what they’ve been through and all they need is a listening ear 99% of the time.”

Although Frank was a great public figure, Ann thinks of him as being quite a private man in his own way.

“He lived with his family and then they married and were all dead before he died, I think. He lived with his mother and used to go to the pictures occasionally. She loved going out and a bit of entertainment and so on, so he went to the cinema with her.

“Other than that, it was mostly mixing with legionaries and that world. You know, meeting priests from abroad, meeting priests from here, going to different functions that we might have on during the year. His life mostly revolved around that”.

But, she adds, “he gave a lot of himself, he certainly did, without sparing. He had great counsel if you had a problem, he’d think about it – probably pray about it – and then tell you what he thought. It would have been quite positive and doable”.

### Children

Both Moira and Ann have fond memories of his love of children. Though he never married, Duff spoke often of the great importance of marriage and how, if he had children, he would have devoted his life to them.

“He loved children, and any of the legionaries who married and brought in children, he’d have great

time for them,” Ann says. “And of course, he was the one who, ahead of his time, set up the Regina Coeli hostel that was initially for young single girls who got pregnant.”

### Abstract

What Ann recalls in the abstract, Moira remembers from personal



The crowds at Frank Duff’s funeral, November 13, 1980.



# Alfie Lambe – Our Lady’s devoted son



Alfie Lambe



## Former envoy to South America, Noel Lynch reflects on one of the Legion’s brightest lights

Alfie Lambe was a typical youth of his day. When he was a teenager, he joined the Irish Christian brother’s novitiate, but after a few years he was asked to leave. He used to get fainting fits. He returned home to his family and was very depressed about the future. His brother was a member of the local Legion of Mary, and he asked Alfie would he like to come to their meeting.

Alfie went with him – it was at that Legion meeting life changed for him. Alfie Lambe always had devotion to Our Lady. He saw at the Legion meeting the way that he could do things for Mary. He came to Dublin and worked in the Morning Star hostel for homeless men, before starting to work full time for Mary. He went with teams that were setting up groups of the Legion in different parts of Ireland.

At that time, he heard a legionary was going to South America to work full time for the Legion. He offered to go as well. Some people thought that he was too young, too shy, too inexperienced. They were proved wrong. He was 20 years of age when he left Ireland and started to work in Colombia. He worked nonstop for the next six years until he died of cancer at the age of 26.

During those six years he started groups of the Legion in nine South American countries. All kinds of people joined, the young, the old, the poorest indigenous to the richest people of the land. He trained them to pray and to work. The people who joined the Legion saw in him what they could do for Our Blessed Lady. They wanted to be like him. They wanted to do the work he was doing.

### Train

Not only did he train them to do Mary’s work, he also trained them to start groups of the Legion of Mary everywhere. So, it spread all over South America. One example of this was a group of the Legion of Mary composed of shoeshine boys. These were little boys who, for the most part, were street children. He taught them first to pray and then to be apostles. He went with them to work in an area where Protestant sects were extremely active.

He told them to visit each home and to say to the people: “We want to tell you that Jesus Christ started only one religion, the Catholic religion. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is your mother too.” Alfie let them do the talking. He told them that if people asked questions that they could not answer they were to say, “I’m sorry, I don’t know the answer. But I’ll find out and come back next



Alfie Lambe in South America

week”. This was the way these children were taught how to pray and be active apostles.

In those days South America was a huge challenge for the Church and for the Legion of Mary. Someone once said to Alfie Lambe: “You have a great life traveling from one country to another. You must enjoy that.” His answer was, “I hate traveling but I do it because I know that is what God wants me to do”.

There are many interesting stories told about his way of recruiting new members, inviting people to join the Legion of Mary. He trained the new legionaries to be always on duty and to avail of every opportunity to speak to people about God and the sacraments.

“He came to Dublin and worked in the Morning Star hostel for homeless men, before starting to work full time for Mary”

This is one of the many examples he gave: In a railway station he was waiting for a train. A young man was also waiting for the train. Alfie smiled and said to him: “Would you like to do something for Our Lady?” The young man answered, “I would, but I don’t go very often to Mass”. Alfie answered, “I didn’t ask you about Mass. I asked you,

would you like to do something for a lady?” This was his approach.

The young man came to a meeting. After four weeks, he was named president of his group. After one month he was elected president of the Legion in his area. After a few years he entered the seminary and was ordained and later became the rector of the seminary. There are many cases like this that can be told about Alfie Lambe. This is what he taught people to do. To have an active devotion to Our Lady. He taught the legionaries just as Mary had gone to visit her cousin, we do the same when we go to visit people.

### Sick

When Alfie was sick’s people did not realise just how sick he was, but he was in fact dying of cancer. In the short time that he was in hospital before he died, he never ever spoke about himself or his suffering. He only asked the legionaries who came to visit him how they were and how was their Legion work progressing.

He kept reminding them that the Legion must spread to all places because that’s what Mary wanted. Mary wanted apostles to spread the good news all over the world. His example was tremendous. Not only had he plans of spreading the Legion all over South America, he had learned the Russian language and had plans to spread it in the Soviet Union. Go teach all nations, is what he taught.



Uruguay: Mons. P. Tekeyen, who had 3 praesidia in his Armenian parish, with some of his Legionaries and Alfie Lambe (right).

A newspaper cutting showing Lambe in Uruguay.

When he died, the legionaries were devastated but at the same time they wanted to do what he had been doing. Many of them said that they had asked God to take them in exchange for Alfie’s life. Those same legionaries offered themselves to continue his work and did many months and even years of voluntary work. The same type of work that Alfie Lambe had done in his short life in South America.

“We want to tell you that Jesus Christ started only one religion, the Catholic religion. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is your mother too”

His cause has been introduced for beatification. About six years ago 13 boxes of favours, that had been received through his intercession, were sealed and sent to the Vatican to be studied. All over South America the Legion continues his work. Many prayer groups in his name help to promote his cause for beatification. Pope Francis, when he was Cardinal in Argentina, said he wanted to see Alfie Lambe’s paperwork finished and sent to the Vatican. The Holy Father has said on some occasions that it is good to have priests and nuns canonised and beatified, but we need also young people who will be a model for the youth of today. A model as apostles of Jesus and Mary, to spread the Gospel all over the world. Alfie is one of those.

Please try and get a little prayer leaflet for his beatification and to ask his intercession for the favours that you need. Some extraordinary favours have been granted. For instance, a lady’s car was stolen in one of the huge South American cities. The police told her, 20 cars an hour are stolen and never recovered. The lady replied that she would pray to Alfie Lambe. Six weeks later the car was left outside her house without a scratch. It had been driven six kilometres. Only Alfie Lambe knows how that happened.



# Tom Doyle – An icon of the Legion

## Raymond Mulrooney writes about the longest serving manager of the Morning Star Hostel

In this year of the Centenary of the Legion of Mary, it is right and proper to remember the many stalwart members who forged the way that led to the solid foundation of the future Legion of which we are proud to belong. One such unsung hero was Tom Doyle. Over the years I had the honour of meeting Tom on occasions of events associated with the beautiful hostel oratory.

From my few encounters with him, I found him a quiet and shy type of person, but ever so helpful. The recently deceased Liam Hayden, on the other hand, knew him quite well, having offered up a year of his early life as an indoor brother. Liam was devoted to his memory and spoke many times lovingly about the impression he made on him and on his comrades in the hostel.

### Family

Tom Doyle, born in Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow, to a family of six, four boys and two girls. Sadly, both parents died young from tuberculosis, causing the children to be separated and reared by uncles and aunts. In Tom's case, this meant going to an uncle on a family farm in Rathvilly, Co. Carlow and later attending school in nearby Tullow. In his early twenties, he moved to Dublin for work, becoming an

apprentice in the grocery trade. He was introduced to the St Vincent de Paul Society by a mutual friend in Myra House, their local HQ. It was there he met Frank Duff, then a president of a SVP conference.

**“From my few encounters with him, I found him a quiet and shy type of person, but ever so helpful”**

In 1927, responding to a great need to shelter hundreds of homeless men, displaced by the destruction of the Irish civil war, Frank Duff sought the help of volunteer brothers to man a shelter that the government facilitated, by providing the premises and offering some financial aid. This was the beginning of men coming into the Legion, which up to now, was completely made up of women. On March 25, 1927, the shelter/hostel was opened, then catering for over 200 men, almost overnight solving the then chronic crisis of homelessness.

### Brother

In 1929, Tom joined the brothers in this venture in the Morning Star Hostel for men, as it is now known, and in January 1931 he gave up his external employment to become an indoor brother, in which he devoted the rest of his long life. In 1931, there were two elderly indoor brothers to cater for security overnight, so much of the burden of the day-to-day running of the hostel fell on Frank Duff, who was also holding down his employment in the civil service.

From here, I have drawn exten-

sively from an article written by Paddy Tynan in 1992 in the *Maria Legionis*, the year of Tom's death. He relates about Tom's first job: the running of the "Stick Yard" where residents of the hostel could earn enough by bundling sticks for sale to defray their keep. (Frank Duff believed that for the men's self-respect, they should make a small contribution towards their keep).

"Tom rose each day at 5:30 am and served 6 am Mass in the Capuchin Church of Our Lady of the Angels, Church Street," Mr Tynan writes. "Then he attended to the residents' breakfasts and the dormitories and was on duty until the afternoon. After provision of the residents' tea, the rest of the evening was given to personal attention to the men. 'There is a danger,' he once said, 'that we may fall short in our service by not giving full personal attention to each man. We should get to know them intimately, share their interests and, as friends, show an interest in their hopes and desires.'

"Frequently, Tom did not avail himself of the day-and-a-half off per week allowed to indoor staff. Instead, he might cycle to Carlow to a Curia meeting. He did extension work in various parts of Ireland and went on *Perigrinatio Pro Christi* projects to Scotland, England and Sweden. He was for many years Concilium Correspondent with Legion Councils in India. He helped also in the organisation of the Legion pilgrimages to St Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg (a three-day penitential exercise) and he recruited many of the pilgrims as legionaries."

### Good humoured

Always good humoured, the experience of those who knew him for 50 years or more was that he was never glum or angry. He had cause to be angry, as when a resident whom he had nursed through an illness struck him, or when he had his leg broken while trying to separate fighting residents, or when the horse and cart used in connection with the distribution for sale of the firewood were themselves sold by a resident for his own profit!

Many sought the benefit of Tom's prayers. One legionary was directed by him to a seminary where he was ordained. He was President of the Morning Star Praesidium from 1950-1956 and from 1960-1966. His deep spirituality was revealed in his allocutio's, in particular his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and Our



Tom Doyle.

Lady. He often emphasised the gifts received through membership of the Legion: the Mystical Body doctrine, True Devotion to Mary and appreciation of the Breviary. He was an avid student of the *Legion Handbook*.

**“The Morning Star Hostel where Tom dedicated his life continues to give help and refuge to men in homelessness”**

Tom always retained his simplicity and told a friend he liked nothing better than to sit round the big log fire in the common room at the end of the day in the company of the residents. But at first, he found duty as an indoor brother very difficult until he grew fond of the men. One friendship is worth recalling: it was with a resident, formally a military officer and university graduate, who had a drink problem. This man went from the hostel to England for the conferring ceremony of a cadetship on his son. But tragically, the son was killed on his way to the ceremony.

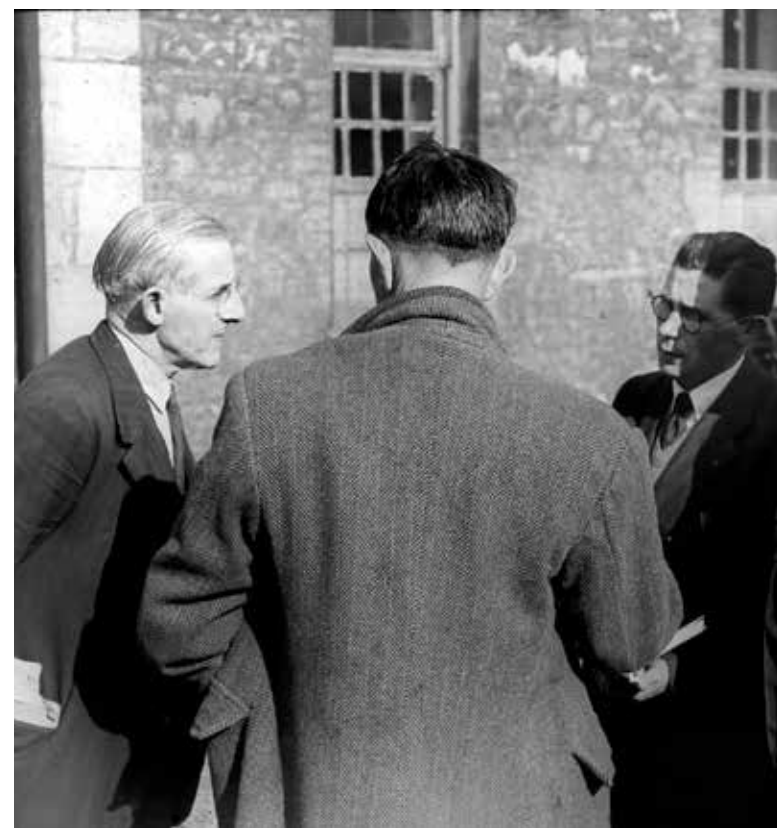
Later the man settled in England but returned to the hostel to express his thanks and to

inform Tom that he and his wife had entered the Catholic Church. Efforts by state departments and other bodies to reward him for his services were graciously declined by Tom. At the age of 80, he went to a nursing home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, who were very kind to him and where he was universally popular. He attended two Masses each day and also the local praesidium meeting. To the last, he daily recited his Breviary. Tom died on Friday, 30 October, 1992.

### Funeral

Twelve priests concelebrated Tom's funeral Mass in the Capuchin Church and he was laid to rest (according to his own request), in the Morning Star Residents' Burial plot in Glasnevin Cemetery, there to await Gabriel's call in the company of his beloved poor. The morning of the funeral was wild and stormy, but after recitation of the Legion prayers and the singing of the *Salve Regina*, the sun broke through as if to let us know that the kindly soul of Tom Doyle was at home with Mary, the Beateous Morning Star.

The Morning Star Hostel where Tom dedicated his life continues to give help and refuge to men in homelessness.



Frank Duff and Tom Doyle (right).

**“Frank Duff sought the help of volunteer brothers to man a shelter that the government facilitated, by providing the premises and offering some financial aid”**



# Edel Quinn's heroic journey into the unknown

**Annette Mulrooney** tells the story of the famous legionary's valiant mission to Africa

**T**he story of Edel Quinn (September 14 1907 – May 12 1944) and her apostolic work in Africa as envoy of the Legion of Mary is now well known, but what sort of person was she in herself? The impression given by Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens in his biography *Life of Edel Quinn* is that of a radiant personality in which nature and grace were united in a wonderful harmony. His insight is confirmed by hundreds of witnesses examined since his book was written.

We read in Edel's life story of the difficulties which confronted her. At first, the African Catholics were incredulous, even suspicious, that a white lady should concern herself with them. More, that she should encourage their own people to work in the apostolate. This was unheard of. They always regarded that work as belonging to priests and catechists. It was a shock to them to learn that it was their duty to spread the Faith.

## Problems

Then we read about the physical problems – miles and miles of travelling, rain, mud, swollen rivers, impassable roads, or heat and dust. Missionaries saw this sick girl doing what none of them could manage. In the morning taking long journeys of one hundred miles standing in uncomfortable lorries, returning about one o'clock. While missionaries enjoyed their siesta, Edel would restart work and keep at it until evening.

Then praesidium meetings, interviews and hosts of other duties. Priests saw her covered with mud from head to foot. They knew of her long hours without food, of the tropical storms she

encountered, torrential rain, nights in lonely forests, wild animals about, not knowing whether she would be rescued or not. When she returned home, she was always smiling, passing everything off as nothing heroic at all.

## Union

One thing enabled her to do it all – her union with Mary. "Turn to Mary in all circumstances," she said, "that she may teach you to love Jesus. To serve the Father; to become like a child in your attitude – trusting utterly, never doubting, showing loving tenderness in little things."

Fr Bede McGregor OP wrote of Edel: "One of the really difficult areas in our spiritual life is the tendency to judge others and therefore hold back the joy and freedom of our own interior life. I find Edel's guidance very helpful in this whole situation. She writes in her notes: 'It is no part of our duty to judge others, so let us not torment ourselves about their doings. We will love our neighbour – and we will be unable to speak ill or criticise – if in each one we see Christ. Restrain the tongue: employ it as you

"I know what's before me. It is exactly what I am looking for. I am going with my eyes open. I don't want to be sent off on any picnic." These were the words of Edel Quinn at the meeting of the Legion of Mary where her going to Africa was decided.

## Picnic

"Picnic, you'll be a picnic for somebody," replied Dr Magennis, a former General of the Carmelite Fathers. "I call on all of you to witness that this picnic will not be a very substantial one," interjected Frank Duff, then president of the Concilium, to roars of laughter. Edel was on her way to Africa.

Her field of work was Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. It is impossible to describe all that this involved. Kenya itself is 1,000 miles long and 750 miles wide with a population of some 13 million people. It is like putting England, France, Spain and Italy together with different languages, races and cultures all living there.

The weather is not like the Irish climate. She was situated on the equator with extreme heat and torrential rain and with a threat of malaria and very difficult travel conditions. This is what one priest in Africa, Fr Cecil Johnston, said about Edel: "When speaking of her, one is up against something which flesh and blood cannot explain.

The work she did and the energy with which she accomplished it in seven or eight years is out of all proportion to her frail and delicate constitution.

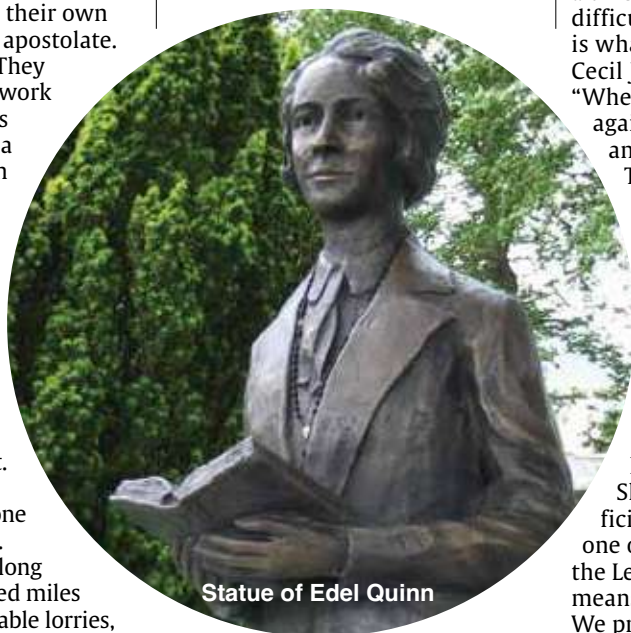
"No one ever heard of her speak of her health. She was always happy and loved to see others so. No Legion work was beyond her, no matter what the cost. She was the most self-sacrificing of persons. She saw only one objective: that of making the Legion known as a powerful means for bringing souls to God. We pray that soon she will be raised to the ranks of the canonised saints."

## Tribute

Fr Anselm Moynihan OP, a Kerry-born Dominican, sometime civil servant and close friend of Eamon de Valera, also paid tribute to Edel: "Edel Quinn's personal character was one in which a warm outgo-

think Mary would have used her speech. *Noli judicare.*"

In 1936, Edel spent her holidays in North Wales promoting the Legion apostolate and, on her return, offered herself as a Legion Envoy. She agreed to go to Central Africa at the invitation of Bishop Heffernan and in 1936 set sail.



Statue of Edel Quinn



Edel Quinn

ing, joyful humanity seemed to be radiant with the indwelling Spirit of God."

**“She was situated on the Equator with extreme heat and torrential rain and with a threat of malaria and very difficult travel conditions”**

"The good she did," wrote a missionary priest, "was largely due to her personality. I had the impression that she carried about with her some of the fragrances of Our Lady." Thanks to Cardinal Suenens's *Life of Edel Quinn* and the efforts of the Legion,

that fragrance has been diffused throughout the Church, evoking everywhere a response of affection and devotion towards Edel. To make Edel known and to promote her canonisation cause is obviously not just a work for the glory of the Legion. It is directly a work for the Church, for the glory of God, a work of immense value and urgency.

## St Thérèse

Cardinal Yves Congar OP, the French Dominican friar, priest, and theologian, said of St Thérèse of Lisieux as "a lighthouse set up by God to guide the Church as it entered the nuclear age, so full of opportunities for the material good of mankind, yet so full too of physical and spiritual perils". Edel had a strong spiritual kinship





Edel Quinn pictured shortly before she died.

personification of the Church's missionary spirit."

The lay apostolate became her way to bring together in her life the Christian witness which we are all called to show. The sense of 'being sent' created in her a responsibility to go wherever the Legion might send her. She found her full expression in her years of missionary accomplishment in Africa, inspiring the clergy and the people with her enthusiasm and her self-sacrificing nature. Her influence is still being felt.

**“Edel had a strong spiritual kinship with Thérèse and it may not be fanciful to think that she, in turn, has been set up by God as a light to inspire and guide the Church”**

Fr Pádraig Ó Cochláin summed it up in this way: “She suffered many obstacles besides her health. She had to overcome racial segregation, class distinction, petty infighting, rejection of her message, great distances, bad weather, heat, little sympathy, attempts to get her to modify the Legion *Handbook*, tiredness, weakness and the ravages of the Second World War. The illness that Edel experienced, especially on her many long journeys to mission stations, did not stop her

achieving her goal to serve Jesus and Mary, in bringing the Faith to the Africans. She was no slave to illness but drove on in love with her God. Her persistence and commitment to the Gospel was an example to all. If one saw things truly; how we should be grateful and rejoice at every physical weakness, tiredness... They are our share in Christ's sufferings and graces. She summed up her whole approach to suffering by saying, 'To suffer for Our Lord is my greatest joy'."

### Biography

From her biography written by Cardinal Suenens, the reader realises that the establishment of the Kisumu Curia, in Kenya, was the final act of her earthly Legion foundations. It must have cost her valiant, fragile body a tremendous effort to make the almost three hundred-mile journey from Nairobi to Kisumu and to Rangala which was a mission only about fifty miles distant from the Ugandan border. Edel was already in a dying condition when she reached Rangala, where she hoped to found the Curia.

All the Rangala community was alarmed when they saw the great change in her physical condition. Although Edel was just the same happy person, the dreadful disease had reduced her to a mere shadow. The successful record of this Curia's activities may be surely attributed to Edel Quinn's dying effort and the unspeakable

## “Rejoice that you had the courage to emulate our Lord in his choice of weak things in faith”

sufferings she must have endured in its foundation. She succeeded in completing her missionary labours in Rangala but she was too ill to proceed to Kakamega. After a brief stay in the Convent of St Therese, Kibuye, Edel returned to Nairobi where she died on May 12, 1944.

**“Her whole life was, in truth, a new song. A reflection on her remarkable life helps us to sing a new song of thanks to the Lord”**

Msgr John Moloney, long-time chaplain to the Italian community in Dublin and author of more than 15 books, said in a homily that “the springlike freshness of her holiness is worthy of our attention.

“Her whole life was, in truth, a new song. A reflection on her remarkable life helps us to sing a new song of thanks to the Lord, for through her he has worked wonders. She found another motivating influence in her life in the example of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus. She saw in her the model of the great missionary, the tremendous lover, the heroic sufferer. Thérèse was a saint in a hurry who cut out all the frills. Her one wish was to be 'love in the heart of the Church!'”

### Recall

The recall of her missionary apostolate brings to the surface the names of many who influenced and supported her work. There was a letter to Frank Duff at the beginning of her journey: “Rejoice that you had the courage to emulate our Lord in his choice of weak things in faith.” There was the immense help and encouragement she received from the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Antonio Riberi, a former nuncio to Ireland and China, later wrote from China that “hidden in the depth of the African jungle Edel Quinn was helping to save China”. She had the unfailing help of Bishop John William Heffernan CSSp in Kenya. At a time when her health was rapidly failing, she answered the invitation of Archbishop James Leen CSSp to come to Mauritius.

I would like to conclude with a quote from the late Mother Mary Celestine Walls, who knew Edel and recounted her impressions of her in *I Knew Edel Quinn*: “Looking back, I can truly say that Edel Quinn left an indelible mark on my life. She was like a bright light that shone on all who approached her. But more especially on her friends. This light gave out not only brightness, but also warmth – the warmth of love. I can still feel its effects. Her friendship was a source of constant joy and happiness. One could not fail to be better for having known her – at least, so it seems to me.”



Edel Quinn's funeral

**“The illness that Edel experienced, especially on her many long journeys to mission stations, did not stop her achieving her goal to serve Jesus and Mary”**



# ‘Holy Mother’s Army’

## The story of the Legion’s extraordinary, though short-lived, success in China

**T**he story of the Legion of Mary in China is markedly different from any other of the 170 countries in which it has started in these past 100 years. It is different because of how the authorities in China reacted to its presence; it lasted only 13 years on Chinese soil, ending with the rise of Communism. It is undoubtedly an interesting story, given its extraordinary but short-lived success and the level of reaction that it elicited from the Communists. The question is how and why was it so provocative to them? How could Mao ZeDong himself, as is said, come to notice the Legion and go as far as calling it an ‘Enemy of the Chinese People’?

The story starts in 1938 when the widespread promotion of the Legion was begun by an Irish missionary priest Fr Aedan McGrath, a Columban father stationed in Central China. The story of the Legion in China ends in 1951 because of a campaign directed by the newly installed Chinese Communist Party against the Roman Catholic Church and towards the Legion of Mary. In the 70 years since the Legion of Mary or “Holy Mother’s Army” as it was known in Chinese, has not yet been able to restart.

**“The story starts in 1938 when the widespread promotion of the Legion was begun by an Irish missionary priest”**

The Legion of Mary in China, though it was only active for this short period, was incredibly successful. One might argue it was more successful than in any other country in which it has been started. In the short span of 13 years, thousands and thousands of *praesidia* were set up. Though less than one percent of the population of China was Catholic, tens of thousands of ordinary Chinese Catholics began doing weekly apostolic work in their local area, helping and supporting their local church, something they had not engaged in before, to such level of activity and intensity.

This quick expansion was brought about through the work especially of Fr McGrath,

who was encouraged greatly by the then Apostolic Nuncio to China, Archbishop Antonio Riberi. Archbishop Riberi was in Kenya for several years prior to his appointment to China in 1946 and had been in touch there with the great Legion of Mary missionary Edel Quinn. In Africa Archbishop Riberi had undoubtedly seen the potential and power of the Legion for raising up lay people to heroically serve the Church and he wanted to bring this to China.

### Promote

Fr Aedan was not the only one to promote the Legion in China: there followed after him several extremely zealous Chinese legionaries. One of these, Johanna Xiao, is particularly notable in spending years, day and night, travelling all over her region in eastern China, starting new groups of the Legion.

But the runaway success of the Legion of Mary in China was also to be a weakness. Just as Archbishop Riberi was confident in the Legion as a means of building up the laity, so the Communists at the same time began to suspect it as an organisation that was competing for people’s loyalty.

The Legion of Mary, founded under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and only ever intended to extend the reign of the Heavenly Kingdom (and not any earthly one), was suspected as a means by Western powers to interfere in China and subvert its people. The Legion was subject to more suspicion as it used the military terminology of the Roman Army (*praesidium*, *tessera*, etc). Moreover, in Chinese, it was called *Shen Mo*

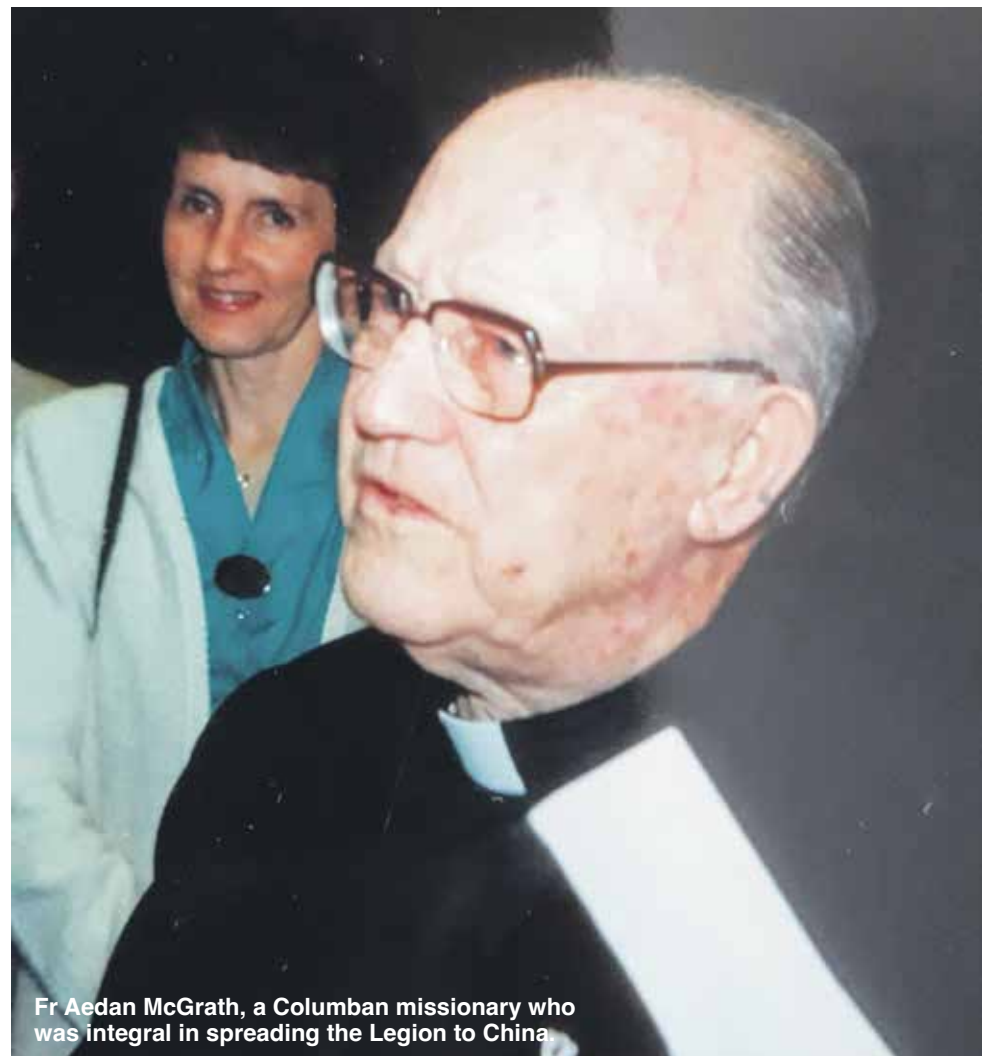
*Jun* or “Holy Mother’s Army”, an undeniably military title.

All of this gradually contributed to a conflated idea of the purpose of the Legion of Mary in the minds of the Communists and gradually they began to characterise it as a secret army, under the guise of religion, which was acting for the Western “imperialists”. They started to publish this misinterpretation in newspapers and circulars.

**“What is extraordinary about the story of the Legion in China is the amount of attention given to an organisation that concerned less than 1% of the population”**

Before the Communists took complete control of China, the Legion was still quite free to operate but its death knell came as the Communist Party formally took power in China in 1950. The Communists wanted to cut off the Catholic Church, as a whole, from outside influence, even from Rome, saying that the Church should be “self-reliant”.

Their major strategy for this was to establish the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Church, which took over the Catholic Church in China, with the government, rather than the Pope, at its head. Many Chinese Catholics found it hard to accept a rupture from Rome.



Fr Aedan McGrath, a Columban missionary who was integral in spreading the Legion to China

Over the Winter of 1950 and in the Spring of 1951, the screw was tightened on foreign Church personnel or foreign Church movements in China. It was in this period that the Legion was singled out as a particularly troublesome organisation. The Legion’s success, its highly organised manner, the energy of its members, the fruitfulness of its work – all these things drew on it the sharper and sharper criticism, disapproval and perhaps jealousy of the Communists and it became the subject of an intense focus.

### Extraordinary

What is extraordinary about the story of the Legion in China

is the amount of attention given to an organisation that concerned less than 1% of the population. It was an attention that went all the way to the top echelons of the new Chinese regime. The Legion concerned a tiny fraction of the country of 500 million people and yet on July 15, 1951, the official newspaper of the Communist Republic published on its front page: “The Legion of Mary: the Enemy of the People”. Fr McGrath said that Chairman Mao himself was aware of the Legion and went so far as to call it “Public Enemy No.1”, perhaps a badge of honour for this Irish organisation of humble origins.

**“This quick expansion was brought about through the work especially of Fr McGrath”**

Though individual legionaries remained loyal in China, the crackdown in the summer of 1951 was inescapable for the organisation as a whole. The situation for the Legion deteriorated rapidly. In several cities the authorities required legionaries to formally admit that they were members and renounce their membership. It was the end for the Legion. Some legionaries felt they had no option but to hand them-

selves in to the authorities but others would not and suffered for their loyalty.

### Imprisoned

Several were caught and imprisoned for long periods. Fr McGrath was imprisoned without trial for three years. In 1954 he was released first to Hong Kong and from there he was able to return to Ireland. He was hailed as a hero on his arrival at Dublin airport by the then-President Seán T O’Ceallaigh and Taoiseach Eamon De Valera.

Many Chinese legionaries were imprisoned too and they received even harsher treatment than the foreigners. The zealous Chinese woman, Johanna Xiao, who had worked day and night to start the Legion across China, was imprisoned and remained detained for an incredible 30 years – just for being a member of the Legion of Mary.

The Communist Party are still in power in China and, as yet, the Legion has not had a chance to restart in that populous country. Perhaps with the changing relationship between the Vatican and the Chinese authorities, the day when “Holy Mother’s Army” may once again unite Chinese people to the peace of Christ’s mystical body, is not too far away.

*The author is known to the editor and asks to remain anonymous.*



The Legion Handbook, including the Chinese language editions.



# Frank Duff - A man of courage and vision



My first experience with the Legion was going door-to-door as a missionary, writes Bishop Fintan Monahan

I often think of the comment of a religious sister who taught us at school, who claimed that the reason we were created is that God likes stories. The stories told at the Pearly Gates must indeed be interesting in variety and many adventures. The obituary section of the newspaper or the biography section of the book shop always draws my attention as I have an interest in the human story. The personal stories behind the RTÉ series on TV on a Sunday night *The Meaning of Life* rarely disappoints in variety and a wealth of lived experience.

An instance of such a life-story is that of Frank Duff, founder of a the Legion of Mary. The Legion celebrated the centenary of founding, on September 7 1921, during an interesting time in national and world history, post the First World War and in the middle of the Irish Civil War or Troubles. In Church terms, life was much more stable. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life were plentiful. Religious devotion and practice could hardly have been higher. It was a time that Ireland was exporting priests and religious to work all over the globe. Seeing that there was no shortage of priests and religious to work full-time in this area it sounds unusual that a lay organisation was formed to promote piety and involvement in charitable works.

**“Duff was passionate in his belief that single mothers should be assisted in being allowed to keep and rear their own children”**

None of this deterred Frank Duff, a determined, intelligent, civilised man who worked as a civil servant in Dublin. He was a committed member of the St Vincent de Paul, open to men only at the time. In Myra House in Francis Street, Dublin, on that September evening, beginning with the rosary and a pledge of doing good work in the local community, the Association of Our Lady of Mercy began, with a small number of women and men, the spiritual direction of Fr Michael Toher and the presidency of Elizabeth Kirwin. It soon became



Bishop Monahan with Clare Legionaries, 2017

the Legion of Mary, adopting the famous nomenclature of the Roman Legion, with the local unit or cell being known as the Praesidium.

## Seminarian

My first involvement with the Legion of Mary was as a seminarian in St Patrick's College, Maynooth where we were invited to go on a most interesting project called *Peregrinatio Pro Cristo* (Journeying for Christ), a specific Legion project where a team went on a mission or pilgrimage to a specific area. On this project, visitation of people is carried out in a systematic way, door to door, in pairs, in talking to people, engaging them on issues of faith and inviting them to practice if interested.

It was quite a whirlwind experience for a young, idealistic third level student to be thrown into. To experience first-hand the life-experience, religious practice, belief, atheism, agnosticism, faith, devotion and other of so many people in an urban setting of Runcorn, near Manchester in England.

In Maynooth we had a small seminarians' praesidium that met regularly on a Monday evening to pray and following on from that we did our pastoral and outreach work in the town during the week, visiting the poor, the elderly, the sick and the housebound. Fr Michael Casey OP, the charismatic retired professor of chemistry was our spiritual director and he inspired many generations

of seminarians with his strong and dedicated Marian and Eucharistic devotion.

Following ordination, I worked as a teacher in St Jarlath's College, Tuam, where there was a particularly strong and vibrant student praesidium, due to the work of a stalwart Legionary called John McLoughlin whose charismatic personality and devotion to the cause interested, inspired and enthused many students to join the college praesidium. They regularly went on *Peregrinatio*, visited nursing homes, hospitals, mental health residences using their musical skills, sharing their vivacious youthful exuberance and that was a great experience for many generations of students.

Here in Ennis my involvement with the Legion continued pre-covid with the annual Mass, dinner and joyful diocesan celebration each Autumn organised by another outstanding Legionary, Ada Power from Clarecastle. Ada returned to God this year, RIP. She is dearly missed by her large circle of friends and many in the Legion.

## Founding

One hundred years on from the founding of the Legion of Mary it claims four million members in over 170 countries. Members follow weekly prayers, commit to at least two hours of voluntary, charitable work, visiting homes, hospitals, prisons, encouraging people at home and abroad to practice the Faith. All

Legion work is voluntary, no one is paid and is always done in pairs. Some of the very focused apostolates at the time was the founding of a hostel and refuge for prostitutes, this being based in Harcourt Street. This was followed by the Morning Star Hostel for homeless men and the Regina Coeli for homeless women. The important principle for the dignity of residents was that of charging a small fee or taking a donation from residents this giving a sense that a service was being provided rather than charity being given.

**“It must have been a great vindication for Duff that he was invited to address the world-wide Church at the Second Vatican Council”**

Duff was passionate in his belief that single mothers should be assisted in being allowed to keep and rear their own children. This was a revolutionary and controversial view at the time and he was highly commended for this by the Commission of Enquiry in the recently published Mother and Baby Home Report, issued earlier this year.

Every year during the month of October we focus on the important work of the 'Missions'. There

is always a strong mission focus to the work of the Legion with many volunteers embarking on missionary work in various parts of the world in mini-missions already described, *Peregrinatio Pro Cristo*, adapted from the mission of St Columbanus, journeying with Christ. The most famous missionary envoys are Edel Quinn who worked in Africa and Alfie Lambe in South America, who along with Frank Duff are proposed as possible candidates for future sainthood.

## Atmosphere

Considering the concentrated and rich religious atmosphere of the time, it is perhaps little wonder that the work of this fledgling, 'amateur' organisation got little notice, heed and cooperation in clerical circles and even opposition at this time. This must have been stressful and disappointing for Duff in these early years and he deserves great credit for his perseverance and persistence.

It must have been a great vindication for Duff that he was invited to address the world-wide Church at the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's in an effort to develop a strategy for promoting the vocation of the laity in the Church, one of the big themes that emerged from the Council. Like a man who was canonised just ahead of the Legion centenary, St John Henry Newman who had radical views on the involvement of the laity in the Church, Duff was ahead of his time. In these days of anticipation of the synodal approach as a way of 'being Church', we gain inspiration from the likes of Duff, Newman and Legionary associates, visionaries for today and people who were ahead of their time in more ways than one.

**“It was a time that Ireland was exporting priests and religious to work all over the globe”**





The Dublin hostel run by the Legion of Mary for unmarried mothers was more compassionate than many at the time, writes **Chai Brady**

**W**hen the final report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes was published in January of this year, one institution stands out as an anomaly among the 18 investigated, in that it was the only one in Ireland prior to the 1970s that supported unmarried mothers who wished to raise their child or children. That institution was the women's hostel founded by Frank Duff, the Regina Coeli.

Another difference was that the Regina Coeli hostel also catered for homeless women, separated women, alcoholics, women with mental health problems and other destitute women. Run by the Legion of Mary, the hostel is described as "not a conventional mother and baby home".

Regina Coeli provided both short-term and long-term accommodation for many pregnant single women and for mothers and children. A total of 5,631 women and 5,434 children who came within the commission's terms of reference were in Regina Coeli between 1930 and 1998.

**“When our oratory opened then there would have been weekly Mass, and occasionally Mass during the week”**

The commission, in its focus on Regina Coeli, stated that the hostel “offers insights into an alternative to the other mother and baby homes”. Unlike the other institutions they examined, it never received direct State support for maintaining mothers and children.

The hostel opened in North Great Brunswick Street, in part of the former North Dublin Union, next door to the Morning Star hostel for homeless men, also run by the Legion of Mary.

Planning for a women's hostel began in 1929. In a memorandum written in 1950, Frank Duff stated: “Primarily it was the derelict type of woman that was in view, but from the very first moment the unmarried mother presented herself for admission and was accepted in her capacity of destitute.”

# A place where women were encouraged to keep their children

The Regina Coeli home on Morningstar Avenue off North Brunswick Street in Dublin. Photo: Dara Mac Donnell.

They did not admit ‘girls possessing means’ because it was believed that they could make other arrangements. The Legion of Mary and their religious mission was central to its operation. In a 1932 report on Regina Coeli, Frank Duff emphasised: “Every entrant is made the subject of a special and individual attention directed in the first place to the creation of moral fibre through the frequentation of the sacraments.”

Faith played an important role in the life of Regina Coeli, according to the report, which also found that in the first 18 months two retreats were held in the hostel and there was a chapel for the women to pray in.

## Oratory

A member of the Legion of Mary who worked in Regina Coeli, the commission discovered, said: “When our oratory opened then there would have been weekly Mass, and occasionally Mass during the week. But very few of our residents would attend it, they would always be welcome but no one was ever forced to attend.” Daily prayers were part of the routine, but she claimed that no one was obliged to take part.

The individual records of women in the hostel indicate that much

emphasis was placed on Confession, including a note of when a resident was last ‘at the sacraments’. Some cards record whether the woman had made a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Confession. “All the children were baptised and subsequently consecrated to Our Lady and all the mothers were churched,” the report states.

In the 1932 report Regina Coeli claimed that the hostel assisted women who were in grave difficulties “for whom no alternative existed”. The only facilities for unmarried mothers in Dublin were the Dublin Union or Protestant homes. It was alleged that some women were reluctant “to face the union”; furthermore, the union would only admit “Dublin girls”, which meant that for the “the large number of those flying from the country,” the Protestant homes were the only option.

Between October 1930 and May 1932, 101 women were admitted to Regina Coeli; 26 were described as ‘waiting mothers’ – pregnant; 45 gave birth after admission and 30 arrived with their baby. The outcomes for these mothers were: two went back to previous employment; 19 settled in indoor situations (live-in service); six settled in outdoor situations; 12 married; 23 returned

home; 39 were in Regina Coeli or in the Coombe Hospital.

## Referred

Women were referred to the hostel by their employer, from hospital, by members of the Legion of Mary, by priests and many were referred to the hostel by the Department of Local Government and Public Health/ Department of Health seeking assistance in the 1940s and 1950s. Many women also heard about the hostel through word of mouth.

**“A unique feature of Regina Coeli was the fact that many women entered the hostel on multiple occasions and others stayed, sometimes intermittently”**

In the years 1944-48, 73 of the 680 women who contacted the department were sent to Regina Coeli and large numbers were referred to the hostel during World War II, though it was often full and they had to be sent elsewhere. The department used Regina Coeli as

short-term emergency accommodation while inspectors tried to secure the agreement of a local authority to pay for the woman's maintenance in a mother and baby home and a place was being sought for her in one of those homes. Many of the 999 women who were in the hostel and left before giving birth went to mother and baby homes.

There was overlap at times, with some women coming from another mother and baby home or staying just a few nights in the hostel before going on to another institution.

A unique feature of Regina Coeli was the fact that many women entered the hostel on multiple occasions and others stayed, sometimes intermittently, over the course of many years. Some of these long-stay women gave birth to a number of children during their years in the hostel. Many women kept in contact with the staff in the hostel after they had left and sometimes returned for a further stay.

The commission found that there were many other examples of women staying for multiple years, with some coming and going intermittently. Another distinct feature of the Regina Coeli hostel was the fact that many residents maintained contact following their departure.

Regina Coeli was unusual in that it admitted women who had been, or were currently, involved in crime. There are references in the records to residents who had some contact with the Gardaí in relation to theft or violence.

Women who were engaged in prostitution were generally sent to the Legion's Sancta Maria Hostel. The



two hostels were in close communication, and regularly cross-referred. However some 'street cases' were admitted to Regina Coeli, particularly those who were seeking to give up soliciting.

### Children

A total of 5,434 children were admitted to Regina Coeli and there is information about the date of admission for over 99% of the children. Children came to Regina Coeli with their mother, and remained with their mother; in a small number of cases a child might remain in Regina Coeli, while their mother was in hospital, prison or otherwise temporarily absent.

Admissions peaked in the 1940s when over 30% of the children were admitted; 225 children were admitted in 1942 and 233 in 1943. The numbers admitted in the 1950s were just over half the figure for the 1940s; in the 1960s less than one-fifth of the 1940s number were admitted. (The small number may reflect the need to rebuild the hostel). The number admitted rose sharply in the 1980s, reflecting the increase in the number of mothers who were keeping their child.

Before the 1970s, Regina Coeli was the only institution that assisted unmarried mothers to keep their infant. The following are the percentages of mothers who are known to have kept their babies within Regina Coeli:

1930s: 29.71%  
1940s: 30.60%  
1950s: 43.10%  
1960s: 39.20%  
1970s: 72.50%  
1980s: 87.30%  
1990s: 79.40%

It is possible that other mothers left with their babies and raised them outside the hostel. Although the mothers who kept their babies were a minority until the 1970s, the proportion was undoubtedly much higher than for any other institution catering for unmarried mothers.

In the early years, it appears that the outcomes for children from Regina Coeli were not very different to other mother and baby homes.

In a lengthy memorandum written in 1950 and submitted to the Department of Health, Frank Duff stated: "From a very early moment it became a principal idea of the hostel that mothers should be encouraged to keep their children permanently...The best that could be aimed at was that they would retain them for a period of a year, so as to give the child its chance of life. After that everything operated to bring about separation. A job was found for the mother and the child went off to fosterage or into an industrial school.

"But in the case of the Regina Coeli there was no date at which the mother had to make up her mind. Each new day brought growth of affection for the child and the natural mother to keep it and be responsible for it. From first to last the hostel has urged this latter consideration on the girls. The cry too commonly heard is that these girls

should be 'given their chance' as if no responsibility whatever lay on the mother in respect of the child." Mr Duff believed that as the fathers had failed in their duty to the children, there was a greater responsibility on the mother.

He claimed that: "As a result of the interaction of proper natural affection and the encouragement and facilities provided...a great proportion of the girls are not only prepared but determined to keep their child."

Due to this, the hostel expanded rapidly particularly on the "unmarried mothers" side as it was necessary to provide care and food throughout the day.

**“Before the 1970s, Regina Coeli was the only institution that assisted unmarried mothers to keep their infant”**

One of the core principles behind all Legion of Mary hostels was that no services should be provided free of charge. The basic charge in Regina Coeli was 6d a day (approximately €1 in today's money), including supper. There was no charge for babies under six months; older babies were charged at one shilling a week (around €2 today). Mothers were expected to find outside work, or undertake work in the hostel to earn this money. However, most work in the hostel was carried out by members of the Legion of Mary.

Frank Duff was opposed to children being committed to industrial schools, saying in a memorandum: "The result of this breaking up the little family unit is not for the good either of mother or child. A formidable proportion of the women thus relieved of their children get into trouble again...Based upon [the] Regina Coeli experience of such cases, it can be confidently asserted that over 60% of such girls thus come

**“From a very early moment it became a principal idea of the hostel that mothers should be encouraged to keep their children permanently”**

to disaster, and it is at least likely that the proportion is very much higher. Then what happened to the children who are thus taken away? The number of children who emerge from industrial schools at the age of 16 and then come to grief is so considerable that a number of years ago the government set up a commission of enquiry to investigate the question."

Regina Coeli was located in a disused former workhouse which was a 19th Century building with primitive sanitary and washing facilities. The commission states that for that reason "it is not surprising that there were numerous outbreaks of infectious disease".

The hostel was staffed by volunteers, who were members of the Legion. It did not employ a nurse, midwives or a visiting medical officer. Mr Duff was committed to the principle that care should be provided by volunteers, not paid professionals. This is one of the reasons, it seems from the report, the hostel was badly provided for medically for many, many years.

It was never envisaged that women would give birth in Regina Coeli and the hostel never had a designated resident or visiting midwife on its staff or a visiting obstetrician.

### Unmarried mothers

The report states: "A DLGPH (Department of Local Government and Public Health) file in 1943 that examined provisions for antenatal care for unmarried mothers in various institutions noted that expectant mothers in Regina Coeli were sent to the Rotunda [Hospital] for a medical examination on the first suitable day following their admission. It claimed that women attended ante-natal clinics regularly

until the birth of their child. Expectant mothers received a special diet in the hostel, which consisted of an additional pint of milk daily in addition to 'a good midday meal of meat, vegetables and milk pudding'."

At the time, infant mortality in Dublin was substantially worse than in comparable cities in Britain and it proved difficult to reduce it. Mortality in the city's tenements and city centre cottages was extremely high, yet the mortality among illegitimate children was a multiple of that figure, the commission found.

**“The hostel was staffed by volunteers, who were members of the Legion. It did not employ a nurse, midwives or a visiting medical officer”**

Overcrowding, which facilitated the spread of infectious diseases, was a major factor; likewise the relatively low rate of breastfeeding (which was a reflection of poverty and poor nourishment of mothers). The poor quality of milk used to feed infants, which was often watered down, from tubercular cows, or riddled with infection was another contributory cause. The city of Dublin implemented a variety of schemes to reduce infant mortality, including the feeding of malnourished mothers, and providing depots to supply clean milk.

Regina Coeli experienced outbreaks of infectious diseases almost from the beginning. Appointments of temporary nurses for periods lasting weeks, and sometimes one to two months to tackle epidemics in

Regina Coeli, were a regular feature throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

The 1939 report on public health in Dublin city stated that unmarried mothers were visited "in the ordinary way" by district health visitors; their records were kept in a similar manner to married women and they were addressed as married women in the clinics. A later note on a Department of Health file indicates that the local dispensary doctor was responsible for medical care at Regina Coeli, but he found it difficult to visit the hostel "except occasionally".

### No indication

The commission found that there was no indication of any response by the DLGPH to frequent requests by Dublin Corporation to approve the appointment of temporary nurses in Regina Coeli. However, there are frequent allegations that children in Regina Coeli were not transferred to hospital in time in the 1940s.

From the 1960s onwards the circumstances of the women entering the hostel changed and some women sought entry because of domestic violence, homelessness or drug addiction.

The healthcare provisions for those in the hostel were horrendous by modern standards and from the commission's investigations they were still severely poor by the standards of the past. However, Regina Coeli was one of the few institutions that actively endeavoured to encourage mothers to keep their babies and for them to find housing. Frank Duff also emerges as a man ahead of his time both in his treatment of unmarried mothers and his opposition to the incarceration of children in industrial schools.



Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary, at Dublin Airport in 1965. Photo: Jimmy McCormack.



# In his own words

## The wisdom of Frank Duff

### Can We Be saints?

“In the heart of every right-thinking Catholic, God has implanted the desire to become a Saint. Yet few make a serious attempt to realise the ambition. The cause for this is to a large extent discouragement, due to the misunderstanding of what a Saint really is. What is a Saint? The answer usually returned to this question is: one who does extraordinary penances and works miracles. Now, this is an incorrect description, for neither miracles nor great penances are essential... Thus, there is another definition of what a Saint is. It is this: One who, with the object of pleasing God, does his ordinary duties extraordinarily well. Such a life may be lived out without a single wonder in it, arouse little notice, be soon forgotten, and yet be the life of one of God’s dearest friends.”



These quotes come from Duff’s books and pamphlets, which are available from the Legion.

### Mary Shall Reign

#### ‘The priest must have members’

“Here is the victory which conquers the world: It is our faith - says the Gospel. Where is the remedy? It is to make the Church work as it is intended to work; that is, as a doctrine put into practice, as a fiery idealism, as a crusade for souls; something that neither fire nor water nor anything else will stop. But the first condition for attempting that supernatural adventure is that it be proposed. If we propose anything less, we engage in the criminal enterprise of leaving the people in ignorance of what Christianity is. Therefore we must teach the real Christianity and not any of those partial or minimum formulae. The Mystical Body and Our Lady must be got home to people as the groundwork of their action.”

### Victory Through Mary

#### ‘Truth is victorious but it must be presented’

“We may not have the slightest notion as to where the trouble lies... It is a question of a spiritual problem the solution of which is not in our hands though we play an essential part. But that is the very part which is providentially assigned to every person. Ozanam says that it is the divine arrangement that the action of one soul is required for the uplifting of another. Scripture says that faith comes by hearing and I think that this must be read in the narrowest sense of one person speaking and the other listening. Prayer alone will not suffice. So go out into the whole world and talk to every man.”



## The Woman of Genesis

### ‘Humour’

“It must not be thought, because we venerate Our Blessed Lady in the quality of Mother of Sorrows, that this was the only side of her life. Because equally we venerate her seven joys. It would be making a tragic mistake to imagine that she was ever gloomy or morose, a depressing influence in any company. It is most certain that the opposite was the case. Like her servants, the saints, she would be a source of happiness wherever she should be. This uplift could in some of the lighter spirits around her assume the form of extreme indulgence in humour.”

## The Faith: The Nation

### Prime principals of survival

“I think it would be unpardonable to proceed to find excuses for such a Catholicism and to bluff it out that really everything is just all right. It is not all right. It is a deplorable fact that Catholicism means very little to a large proportion of our people and that for them it is on its way out. It is terribly like the position which precluded the fall of the Faith in the other European countries. I have already invoked the image of the house built on sand. I now propose the image of the ostrich which hides its head in the sand because it does not want to see what it fears, and because it thinks that it abolishes the danger by not seeing it. We must not imitate the folly of that witless bird.”

## Virgo Praedicanda

### ‘Our potential membership is the uncommitted Catholic population’

“[C]onsider what the Legion has in its treasury and can give. Its vivid, restless Christianity seeks to pour itself out in every direction from great to small. It is as tender as it is tough; as full of courage as it is of faith. Its women are as brave as its men, and its men are as gentle as its women. It has a heart for every employment that seeks to serve Jesus and his mother. It cleans up the home for an invalid with no less intensity of spirit than those four legionary brothers displayed recently when they entered an area which promised them a tombstone if they tried to promote Catholicism; or with which the 4,000 Chinese legionaries met their gruesome deaths.”

## Walking With Mary

### ‘Fiddling while Rome burns’

“At this point may I say that whenever I hear anyone talking abundantly about the Holy Spirit, I always listen anxiously for some mention of the Blessed Virgin who is his inseparable co-operator. If she is absent, it is most likely that he is too. We must not treat the Third Person of the mighty Trinity as a sort of toy which will dance according to our whims. He has his rules which are, so to speak, posted up in the Catholic Church but not elsewhere. If these are observed, we are safe in making a familiar approach to him and hoping for his aid. Otherwise we are not sure.”



LEGION OF MARY  
FOUNDED 7 SEPTEMBER 1921



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## It's high time Albert Reynolds was given his due



### Albert Reynolds: Risk Taker for Peace

by Conor Lenihan (Merrion Press, €22.95/£19.99)

#### Dr Ciaran Casey

With the deadline for my own book on the horizon, I was determined not to commit to any more work. But a request to review Conor Lenihan's latest book was impossible to resist.

His first biography, *Haughey: Prince of Power* was released in 2015. There was already a plethora of books on Charlie Haughey, and it was not immediately apparent what a new one could contribute. But Mr Lenihan gave the reader unique access to the Fianna Fáil lore, much of it directly from his father, Brian Lenihan Sr.

A personal favourite was when Haughey and Lenihan Sr visited Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 1983. Gaddafi was accompanied by his team of lycra-clad female bodyguards, pistols strapped to their thighs. Lenihan Sr would joke afterwards that the combination of women and guns almost proved too much for Haughey. The book painted the former Taoiseach as a much more vulnerable and uncertain character than any other source. This side of Haughey was one that few ever saw, and was a fascinating counterbalance to the many other accounts.

With Albert Reynolds there is no such opportunity for comparison. His autobiography aside, this is the first complete account of Reynolds' life. For someone who does not remember him first hand, he is a difficult person to understand. His leadership of Fianna Fáil only lasted 19 months, compared to 12 and 13 years respectively for Haughey and Bertie Ahern. Nor was his relatively brief tenure as Minister for Finance particularly noteworthy. A biographer of Reynolds faces the challenge of portraying the life of a relatively nuanced politician, with comparatively little source material.

#### Dancehall business

The first major point of interest is how Reynolds made a personal fortune from modest beginnings, which was already firmly cemented by the age of 30. A genuinely self-made millionaire is rare in most contexts, let alone Irish politics in the 20th Century. Mr Lenihan does an admirable job of explaining his subject's unusual make-up, and does not skirt around his rougher edges. Reynolds' departure from the dancehall business created a long-lasting family feud, when he initiated a lawsuit against his elder brother and business partner.

The book gives more detail on Reynolds' time and accomplishments at Posts and Telegraphs (1979-81) than his subsequent ministries. Former officials have observed that he was better suited

to the Department of Industry than Finance. He was much more adept at making business deals than reading memoranda, a source of major frustration for the civil servants who worked for him. Reynolds was inclined to 'wing it' at European meetings, and, such was his intellectual ability and affability, that he often got away with it.

The main message of the book, and one which it delivers remarkably well, is that Reynolds' outstanding contribution was to the peace process in Northern Ireland.

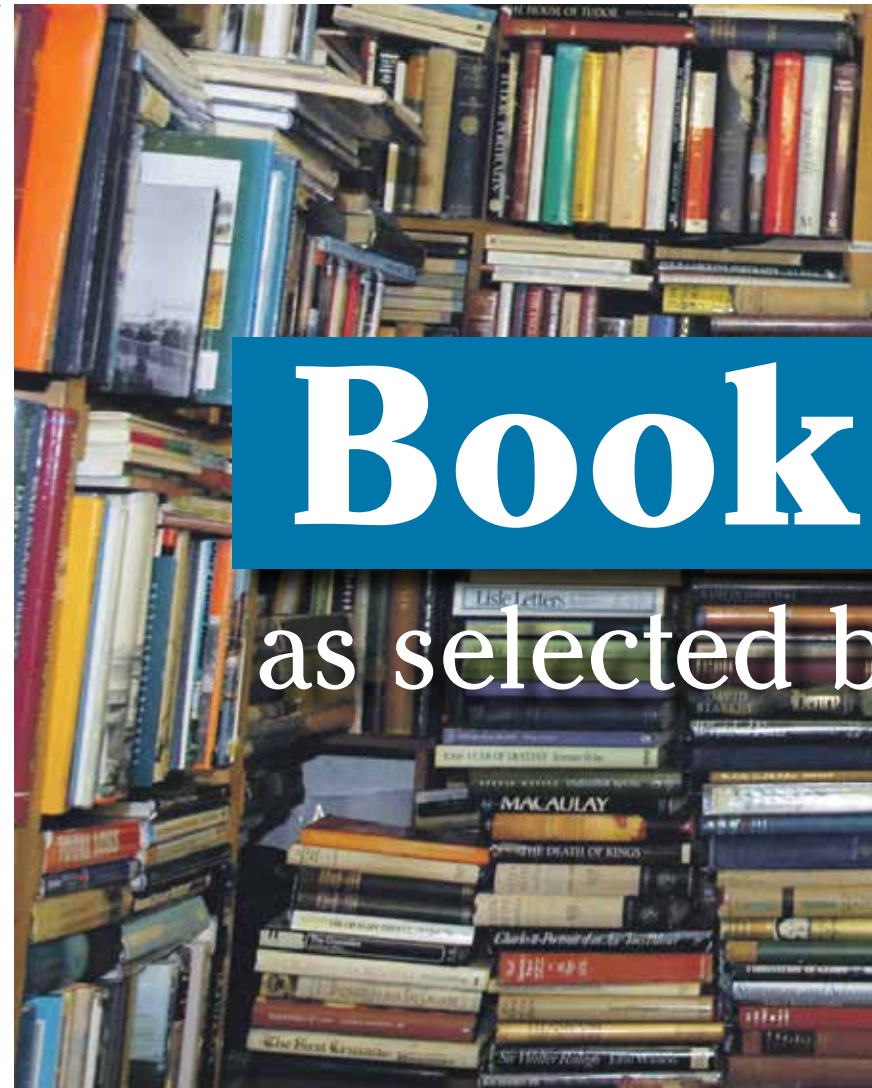
Here, his skillset was perfectly suited to the task. Mr Lenihan compellingly describes his sponge-like ability to absorb information, his willingness to build relationships with all sides, his personal friendship with John Major, and his unusual physical and political courage.

Reynolds brought almost no personal or political baggage on the northern issue, but worked on it doggedly and took significant risks. This marks him out from some of his predecessors, who were content to use the North to make political hay among their own voters.

Mr Lenihan argues compellingly that Reynolds has received too little credit for his very real achievements. Having read this absorbing account, it is difficult to disagree.

*Dr Ciaran Casey is research fellow, Department of Finance History Fellowship in the School of History at University College Dublin (UCD).*

“The first major point of interest is how Reynolds made a personal fortune from modest beginnings, which was already firmly cemented by the age of 30”



#### Thomas J. Morrissey

In a secularised western world we are told that the existence of God has been disproved by science, religious faith is futile superstition, truth is relative, morality is the result of evolution, and there is no absolute right or wrong, that Jesus Christ did not exist, and so on.

Hence the appeal to me of *The Sanity of Belief: Why faith makes sense*, by Simon Edwards (SPCK).

The author, a member of The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, brings to such problems an acute mind trained in law and a blend of science, history, philosophy, scripture knowledge and the experience of life. The arguments of atheists from Friedrich Nietzsche to Richard Dawkins were faced straight on, as were arguments put forward by some historians and scientists.

In *The Sanity of Belief*, which gained favourable reviews in Britain, Edwards draws on his own experience to show why Christian faith and the message of Jesus offer the most compelling answer to life's deepest questions. His well-written, well-researched and powerfully argued book shows why the Christian faith truly makes sense.

This is a convincing and relevant book, not just for Christians, but for all those seeking truth based on credible evidence.

#### Desmond Egan

Several candidates present themselves: the Pessoa biography; a fine retelling of the Battle of Kinsale; the gossipy *Parisian Lives* - but not

a single novel, not since Elmore Leonard left us. (Have I missed much?).

However my book of the year is a long-awaited insightful look at the friendship between Gerard Manley Hopkins and Robert Bridges, *My Own Familiar Friend* by William Adamson (Peter Lang, 2021).

Hopkins died in 1889 but Bridges - his executor - took another 28 years to have Hopkins' poems published - and even then in an edition badly flawed by editorial blundering and introduced by a devastating mixture of ignorance and arrogance. In scholarly and meticulous fashion, Prof. Adamson exposes Bridges' prejudice against Hopkins' Catholic faith; his grim Victorian vision; his limitations as a poet, and as critic - all this, along with more than a hint of professional envy. With friends like that...

Prof. Adamson's lively book is an important addition to the new Hopkins scholarship, an overdue reevaluation of a strange, one-sided friendship which finally led to years of neglect of one of the greatest poets in English.

"Does no one understand me?" asked Joyce; Prof. Adamson leaves no doubt that poor Hopkins could have asked the same rhetorical question.

#### Gabriel Fitzmaurice

I read with profit and pleasure Mark Patrick Hederman's *Crimson and Gold: Life as a Limerick* (Columba Books) in which the author examines everything from horses to hierarchies arguing powerfully



Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

# Books of the Year

by some of our regular critics

for the importance of the arts, especially poetry, and for radical change in the Catholic Church.

The most intriguing book of poetry I read this year is Jessie Lendennie's *The Salmon's Tale* (Salmon Poetry). Exquisitely designed by Siobhán Hutson, it is a conversation with, a hymn and an ode to the *Bradán Feasa*, the salmon of knowledge, of wisdom and poetry which inspires Jessie Lendennie, poet and publisher extraordinaire.

Fintan O'Toole's magnificent *We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Ireland since 1958* (Head of Zeus) is a Herculean attempt to come to terms with our most distressful country. Food for thought that some will find hard to digest, it is a *must* read for anybody who wishes to understand the state of Ireland today.

## John F. Deane

The Book of Ecclesiastics tells us: "To everything there is a season"; in our time, it appears to be a season of darkness, in terms of the pandemic, of divisions in society and between nations, and in the hearts of people.

Poetry helps to lighten that darkness, Pádraig J. Daly's collection of poems, *A Small Psalter* (Scotus Press) is one that touches on every darkness and serves to offer the light of hope, of good poetry, and of faith. It touches contemporary topics, like the refugees who trust themselves to "the unfenced seas" and "pray to their God for mercy".

We need light, hope and faith; all are presented here in richly wrought poems by Mr Daly.

## John Bruton

*JFK*, by Fredrik Logevall (Pluto Press) is the first volume of a two volume biography of the US president who was assassinated in 1963. It covers the period up to 1956 with a lot of personal and family detail.

Kennedy was a modest student, but one who read widely. He was serious and introspective, but he also used people without much concern for their feelings. This was particularly the case in his relations with women.

He came from an unnaturally competitive family and displayed great physical courage, both in his wartime service, and in his battle with illness throughout his life.

While his father, Joe Kennedy, supported appeasement and isolationism in the 1930s, JFK, in contrast, supported US military activity abroad, and criticised President Truman for the 'loss' of China to the communists.

This is a very readable, if slightly long, book.

## Joe Carroll

Not all the books I enjoyed this year were new ones. Anthony Cronin was a distinguished literary figure as cultural advisor to Taoiseach, Charles

Haughey, and a founder member of Aosdána. In *Dead as Doornails: A Chronicle of Life* (Lilliput Press) he relives an earlier, very different period. I read it when it came out in 1976, but it was a tonic to re-read it during these gloomier times.

Set in the Bohemian life of Dublin in the 1940s and 1950s, it recalls friendships mainly with Brendan Behan, Patrick Kavanagh and Brian O'Nolan (otherwise Flann O'Brien and Myles na Gopaleen). For a while he shared a wine cellar in the infamous 'Catacombs' with a homeless Brendan Behan.

Cronin (a non-practising barrister) and Behan (an ex-IRA bomber and Borstal-boy, an occasional painter and decorator), struck up a friendship which ended years later with a wrestling match outside Davy Byrnes.

Their 'pilgrimage' to Rome, which only got as far as the Riviera, is hilarious as they scrounged for money and food in the streets of Paris and looked for beds in Catholic churches. The 1950s were not all doom and gloom.

## Rev. Robert Marshall

*The Reminiscences of Ignatius O'Brien, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, 1913-18: A life in Cork, Dublin and*

*Westminster*, edited and introduced by Daire Hogan and Patrick Maume (Four Courts Press, €55.00)

In 1937, seven years after his death, a typescript of the *Reminiscences of Ignatius O'Brien* was donated to the library of the King's Inns, Dublin. These memories of his life, introduced and annotated by solicitor Daire Hogan and historian Patrick Maume, have now been made available to the interested public in a handsome volume.

The text engagingly describes O'Brien's childhood in Cork, the many faceted career of an Irish nationalist leading to high office in Dublin, and, in retirement, as Lord Shandon, a peer of the realm at Westminster.

One attraction of the volume is the way the editors have supported illustrations with quotations from O'Brien's acute observation of the social, political, and legal milieu of a changing Ireland.

## Felix M. Larkin

I have been a fan of John le Carré's work ever since reading *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* as a schoolboy. He was on form right to the end. His last novel, *Silver-*

*view* (Viking), published posthumously this year, is a terrific read. In the novel, one old spy says to another: "We didn't do much to alter the course of human history, did we?"

It is a bleak summing-up at the end of a life, but le Carré's view of the human condition had always been bleak. He leaves behind him an amazing literary legacy, but (to adapt a famous line from Auden's elegy on Yeats) does literature make anything happen? Does it alter the course of human history?

## Ian d'Alton

*The Historian as Detective: Essays in honour of Raymond Gillespie*, ed. by T. Dooley, M. A. Lyons and S. Ryan (Four Courts)

Festschriften can be dull, earnest endeavours, exuding worthiness and wordiness. This one is much different. It consists of over 80 short pieces by friends and colleagues of Raymond Gillespie, much-regarded professor of history at Maynooth University.

A delightful *soufflé* of sagacious frothiness, exciting the palate and the senses. A parade of distinguished historians, archivists and economists jostle to provide a mouth-watering tasting menu of their talents.

Here are just two – 'Fifty ways to cleave your brother: misfits, mayhem and murder in medieval Irish monasteries' by Colmán ÓClabaigh, OSB; and 'Ireland's lost cardinal' by Oliver Rafferty, SJ. But all are well worth the €49.50 price tag.

## Aubrey Malone

The stand-out book of the year for me was *The Letters of John McGahern* (Faber). Almost as good as an autobiography, it's a must-read - even at 800-plus pages - for anyone who, like this writer, regards McGahern as Ireland's most important prose stylist since Beckett.

Equally meaty, if over-detailed, was Paula Byrne's *The Adventures of Barbara Pym* (William Collins), a long-overdue biography of the much-neglected author.

I also enjoyed Helen O'Hara's *Women Vs Hollywood* (Robinson), and Hayley Mills' memoir *Forever Young* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson). Mills captivated me in youth, but her life wasn't all plain sailing. She was cheated out of almost everything she earned as a child star by a legal loophole in a trust fund.

## Christopher Moriarty

*How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need* (Allen Lane) is a cheering book at a time when forecasts of doom enjoy a much greater proportion of space in the media than do messages of hope. The author is Bill Gates, developer of Microsoft and one of the top technological thinkers in the world. The book is of exceptional interest because it combines a carefully reasoned account of the dangers of global warming with an equally careful survey of the already existing technology which, if and when further developed, is fully capable of providing the solutions that are needed.



Aubrey Malone

“Almost as good as an autobiography, it's a must-read - even at 800-plus pages - for anyone who, like this writer, regards McGahern as Ireland's most important prose stylist since Beckett”



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# Leisure time

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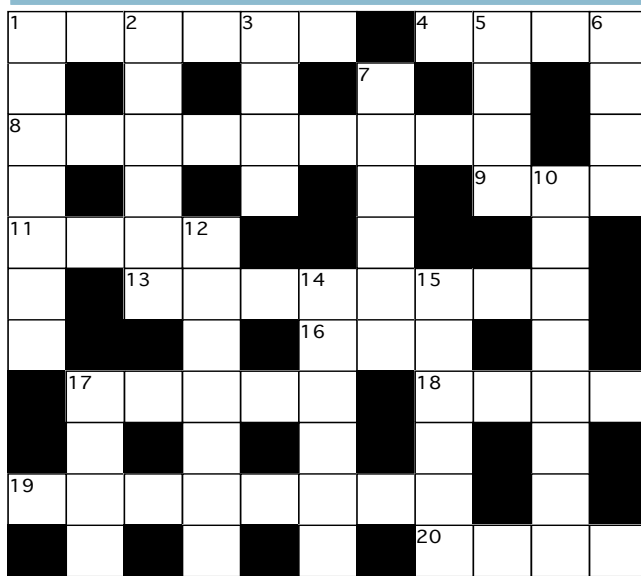
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

## Crossword Junior

Gordius 412



### Across

- 1 Reptile with four legs and a tail (6)
- 4 2, 4, 6 and 8 are \_\_\_\_ numbers (4)
- 8 It is rolled out for famous people to walk on (3,6)
- 9 A pig lives here (3)
- 11 Test (4)
- 13 The days of the year are set out in this (8)
- 16 Had some food (3)
- 17 Boulders (5)
- 18 The opposite of warm (4)
- 19 The part of your face above your eyes (8)
- 20 You see with these (4)

### Down

- 1 Biggest (7)
- 2 Aries and Leo are signs of the \_\_\_\_ (6)
- 3 Cars may drive along it (4)
- 5 Animal doctors (4)
- 6 A shade of dark blue, or a country's force of ships (4)
- 7 Run at top speed (6)
- 10 This pet has a thick 'shell' (8)
- 12 Walked together, like soldiers (7)
- 14 Time when you might receive a chocolate egg (6)
- 15 Make your mind up (6)
- 17 The part of a plant that is under the ground (4)

## SOLUTIONS, DECEMBER 02

GORDIUS NO. 536

**Across** – 1 Ancient Greek 7 Imp 9 Beef 10 Runner bean 11 They 14 Geese 15 Cameo 18 Mimic 21 Cairn 22 Lying 23 Drawl 24 Rued 25 Spare ribs 26 Trike 29 Andy 33 Goalie 36 The Little Flower

**Down** – 1 Birdwatcher 2 Test-tube 3 Carer 4 Rowboat 5 Ankle 6 Oldest 7 Run 12 Launderette 13 Bough 14 Salty 17 Princess 18 Assumed 19 Sailor 22 Magic 23 Maxim 24 Tap

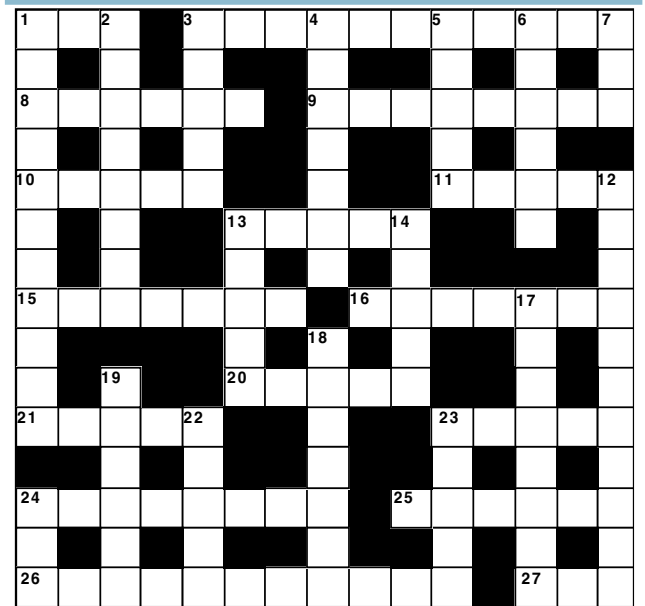
CHILDREN'S No. 411

**Across** – 1 Highlights 7 Intrude 8 Yield 11 Diet 14 Revising 15 Sour 16 Exhale 17 Eire 18 Any 19 Ran

**Down** – 1 Hairdresser 2 Gather 3 Loud 4 Grey 5 Tyre 6 Lid 9 Irishman 10 Legally 12 Terrier 13 Vinegar

## Crossword

Gordius 537



### Across

- 1 Chart (3)
- 3 Nice dice Con scattered - it just happened like that (11)
- 8 Allowance, extra time, space etc (6)
- 9 Needed (8)
- 10 Nobody at all (2-3)
- 11 Japanese city associated with a climate change protocol (5)
- 13 Forcibly take control of the new tress (5)
- 15 The Blessed Virgin Mary (3,4)
- 16 Sleep (7)
- 20 Early rounds in a competition (5)
- 21 This piece of snack food might have a cheese and onion flavour (5)
- 23 & 24 Refrain from the hymn "Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer", most associated with Welsh rugby supporters (5,2,6)
- 25 Scoreless result (3,3)
- 26 Nuclear in a way that has the wireless up and about (11)

27 Tart or pastry (3)

### Down

- 1 No chill came about, making one gloomy (11)
- 2 Tooth found beside the canine (8)
- 3 Bird that's used for lifting? (5)
- 4 Rudolf, Russian ballet dancer who defected from the Soviet Union in 1961 (7)
- 5 Inebriated (5)
- 6 Thin, not broad (6)
- 7 Terminus (3)
- 12 Have too much of the strangely ruined glove (11)
- 13 Breadth (5)
- 14 Cash registers (5)
- 17 You'll see one outside a Garda station (4,4)
- 18 Item of furniture or body of government ministers (7)
- 19 Expressed a desire (6)
- 22 Keyboard instrument (5)
- 23 Backhander (5)
- 24 Use it when rowing (3)

## Sudoku Corner

412

### Easy

8				5	2			9
	9			8	7	5	6	
	5	4				3		
4	1		6		8			
3	8						4	6
			1		3		8	5
		8				9	3	
	4	2	8	3			5	
9			5	6				7

### Hard

			6		2	4	5	
6						7		
4	2		8					
9			2		7	6		8
7		2	1		4			5
						1		6
							6	3
		7						1
	6	5	9		8			

### Last week's Easy 411

8	5	3	4	2	9	1	7	6
7	9	1	8	6	5	2	3	4
6	4	2	7	1	3	8	5	9
2	8	9	6	7	1	3	4	5
3	7	6	5	8	4	9	1	2
4	1	5	3	9	2	6	8	7
5	2	4	9	3	8	7	6	1
1	3	7	2	5	6	4	9	8
9	6	8	1	4	7	5	2	3

### Last week's Hard 411

7	4	9	2	5	8	1	3	6
1	8	2	3	7	6	4	9	5
6	5	3	9	1	4	8	2	7
9	7	8	1	3	5	6	4	2
3	1	6	4	9	2	7	5	8
4	2	5	8	6	7	3	1	9
5	3	1	7	8	9	2	6	4
8	9	4	6	2	1	5	7	3
2	6	7	5	4	3	9	8	1





Notebook

Fr. Conor McDonough

# Staying true to the Church's supernatural mission

**SOME WEEKS AGO** I watched a short American documentary about a remote part of the West of Ireland, filmed some time in the 80s. A packed church was shown, and an interview with the priest followed. The interviewer asked him some questions about his spiritual role, but he strikingly downplayed that aspect of his role, and emphasised instead his function as a leader of the community in other respects: organising building projects and employment schemes, helping emigrants find work, and so on.

It was a revealing moment. While the Church in Ireland in the 20th Century succeeded in gaining major influence over all aspects of society, it often did so at a price: the loss or diminution of its spiritual dimension.

We see the consequences of this loss in the idea, widespread even within the Church, that the Church is essentially a social group like any other, one that can and should be shaped and reshaped according to the views of its members.

**Absence**

In the life of the Church in Ireland of talk there's a strange absence of talk about the supernatural dimension of the Christian life: the reality of



the soul and its transformation by grace, the power of the sacraments, the necessity of personal prayer, the gifts of divine revelation and salvation. These supernatural realities often recede into the background of the conversations that animate Catholic parishes, schools, and charities today. Secularisation isn't just something that affects those who have left the Church behind; it influences practising Catholics too, including clergy and religious.

One of the fascinating things about Frank Duff is that he saw the signs of this tendency long before anyone else. In an essay published

in the 1970s, for example, Duff outlines his vision of the contribution of the Legion of Mary to the nation of Ireland. Does the Legion provide material relief and social assistance? Certainly. But, Duff makes clear, "the spiritual must be the motive".

"We must not for a moment lose sight of the soul. It is to the soul that we are really addressing ourselves through the means which we use, each of which should be viewed as a lever to uplift faith, to promote moral good."

**Secularisation**

Duff insists on this so strongly because he sees – already in the 1970s – that secularisation has influenced many other Catholic apostolates. Instead of ultimately supernatural motives, these apostolates, Duff claims, are often motivated by "mere humanism".

"The prevailing tendency is to rule out [spiritual motives] and to commit the people's lives to secular and technical handling. This is not even a distant relation to Christianity and we must energetically try to impart true balance," he said.

Neither Frank Duff, nor the Legion he founded, discount, of course, the vital importance of

practical assistance to those in any kind of need. Through my own involvement with the Regina Caeli Hostel, I have seen at close hand the extraordinary work of Legionaries in caring for the women who live in that hostel. But no matter how much effort is put into material assistance, spiritual assistance always has priority.

True to Duff's vision, the Legion of Mary has never given in to the temptation to secularise its aims or to become one more NGO among others. What explains this success? Surely it is the magnificent Legion Handbook, that little red book which structures the work of the Legion, and which continually calls spiritual realities to mind, and just as continually warns about the risks of forgetting the spiritual dimension.

As the Church in Ireland prepares for its National Synodal Assembly, the opportunity presents itself to face up to the reality of secularisation in the life of the Church, and to ask ourselves how to challenge and resist this tendency, so as once more to focus with clarity on the Church's supernatural mission. In this process of discernment, careful study of the Legion's Handbook might well bear unexpected fruit.

**The colour of the Legion's Handbook**

Why is the Legion's Handbook red, rather than a more Marian colour, like blue? The Handbook itself explains that it's a way of honouring the Holy Spirit, and the colour red appears throughout the Legion's imagery for this reason. In getting to know the Legion, I was struck by the prominence of the Holy Spirit in the prayers and promises of legionaries. In fact, the very first act of the Legion, at its first meeting a century ago, was to pray to the Holy Spirit. It's no surprise that this great work of evangelisation honours the presence and work of the Spirit to such an extent. After all, as Pope Francis continually reminds us, it's the Holy Spirit who really drives evangelisation.




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- St Therese

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IC/12/09

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