

# Mary's Legion — Fifty Years of Militancy

I know it is unpopular in many circles today to hear words of praise uttered for people associated with military activity. But I do not



hesitate to pay tribute and extend my blessing to a group of constructive militants who have been marching in battle array for 50 years under the banner of the Queen of Peace.

I refer to the Legion of Mary, an association of dedicated men and women whose fidelity and loyalty to the Church have been publicly praised by four popes, most recently by Pope Paul VI on the occasion of this their Golden Jubilee year.

The movement began quietly and modestly in Dublin on Sept. 7, 1921, and has grown in stature to an organization that has 60,000 centers on five continents. Its structure is modeled on that of the army of Ancient Rome and is organized to do battle against the forces of evil that threaten always to over-

whelm us. The chain of command ranges from the Concilium in Dublin to the smallest parish unit called a Praesidium.

There is a discipline built into its program which demands fidelity to a commitment once made and faithful attendance at weekly meetings. Prayer life with special emphasis on Marian and Eucharistic devotion provides the strength that supports the Legionary in his apostolic activity of bringing spiritual aid to the lost, the lonely, the forgotten and the forgotten. I have no doubt that the Legion has preserved its vitality for fifty years because it has not forgotten its spiritual aim and has allowed itself but a minimum of social life. Moreover, it has remained firmly grafted into the life of the Church, the only organization on the face of the earth that has received a divine guarantee of stability and permanency.

And now after 50 years the Legion of Mary wishes to celebrate its Jubilee in the only way that can assure the vitality of its future. Rather than spending this year in nostalgic review of a half-century of a glori-

ous history (and, indeed it has been just that), it prefers to look to the challenges of what hopefully will be many tomorrows.

A holy restlessness marks the spirit of the true legionary who is ever anxious to accept new challenges for Christ and ever sensitive to the needs of mankind. Since Vatican II there has developed within the Legion a growing world consciousness and a willingness to extend its energies beyond the needs of a parish — the confines of its original apostolate. It is common now to find Legionaries sacrificing their vacation periods to serve the Church far from home — to reform the temporal order as a necessary prelude to spiritual conversion.

It is a personal pleasure to express my gratitude to the members of the Legion who have served the Church of Rochester so well and to the priests who have generously offered our dedicated laity spiritual guidance and encouragement.

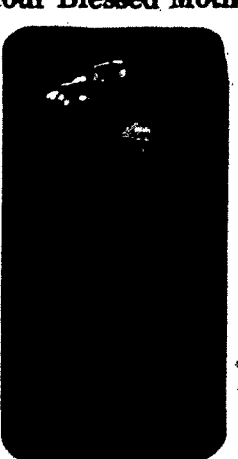
May this Jubilee Year mark the beginning of a great chapter in your growth in numbers and vitality.

Guest Columnist

By Father Charles B. Connell

## St. Philip Neri . . . Apostle of Rome

Every parish bears a name honoring some mystery in the life of our Lord, some title of our Blessed Mother or the name of one of the



Saints of God. The Patron of St. Philip Neri Parish was born in Florence, Italy, in 1515 of humble, pious parents. He grew up in an atmosphere of true Christian virtue. Renouncing the world, and an inheritance from an uncle, Philip went to Rome to study for the priesthood.

As a priest he quickly became known for his love of youth and as a promoter of frequent confession and Communion. His preaching in the streets of Rome won many souls to the faith and prompted Pope Gregory XIII to encourage Philip to organize a number of priests into a group known as the Oratorians.

This group followed Philip's program in winning scores of young people away from

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lives of wickedness to lives of solid piety. Francis Xavier, a contemporary of Philip's, was busily engaged at the same time in the Indies. Philip expressed a wish to go and work with Francis. But his confessor convinced him that his "Indies is Rome". So Philip stayed and worked among the youth of Rome and became known as the "Apostle of Rome", while Francis was establishing himself as the "Apostle of the Indies." Both of these great priests were canonized as Saints of the Church at the same ceremony in 1622.

The great English convert, Henry Cardinal Newman, came under the influence of St. Philip Neri, and his Oratory in Rome after his conversion to the faith. Newman saw in Philip his ideal of the "choicest of priests" and patterned his own life as a priest on the life of Philip. Upon leaving Rome as a priest, Newman carried the papal charge to establish Oratories in England. The first was founded in

Birmingham in 1848 and the second in London a year later. The influence of Philip Neri was felt in England long after his death in Rome.

St. Philip Neri, as a priest, knew how to speak to God in his heart and how to speak from his heart to the hearts of men about that same God. His memorial in Rome lives on in the lives of men who have studied and prayed at the Oratory where he had sown the seeds of a strong faith and vibrant Christian virtue. He came to Rome as a young man to find the city and the Church deeply stained by indifference and widespread wickedness. On the day of his death — May 26, 1595 — he left Rome a far richer city and a far holier Church because of his priestly example and ministrations. The influence of a St. Philip Neri is badly needed in our world today where we find, not only much indifference but universal confusion and wholesale wickedness as a result of the revolution of manners and customs and morals among the young, particularly, of every nation and culture on earth. St. Philip Neri, pray for us!

Editorial

## We Have Leadership . . . Where Are Followers?

Newsweek magazine in a recent article, "Has the Church Lost Its Soul?", claims that both conservative and liberal Catholics believe current Church-unrest can be traced to a "lack of episcopal leadership."

The magazine says that the "vast majority of U.S. Catholics have little interest in what the bishops do or say." The article says that a Gallup Poll showed that 90 per cent reported they could recall no single decision by the national episcopal conference which they considered crucial in their lives.

Vatican II, cited as the catalyst, is undoubtedly a contributing factor but a general look at our times shows that many other spheres are experiencing similar unrest and Vatican II's open window cannot be influencing all these cases.

Life styles simply have changed.

Where are the minor league baseball crowds of 20 years ago (with the exception of Rochester)? Indeed many of the stadiums have gone; television has taught everyone to think "major league."

Ditto the lavish movie houses that would change films weekly to satisfy vast audiences. Hollywood, just as the baseball stadiums, has itself been diminished by the change in entertainment habits.

Look magazine has gone the way of the Saturday Evening Post, Collier's and Liberty.

Such stalwarts as the Herald Tribune have disappeared and other big city newspapers are suffering while small, more regionalized papers thrive.

All of this indicates that times have changed even more radically than the Church.

And blaming episcopal leadership for the turmoil is a classic case of putting the cart before the horse. The leadership is there but not the followship.

When the Pope upholds traditional bans on birth control, flocks of modernists ignore him to follow their consciences. If he acted conversely, traditionalists would have left the Church.

When the Pope says, "War no more, war never again", the more conservative elements who see necessity in the Vietnam war ignore him.

When the U.S. Bishops support the Pope on *Humanae Vitae*, people don't see it as leadership but rather as submitting to an alien idea.

When the U.S. Bishops support selective conscientious objection those who disagree ignore them and still talk of draft dodgers.

There is leadership in all these decisions which were all or in part obviously unpalatable with segments of society. But where was the followship?

Some may call this lack of leadership. To do so is somehow soothing for the condition seems remediable by some great visionary leader just over the horizon.

But what is wrong is more likely a crisis of followship and that is frightening because it may be incurable.