

Ten ***Benefits*** **Of** **Legion of Mary** **Membership**

The Legion of Mary began in Dublin, Ireland on September 7, 1921. It is now the largest lay apostolic organization in the Catholic Church, with well over three million Active members throughout the world.

Types of work focus primarily on the Spiritual Works of Mercy:

Conversion – establishing friendly contact with those outside the Church; promoting the ‘New Evangelization’ called for by Pope John Paul II.

Conservation – fostering Catholic ideals and devotions in parish communities and Catholic families.

Consolation –
Visiting prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, shut-ins; parish census or other spiritual needs in the parish or community.

1. It Can Help Grow Hair

A true story concerns the late **Father Francis Ripley** of Liverpool, England. During World War II Father wanted to start the Legion in a military hospital and was recruiting members. One German patient had been in an explosion in a tank and had lost all his hair which had never grown back. When Fr. Ripley asked him to join the Legion of Mary, the soldier asked if he joined would the Blessed Mother help his hair grow back. Fr. Ripley said that he would not be surprised if that happened. Three months later the new German legionary had the most handsome head of blond hair!

The principle is that Our Lord and Our Lady are never outdone in generosity. If we sacrifice some time, effort or energy doing their work, they will always give something in return to us or to others. Perhaps a child or grandchild away from the Church would come back. There will always be some special grace because of your Legion membership.

2. School For Saints

Frank Duff, the founder of the Legion of Mary, once said that "The Legion makes saints and makes them by the bushel". When we consider that an organization begun in 1921 already has three lay members whose cause for canonization has been introduced, it is truly amazing

If we want to become good at something, we have to practice it every week, such as a sport, a hobby, a musical instrument. If we want to "get good" at holiness, we must practice it every week as well. And the Legion gives us that opportunity. It provides an ideal expression of the Catholic vocation. It is a unique privilege and great blessing to be counted in the membership of an organization whose primary purpose is personal holiness.

3. Fulfills Canon Law

Canon Law is the rulebook of the Catholic Church. Canon 225 obliges all Catholics to be apostolic: *“Since all lay people are assigned to the apostolate by baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and they have the right, whether as individuals or organizations or in associations, to strive so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people throughout the world.”*

Legion of Mary membership makes it actually easy to follow the rules and be a good Catholic, but it does more: the Legion offers a proven method and motivation for sanctity, thus fulfilling Canon 210 which states: *“All Christian faithful must make an effort, in accord with their own condition, to live a holy life and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification.”*

4. Keeps Its Members Young

This can't be found in Canon Law but it can be shown nonetheless. For example, the late **Fr. Aedan McGrath**, official Legion visitor to the Far East, at 92 years of age was still active and looked to be about 75.

Frank Duff, founder of the Legion, was still riding his bicycle at the age of 91. (In fact, he never drove a car after his first ride, when the engine exploded!) The Legion kept him young in spirit and in body.

And there were the “little old lady” legionaries in Philadelphia who, in their nineties, were still doing their Legion work of door to door evangelization! The Legion seemed to keep them young!

5. Teaches The Catholic Faith

During the weekly Legion meeting spiritual formation is found in the rosary, the Legion prayers, the spiritual reading and discussion, and the talk by the spiritual director. Additional help comes from Catholic doctrine, and apostolic techniques learned from the Legion handbook and the work reports presented and discussed.

Every time legionaries come together for a meeting it is as if they are gathered at the cenacle with Our Lady, as in the days of the first apostles. Every Legion meeting becomes the Upper Room where modern-day apostles gather together in a cenacle of prayer with Mary, asking the Holy Spirit to come upon them so that they can do great things for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

6. Friendships

The Legion's main purpose is the holiness of the members. It improves the "vertical" relationship we have with God and the Blessed Mother, but it also enriches the "horizontal" relationship of friends we gain as we live the Legion way of life.

Experience has shown that the Legion can help develop wonderful life-long friendships with like-minded Catholics. It is also a great place to meet a future spouse. One Legion council in Cork, Ireland reported five marriages from one Legion group alone. It soon became the most popular group in all of Ireland!

7. A Means Of Tithing

In Scripture, tithing generally refers to the gift of ten percent of our finances to God. This principle should be applied to our time and effort as well. The Legion provides a good jump-start on this by requiring that about four hours each week be set aside, which is only two percent of our time. Scripture says that when you tithe, God's blessing to you will be far greater than your generosity to Him.

Therefore, as we give time to our Lord and His Mother, they bless us in many ways and we find even more time and more blessings in life. So we are encouraged to consider the tithing principle not only for finances but also for time. The aim is to spend time serving God through Catholic living and the active apostolate.

8. Helps Face Judgement Day

What a great blessing it would be to hear Jesus say to us, "*Come, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for when I was sick in a nursing home you legionaries visited Me. When I was in prison, you came to see Me. When I was hungry for the Truth you brought Me back to the Church. When I was thirsty for love, you came and comforted Me.*"

The Spiritual Works of Mercy – the Legion of Mary's primary program of works, such as encouraging people to come back to the sacraments, helping to get children baptized, making the Catholic Church known to others – will be even more important than the Corporal Works of Mercy (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked) because the soul, unlike the body, is eternal and will last forever in either heaven or hell.

9. Saves Souls

This is what life on earth is all about and it has its basis in the Letter of James, chapter 5, verse 19: “Brothers, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone brings him back, he should know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Therefore, if you help to bring back a fallen-away Catholic, or bring a convert into the Catholic religion – if you are God’s instrument to do that – the Bible says that you will cover a multitude of sins and save your own soul from death as well. The Legion, with its program of works which includes the friendly encouraging of the lapsed to live again their Catholic Faith, ensures its members of this future blessing.

10. Masses For Your Soul

At present throughout the world there are approximately 600,000 Legion groups, and by rule each group has a Mass said for all deceased legionaries in the month of November.

So, you as a Legion of Mary member, after your death can be sure of having six hundred thousand Masses celebrated for you. Imagine sitting in Purgatory and along comes November 1st, with six hundred thousand Masses being said for you. If you are not out of there soon, it’s through no fault of the Legion of Mary!