



# Acies Allocutio

Presentata Curia  
Sunday 27th March 2011

The Gospel today is a Gospel for all of us in the Legion to listen to well. Our Lord is clearly saying to us that here is a great harvest out there to be reaped if only there were labourers to go out. The story of the woman at the well is saying to us that so many souls who seem astray are simply trying to find God even if on wrong roads and all they need is a little help to put them on the right road and become missionaries for Christ. So the call is clear to us to be those brothers who reach out to souls that have gone astray in their search for love and truth and help them find that more secure way that Christ gives us.

Our Lord even shows us a few strategies for contacting people. The first one is that he approaches the woman out of his need. He asks her for help. So how about an opening line in visitation which goes: "I wonder could you help me a little." To signal that you are in need is to signal that you are not there in a position of power or aggression. And you touch a soft spot in the other person.

Do you notice another thing about Our Lord's strategy: he lets her call the conversation. "How come you a Jew ask me a Samaritan for a drink?" In other words he seeks to meet her where she is at and to the extent that she discloses herself. It is she who asks how he can get the water that gives life, it is she who says she has no husband, it is she who asks the religious spiritual question about where you should worship. And he answers her staying on the same level, as a brother, not as an authority who speaks down. There is much then to reflect on in today's Gospel.

The Acies is always held on the nearest Sunday to the Feast of the Annunciation if possible, This Feast is also called the Incarnation because that is the day God united himself to our flesh, to our earth, to the Universe we live in. It could also be called the Feast of the Universal Brother. Because in the Incarnation Christ became a brother to us all, a brother to the family he would belong to in Nazareth, a brother to the people of Nazareth and to the whole of Israel and to the whole human race. And I will go so far as to say to the whole Cosmos. He has adopted the Creation of his Father and confirmed to the heavenly Father that his creation is good and that the human being is very good despite our sins.

And that is what he was sitting at that well, a brother to this sister who came along. He was going to be a good brother to her and help her. And in turn he brought out that she was, despite superficial appearances, very good. She became one of the first missionaries for Christ.

All of us have come here today with our human burden. Part of our burden is our sins and those dispositions in us which pull us down and work against our christian calling. We also need to hear Christ say to us as he did that woman: "You are a loved sinner". Yes, dear friends, if there is a great truth which must sink deep into us it is that we are loved sinners. God wants us to know we are loved, for Christ loved us and died for us while we were yet sinners. Our faults can tend to pull down our energies but Christ wants us to know we are loved by God and to begin to give of ourselves.

And so today we come to dedicate ourselves yet again to his service under the command of Mary his mother. She knows that her son came to save his people from their sins. She knows he wants to lift us up as he did St. Patrick, like a jewel hidden and dirty in the mud that is lifted from the grime and shines out reflecting the light of God. We know that especially with her we will be able to give God a greater service.



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How can we give greater service under her? Well I thought today of helping you by turning to those servants who worked under and with Mary whom we meet in the Gospels.

The first servant of Mary we meet, in a way the first legionary, is St. Gabriel. Many artists show Gabriel kneeling before her. He is her servant as well as God's. He is a messenger of God bringing good news. That too is our call, to be messengers of God bringing the friendship of God, his peace. Following the words of Gabriel we too must not fear but have a deep faith in God. The Letter to the Hebrews says we are made higher than the angels and are called the sons of God. Let us respect the image of God that shines in the heart of every human being and always bring them respect.

Gabriel too dropped in on Joseph to reassure him that he should take Mary as his wife. Again he is her help and servant, working in her interests because behind her are God's interests. And I think that Gabriel will say to us all: "Yes take Mary to yourself as your spiritual mother and sister, your friend and the lady who is your mistress. Like the eyes of the servant on the hand of the mistress you will do well to pay attention to her."

I mentioned St. Joseph. He too belongs to the Legion. Like him we are asked to take care of the interests of Mary and her child. We are to protect the good of God entrusted to us, especially the faith, the Gospel, and all the brothers of the Lord. We are to be alert to the dangers that might assail the life and interests of Mary's child and save them from the Herods of this world.

The next servant of Mary has to be John the Baptist and his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah. Following the Baptist we must be humble and ensure that we do lead people to Christ and not to ourselves. If we are friends and servants of Mary we must desire that it is Christ who increases in the world, not just by the number of Christians but by the depth of faith that grows in each human heart. We must help souls to deeply love him who is the Lamb of God and gave his life on the Cross for us. With Elizabeth may we welcome every mother with child, may we welcome every child irrespective of circumstances. With Zechariah let us bless the Lord for visiting his people and redeeming them.

The next servants Mary had were the poor shepherds. They were not well educated people, they were not the most cultured. But they took her and her child to heart. One of the great things about the Legion is that you do not need a University degree nor to have been polished in the School of the Posh. Mary accepts all those who have faith and are willing to tell of the marvels of the Lord to others. There is nothing like personal witness to cause people to stop and ponder.

The next servants of Mary are the three wise men. These are men in search of answers. Their journey is not a straight line. They may not be able to stay long. But our Legion, like Mary, can receive those who are also searching for the truth and may only stay a while. And there are those who cannot get too involved but are happy to leave gifts. Let us accept with gratitude all that is placed before us in the cause of Mary's Son.

Simeon and Anna are the next servants of Mary. Age should not bar any one from the Legion. What would the Legion be were it not for the many Simeon's and Anna's who in advanced years give their time to welcome her Son and witness to him before others. Because what is witnessing if not, like them, talking to all about this child of Mary. They too witness to the great value of prayers day and night.



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The next servants of Mary we meet are those stewards in Cana who did what Mary said, “Do whatever Jesus asks you”. And we in the Legion must be the same. We do whatever Jesus tells us to do even the humdrum uninspiring work like filling 6 jars with 20 gallons of water each. Boring, monotonous, tiresome. But he asked it so we do it. And what a result. Jesus himself knew from his Nazareth experience that a lot of life is boring and uninspirational. The daily drudge. Like saying our prayers, obeying the commandments, staying with your duty. But that is how we are servants of Mary. It is how ordinariness is changed into heaven.

If you read the passage of the wedding feast of Cana you will see that immediately afterwards Mary accompanied Jesus and his apostles. She already knew these special friends of her Son, the future priests of the Church. So we in the Legion go too with these special friends of Jesus and share their burdens. We respect them, we befriend them, we encourage them and try to co-operate with them.

And this brings us finally to a special servant of Mary, St. John, one of that special band. In Knock you will see him standing beside Mary with St. Joseph. Like Joseph he took Mary into his home. For all of us in the Legion this special servant of Mary who looked after her in her advancing years must be a special model. We are not just Mary’s servants on the outside, we must be those who take her into the home of our hearts and make her welcome there and sit and listen to her and share our troubles with her.

So as we pledge our fealty to her now let us take her into the home of our hearts and make her welcome and befriend her who after all— and we can forget this—still carries her wounds from Calvary just as Jesus still carries his.

Let today be the beginning of a special relationship for all of us with her.  
Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill