

WELCOME Legacy Workshop



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LEGION OF MARY
FOUNDED 7 SEPTEMBER 1921

The Myra House



This is where it all began...The Myra House - 100 Francis Street, Dublin. This was where the meetings of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (Saint Patrick Conference), and the Pioneers Association meetings were held. It was also the place where the first meeting of the Legion of Mary would take place. One can easily imagine the many people coming in and out from this rather derelict, yet, “holy ground” of Christian apostolic action. Linked in all these activities was Brother Frank Duff, a young civil servant, who before joining the Saint Vincent de Paul in 1913 was a nominal Catholic, just like many of us.

The Myra House



In Myra House, Frank Duff met new friends, young and old, rich or poor, learned or uneducated... there he met them and slowly began to understand the mysteries of our Christian faith. There he learned how important it is to care for everyone, at whatever cost. There the greatness of a simple man, of simple faith devoid of pretenses. **At Myra House, he and his friends, through the workings of the Holy Spirit, build one of the most formidable army of the Church under the protection by the Blessed Virgin Mary.** This was the house galvanized by strong-willed gentlemen and ladies who only had one desire, one goal... sanctify the world through Mary.

Saint Vincent de Paul

Jack O' Callaghan recruited Frank Duff to as a member of Saint Vincent de Paul Society. He joined SVP on October 1913 and attended his first meeting on October 22 as a member of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Conference. It was his membership to SVP that Frank Duff's spiritual growth began to take place. A great influence on Frank Duff was a SVP member named Joe Gabbett who headed SVP's efforts to counteract the proselytizing activities of other religious groups by offering free breakfasts to people. Gabbett would be heard teaching about God and Mary, while he was working. Frank Duff was so much attracted to this type of apostleship that he would later incorporate it in the Legion system.

Joe Gabbett

As a recovering alcoholic Gabbett was a member of the Pioneer Total Association (established in 1898 by Fr. James Cullen, S.J.) and would later introduce Frank Duff to this organization. It was from SVP's works that Frank Duff experienced visitation of homes or tenements. It was also during his early years as a member of SVP that he and Joe Gabbett developed other activities such as catechetical instructions to children about the sacraments. Around 1914, Gabbett and Frank Duff began to do more work assignments such as visitation of soldiers afflicted by venereal diseases at the Portobello Barracks. Here they ministered to Catholic soldiers through Sunday prayer services.



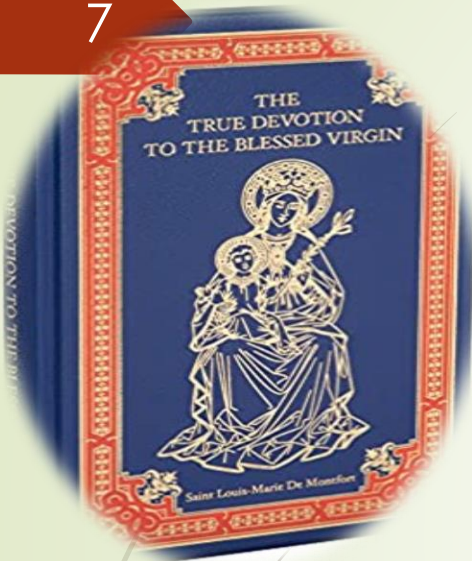
Pioneers Abstinence Society



Mrs. Elizabeth Kirwan, the first President of the Legion of Mary (1921-1930).

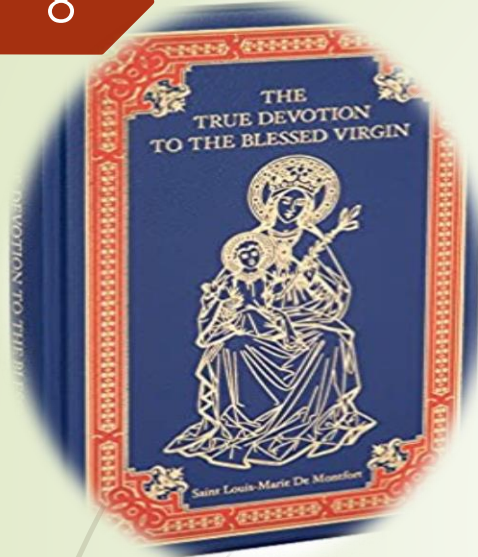
Although Frank Duff was a 'reluctant' member of the Pioneers, as a member of Saint Vincent de Paul, he helped start a Pioneer Center on April 27, 1917 based at Myra House. At first, the Pioneers consisted of men only, but in 1919, Pioneer Centers were opened to both men and women. Among the early recruits of the Pioneer Center at Myra house was a woman named **Mrs. Elizabeth Kirwan whom Frank Duff invited to the Pioneers.** A young priest, **Father Michael Toher** was the Spiritual Director of this Pioneer Group. He was also concurrently the spiritual director of Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Saint Patrick Conference. Fr. Toher would be present at the first meeting of the Legion of Mary.

True Devotion to Mary

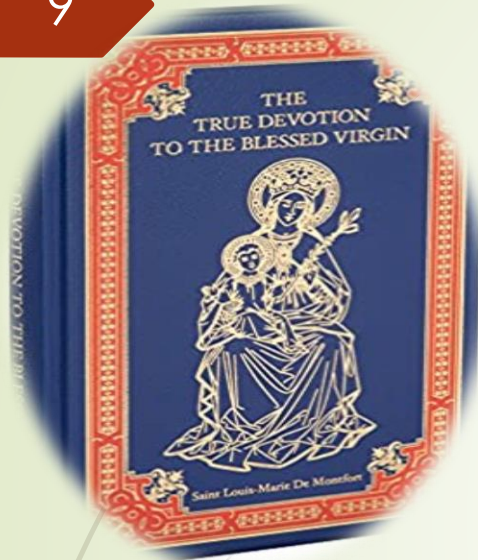


Myra House was bustling with meetings and many apostolic activities. There were many great stories of real heroes that passed through this building. Looking back at these stories, one could describe these events as providential in the formation of Mary's legion. One of these events is how Frank Duff by some happenstance, overheard a group led by SVP member, **Vincent Kelly**, discussing about a certain book on Mary written by some fellow named Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. *As if being led to this book by Mary herself, a few days later, Frank Duff who was an avid reader frequented second hand book shops. There he encountered the book "True Devotion to Mary." Having read it for the first time, Frank Duff thought that the proposition about Our Lady was a bit absurd and exaggerated. Nevertheless, the book had created an immense impact on him.*

True Devotion to Mary “Forced Reading”



Again the Blessed Mother seemed to be urging Frank Duff not to give up on the book True Devotion to Mary. This time, a fellow member from SVP Society by the name of **Tom Fallon**, asked Frank Duff to re-read the book again. And after half a “dozen times” it finally made sense to him: “Without any process of thought leading up to it, something which I could but regard as a Divine favour was granted to me. It was a sudden realization that the Book was true.” (Frank Duff, *Victory Through Mary*, p. 460).



True Devotion to Mary “Forced Reading”

A year later (in April 1920)., accompanying his good friend Joe Gabbett to the Cistercian Abbey at Mount Melleray in County Waterford, Frank Duff was handed a book by Fr. Brendan named “Knowledge of Mary” by Fr. Januarius de Concilio. It was this book that propelled Frank Duff’s greater appreciation and understanding of De Montfort’s “True Devotion to Mary.”

The Early Beginnings

It was also at the Myra House where Frank Duff During the summer of 1921 (August), members of the Pioneer Council were deeply interested to learn more of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort's True Devotion to Mary. It was agreed that this special meeting on True Devotion would be held on a Sunday afternoon. At a Pioneer Meeting held on August 28, members of the Pioneer Council heard of a report by Matt Murray (SVP member) on the visitation that he and a fellow SVP member did at Union Hospital.

The Pioneer members expressed their desire to also visit patients in hospitals. They agreed to undertake this work if there would be enough interest from others. This 'preliminary meeting' was held on August 31, 1921 (Wednesday). Since there was enough interest among the group, they agreed to meet again the next Wednesday - **September 7, 1921!** . It was going to be the first official meeting of the Legion of Mary.

The Early Beginnings

September 7, 1921 - When Fr. Toher (who would become the first Spiritual Director of the Legion of Mary), Frank Duff, and thirteen women that would include its first president, Mrs. Kirwan, they were met by an image of the Immaculate Conception standing on a white cloth with two vases, flowers and two candlesticks lighted with candles. This statue belonged to Frank Duff's good friend Joe Gabbett and had been stored at Myra House. **Alice Keogh** who later would become nun of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, was the one who had set up what would become the official Legion altar except without the Vexillum or standard of the Legion.



The Early Beginnings



The first meeting commenced using the Saint Vincent de Paul prayer card. This consists of the following: Opening Prayer - Invocation to the Holy Ghost, Rosary and Spiritual Reading (at this first meeting, a short passage from Saint Matthew's Gospel Chapter 25 was read. There followed the appointment of officers, work assignments and concluding prayers. A secret collection was made, totaling fifteen shillings.

The Early Beginnings

Within a month of the first meeting of the Association of Our Lady of Mercy, it was reported in one of the meetings of the Pioneer Council, that its membership had grown to thirty two. Unlike the more popular notion that the Legion of Mary's foundation was orchestrated with a well planned scheme and that the Legion Handbook was already ready for new members to read (like a new employee manual), the Legion's formation had no real planning... went with the flow, so to speak... but through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



Hidden Gems of the Legion



The Legion came into existence because our Blessed Mother guided it from its very beginning. She called upon people of ordinary talent and interest with Frank Duff as its anchor and center piece. However it was his enduring friendships with those who surrounded him that made the Legion of Mary what it is today. It's asset is the quality of members committed to its cause and ideals. To name a few, **Joe Gabbett, Fr. Toher, Fr. Creedon, Fr. Devane, Tom Fallon, Elizabeth Kirwan, Vincent Kelly, Miss Plunkett, Miss Scratton, W.T. Cosgrave, Ulick McNally, Matt Talbot, Matt Murray, Mr. Lalor....** *"The Legion has always declared that it was an unpremeditated organization. Nobody sat down at the beginning and put on paper what the Legion was intended to be...The history of the Legion has that character of one step leading to another step."* (Frank Duff)

Early Apostolic Works



Soon after its first meeting, members of the Legion began their apostolic works visiting cancer patients of the Union *Hospital* as they had planned. The following year, **1922**, he *KNOCKED* at 25 Chancery Lane, where he found a lodging house owned by Mrs. Slicker. In that house were thirty women, mostly young girls engaged in PROSTITUTION. *Fr. Gibney and Fr. Creedon* spoke to these women and enlightened them to turn their lives away from prostitution.

Early Apostolic Works

Fr. Creedon wanted to ensure that no further harm are done to these girls offered Mrs. Slicker a sum of money for maintenance of the girls. Fr. Richard Devane, S.J. having heard of the girls' desire for a 'new start' recommended a weekend retreat. But where would this weekend retreat be held? With this, Fr. Devane accompanied by Josephine Plunkett, embarked to search for a place. However, convent after convent turned them away. Finally, Mother Angela Walsh, Superior of the Convent of the Sisters of Charity in Baldoyle, agreed to open the convent for the weekend retreat.

Sancta Maria Hostel



At that weekend retreat, Frank Duff seeing how young and vulnerable the girls were, realized that they just could not be left to go back to their old life. Frank Duff did not only take care of their spiritual needs, he was also concerned of their practical needs. Thus, he thought of providing them with some form of accommodation. Remember that this was all happening in the middle of the Civil War in Ireland. Still, Frank Duff managed to secure a meeting with W. T. Cosgrave, the Minister for Local Government (who would soon become the President of the Executive Council of the Free State).

Sancta Maria Hostel



Fr. Creedon and Frank Duff requested Cosgrave if it were possible to find the girls a home. Another miracle! The next morning, a Sunday, he received a letter from Cosgrave informing them that the premises at 76 HARCOURT STREET, had been handed to them, free of rent and taxes! This was the birth of Sancta Maria Hostel, where lives would be transformed, and many souls saved.

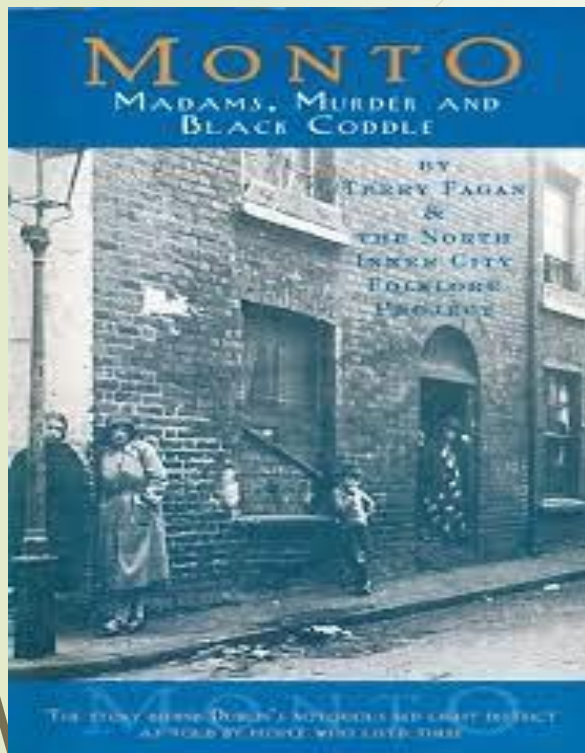
Assault on Bentley Place



MONTO IS DUBLIN'S RED-LIGHT DISTRICT – "BENTLEY PLACE" WAS A PSEUDONYM USED BY FRANK DUFF

When two of the residents of Sancta Maria Hostel, LIZZIE MANLEY and KATHLEEN DEEGAN left and went to a place known as Monto, a notorious area in Dublin, Frank Duff and the Legion had a sudden awareness of the problem of prostitution and vice in Ireland. They needed to do something to further assist young girls to quit this kind of 'work.' Thus, began the assault of the Legion on Monto ('Bentley Place'). The notoriety of Monto was worth mention in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1903. On March 22, 1923, Frank Duff and Miss Plunkett set off for Monto.

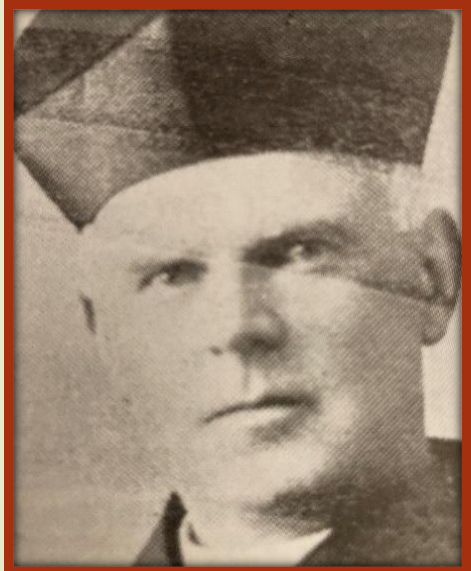
Assault on Bentley Place



MONTO IS DUBLIN'S RED-LIGHT DISTRICT – "BENTLEY PLACE" WAS A PSEUDONYM USED BY FRANK DUFF

Within a span of two years, Frank Duff knew that he needed to step up his campaign against prostitution - and as ambitious as it might have sound, he knew that only the closing of Bentley Place would stop the many evils that were going on there. How do you close such a place? First, Frank Duff using what we all know as personal contact. Approached the girls, madams, operators and pimps - convincing them to give up their trade for a new life. Second, knowing that this might not be the final solution, he planned on talking to authorities to end all illegal activities that cause peril to many women of Dublin.

Closure of Bentley Place



FR. ERNEST MACKAY
TEAMED WITH FRANK DUFF
TOWARDS THE CLOSURE OF
BENTLEY PLACE

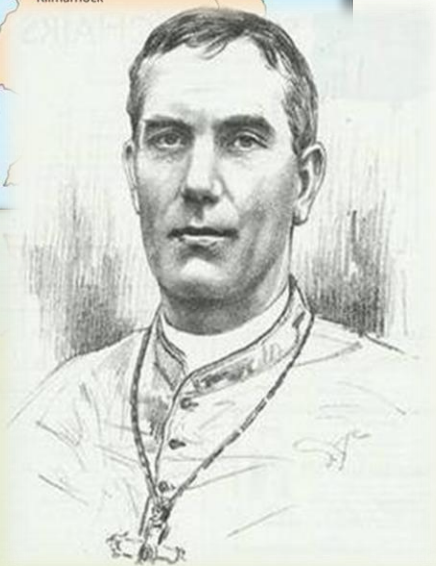
In a well planned move, Frank Duff and Father Mackey proceeded to see the Garda Chief Commissioner, General Murphy and explained to him the situation and that the only likely solution to eradicate these illegal activities in Bentley Place was through and official police intervention. Thus, it was agreed that a large scale police raid of Bentley Place would take place on the midnight of **March 12, 1925**. The raid was to be under the supervision of David Neligan and Captain Ennis. There were a total of 120 arrests but only two was charged

Worldwide Expansion - 1927



The Legion of Mary in Ireland continued to grow at a very impressive pace, thanks to the support of the priests, nuns and of course, the 'little people' of the Church. In the year 1927, as a result of a letter received by Frank Duff from a nun in the Ursuline Convent in Waterford, a new Praesidium outside of Dublin was established (Waterford). Later that year, a certain Mrs. Mahony of the Blarney Mills invited the Legion of Mary to Cork, considered to be the second largest city in Ireland.

Worldwide Expansion - 1927



A nun by the name of Sis Josephine met Frank Duff earlier, spoke to her superior, Sister Brendan, who in turn made arrangements with the Archbishop of Glasgow (Scotland), *Archbishop Donald Macintosh*. Frank Duff met with Archbishop Dr. Mackintosh who received him graciously. Archbishop Mackintosh expressed his desire to establish the Legion of Mary in his diocese.

Worldwide Expansion

England formed its first Praesidium on May 31, 1929 and soon after with a combination of different factors such as the 1932 Eucharistic Congress in Ireland and the eventual use of the concept of envoyship (thanks to a Bartley Oliver a wealthy business man from San Francisco) the Legion of Mary proceeded to make its presence known to all the continents of the world.

1929 - England

1931 - India and the
United States (San
Francisco in 1933)

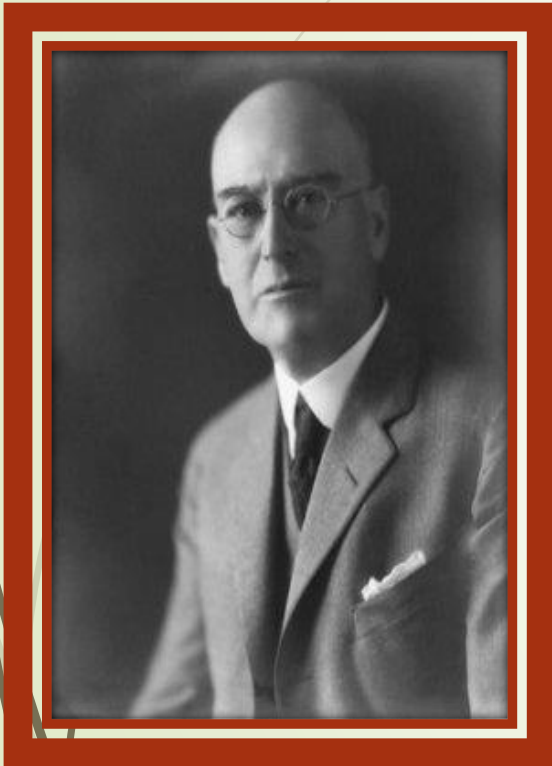
1933 - Australia
1934 - Canada

1937 - China
1938 - Africa
1940 - Philippines
1948 - Japan

1950 - Argentina and
Colombia
1951 - Brazil and Chile
1954 - Ecuador



The Legion Envoys



Bartley Oliver

The concept of Legion envoyship could be attributed to a wealthy San Francisco businessman named **BARTLEY OLIVER**. After having read an article about the Morning Star Hostel in an American magazine written by Alice Curtayne, Mr. Oliver sent a letter of interest about the Legion and requested that the Legion send representative to the US to help explain the Legion to him further.

The Legion Envoys



Mary Duffy

As a result of this exploratory meeting, Mr. Oliver offered to finance a full time Legion Envoy to help the expansion of the Legion in the United States. Thus, in 1934, **Mary Duffy** left Ireland for the US to become its first envoy in the US and also in Canada. *She presided the first San Francisco Curia meeting on June 10, 1937.*

Official Approval

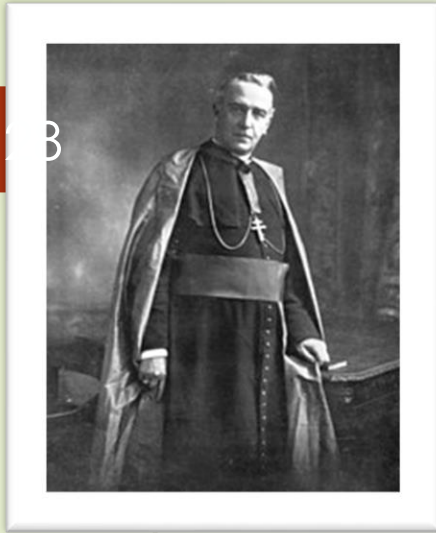


Archbishop Byrne
Archdiocese of Ireland



Pope Pius XI

While the Legion of Mary was founded in 1921, it took almost fourteen years for it to be officially recognized by the Archdiocese of Ireland as an official Church organization. The formal process began on October 2, 1929. Archbishop Byrne was given an official request for the recognition of the Legion in Ireland. The irony of this long-drawn out process was that during the years of waiting for an approval, the Legion had received stirring papal endorsements from Pope Pius XI on May 23, 1931 and again on September 16, 1933.



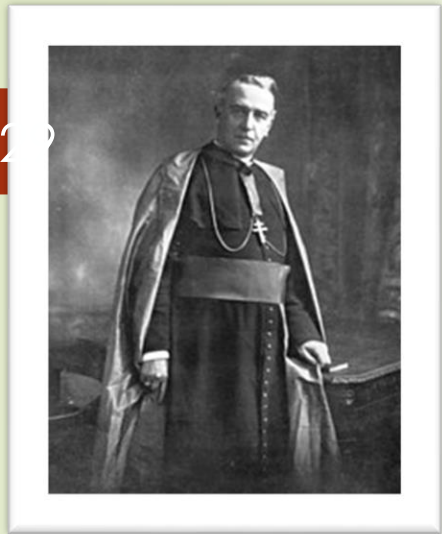
Archbishop Byrne
Archdiocese of Ireland



Pope Pius XI

Official Approval

In 1934, progress was made between the Legion and the Archdiocese as the committee in charge of the approval process, handed Frank Duff a proposed constitution of the Legion of Mary. It was a bit of disappointment for Frank Duff, as the draft proposed the Legion be opened only to women and that the Spiritual Director had the right to veto all proceedings. A final meeting between the vicars of the Archdiocese (represented by Msgrs. Waters and Cronin) took place on July 27, 1934. On Jan 3, 1935, the Legion received its official recognition as a Church organization in the Archdiocese of Ireland.



Archbishop Byrne
Archdiocese of Ireland



Pope Pius XI

Official Approval

The earliest edition of the Legion of Mary Handbook was published around 1928 and a copy immediately sent to Archbishop Byrne to request for an imprimatur. The following year, having not received an answer, Frank Duff wrote the Archbishop on June 29, 1929 asking for an official declaration of the Handbook's compliance to the dogmatic and doctrinal teachings of the Church. Frank Duff, once again resorted to his friend President Cosgrave, who in turn approached the Papal Nuncio, Paschal Robinson for endorsement of the Legion. A meeting between Frank Duff and Robinson took place on May 7, 1931. March 7, 1937.

Historical Dates

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- 1889** June 7 - Frank Duff is born in Dublin to Laetitia and John Duff. He is the oldest of seven children. Enters the Jesuit's Belvedere College in 1896.
- 1913** Frank Duff becomes a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society upon the invitation of his friend Jack O'Callaghan.
- 1917** The Myra House located at 100 Francis Street came into the possession of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. This was gifted by its owned Mrs. Keogh Donnelly mainly in part of her relationship with *Frank Sweeney*, a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.
- 1918** Frank Duff became president of Saint Patrick's Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul Society and also in the same year, the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association ("The Pioneers") was also formed. The Pioneers (women members) played an important role in the formation of the Legion of Mary. Frank Duff was also introduced to the book of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, "True Devotion to Mary." .

Historical Dates

1921 September 7 - A group of fifteen people, members of the Pioneer Association, Frank Duff and Father Toher met at Myra House (Francis Street) to discuss how members could do similar works as that of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society by visiting cancer patients of the Union Hospital. Upon their arrival at the meeting, a member of the Pioneer Association, Mrs. Alice Keogh, had already set up the meeting place with an image of the Immaculate Conception, two candles, and two vases with flowers. It marked the beginning of the first praesidium meeting of the Legion of Mary.

Historical Dates

1922 Legion work for street girls began with an invitation from Legionaries to attend a weekend retreat, and thus arrangements were made for twenty-three women to come to Balydole Convent. As a need arose for a 'safe haven' for the girls, Frank Duff sought an interview with W. T. Cosgrave, Minister for Local Government (Housing). With a letter in hand from Mr. Cosgrave, Frank Duff and Father Creedon met with the Minister and on the following day, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, July 16, they were handed the keys to 76 Harcourt, which became to be known as the first Legion hostel, "*Sancta Maria*"

Historical Dates

- 1923 Legion of Mary members began their work at Monto (Bentley Place), an infamous area in Dublin known for prostitution and other vices. The Legion system of personal contact and its cardinal rule of never giving up led to the conversion of young women to a 'new life.' The stories behind these Legion work adventures are written in the book "How to Conquer the World".
- 1926 Bentley Place was successfully closed through the perseverance of the members of the Legion with the help of the Dublin Police.
- 1927 Foundation of the "*Morning Star Hostel*", an accommodation for homeless men in Dublin (March 25). First Praesidium outside of Dublin (in Waterford) was established. .

Historical Dates

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- 1928 Legion reaches Scotland, soon after, London.
- 1930 *Regina Coeli* Hostel was opened.
- 1931 First Presidium formed in Madras, India (Feb 2, 1931). The Legion of Mary introduced to North America (United States forms its first Praesidium in Raton, New Mexico (November 28). Frank Duff in an audience with Pope Pius XI, received Papal Blessings for the Legion of Mary.
- 1932 *Eucharistic World Congress* held in Dublin. Bishops from all over the world learned of the Legion of Mary for the first time and as a result, the Legion began to spread rapidly around the world.
- 1933 September 7: First Presidium of Africa established in Ifuho, Calabar, Nigeria.. November 14, 1933 - First Praesidium in San Francisco was established at Saint Monica's Church.

Historical Dates

- 1934 Departure of the first ambassadors of the Legion of Mary, Mary Duffy, to the USA and Canada with the task to make the Legion known and spread there. The Legion of Mary Handbook received its imprimatur from the Archbishop of Melbourne on May 1934.
- 1935 January 3 - Formal approval of the Legion of Mary was given by Archbishop Byrne, Archbishop of Dublin. (This was also the same year that Book Barrow apostolic work was started).
- 1937 The Legion of Mary Handbook received its imprimatur from the Archdiocese of Dublin on March 7, 1937. Edel Quinn travelled to East Africa and arrived in Nairobi on November 24. The Legion of Mary Handbook received its imprimatur from the Archbishop Byrne of the Archdiocese of Ireland on March 7, 1937.
- 1945 Hilde Firtel from Austria was appointed envoy to Germany.

Historical Dates

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1946

Monsignor Riberi, former nuncio for Central Africa, becomes Internuncio in China. He had observed the work of Edel Quinn in Africa which will later prove an important piece of our history in the growth of the Legion of Mary in Communist China.

1947

Archbishop Riberi, now the Internuncio in China, ordered Father Aedan McGrath to spread the Legion in China

1948

At the beginning of 1948 P. McGrath began his activity as an envoy first in Shanghai, but later in North, Central and South China. By quickly moving from town to town, he was able to form at least one thousand praesidia within a year. The growth of Catholicism in Communist China, led the Communist Party to establish the "Patriotic Church of China", which, under the name of "Movement of the Three Independents", strove to guide the Church through government supervision and control, detaching the Catholic Church from Rome.

Historical Dates

- 1950 Legion of Mary members opposed separation from Rome and informed the Chinese Catholics that this was wrong. The communist persecution of the Catholic Church resulted in the imprisonment of Fr. Aedan McGrath and the death of at least 4,000 Legion members. The Society of the Patricians was founded as a means to develop among Catholic lay people a deeper knowledge of the Faith.
- 1951 **Seamus Grace and Alfie Lambe flew to South America as Legion envoys (July 16)**
- 1958 First "Peregrinatio Pro Christo" held at England.
- 1959 Alfie Lambe dies in Buenos Aires. In just over five years, he made great strides for the spread of the Legion of Mary in Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Historical Dates

- 1969** Legion members and priests from Ireland traveled to the Soviet Union for the first time on “Peregrinatio Pro Christo”.
- 1976** Irish priest Father Robert Bradshaw begins his missionary work in Iceland and is supported by many Legion members from all over the world. He was there as a volunteer for a year (“Incolae Mariae”).
- 1979** Frank Duff was received in audience with officials of the Council of Pope John Paul II. They held a long talk about the situation of the Church throughout the world.

Historical Dates

- 1980 February: the beatification process for Alfie Lambe is initiated by Cardinal Aramburu of Buenos Aires. Nov 7 - Frank Duff, our Legion founder dies in his house in Dublin after having attended two Masses, First Friday Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a Funeral Mass for a great Legion envoy, Joan Cronin.
- 1992 Fr. Bradshaw moves to Siberia to work as a pastor until his death in 1993.
- 1998 **The process of beatification of the Servant of God Frank Duff is officially opened by Archbishop Desmond Connell (January 14).**

Historical Dates

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- 2011** The Legion of Mary celebrates its 90th year anniversary of its foundation.
- 2013** The Legion of Mary in Australia celebrated the 80th anniversary of its foundation meeting on September 7, 1933.
- 2014** The Legion of Mary receives official Vatican approval. Bishop Josef Clemens, secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, presented to the Legion of Mary the Decree of Pontifical Recognition.
- 2015** The Legion of Mary celebrated its 75th Founding Anniversary in the Philippines. Its founding date is July 21, 1940 and their founding spiritual directors being Fr. Manuel Gracia and Fr. Michael Doherty. The founding members were Joaquina Lucas and Pacita Santos who became Legion envoys.

Historical Dates

- 2018 The Legion of Mary celebrated its Silver Jubilee in Yaounde, capital city of Cameroon.
- 2020 The Legion of Mary continued its worldwide apostolate, establishing numerous praesidia in all continents, with plurality of memberships of different cultures and languages. In March 2020, a pandemic that resulted in a global lockdown, curtailed Church services, the Legion of Mary remains a strong support of the Catholic Church.
- 2021 The Legion of Mary celebrates its Centenary Anniversary (September 7, 2021)

Presidents of Concilium Legionis Mariae

Mrs. Elizabeth Kirwan (RIP)



President from November 1924-June 1930.

Frank Duff (RIP)



President from June 1930-June 1936.
President from June 1942-June 1948.
President from June 1951-June 1957.
President from June 1963-June 1969.

John Nagle (RIP)



President from June 1936-June 1942.

John Murray (RIP)



President from June 1948-June 1951.

John Gavin



President from June 1957-June 1963.

James P. Cummins (RIP)



President from June 1969-June 1975.

Enda Dunleavy



President from June 1975-June 1981.

Samuel J. Hughes



President from June 1981-June 1987.

Patrick Fay



President from June 1987-June 1993.

Aileen O'Donoghue



President from June 1993 to date.

Frank Duff (RIP)



President from June 1930-June 1936
 President from June 1942-June 1948
 President from June 1951-June 1957
 President from June 1963-June 1969