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LEGION OF MARY
FOUNDED 7 SEPTEMBER 1921

The Unsung Heroes

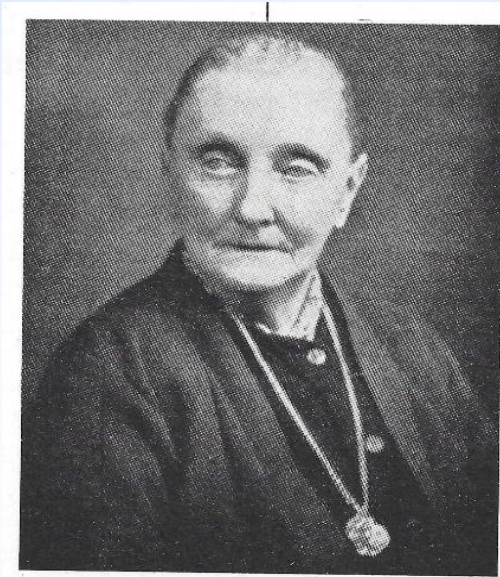
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Mr. Joe Gabbett - though he never was a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society or the Legion of Mary, Joe Gabbett had a tremendous influence on Frank Duff. This influence would carry through in the Legion system. He was in the British Army - he was a recovering alcoholic - he established his own breakfast center as a means to offset the Protestant's proselytizing activities among the poor - he was a catechist - and he had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Unsung Heroes

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Kirwan - a member of the Pioneer Association and became the president of Association of our Lady of Mercy (Legion of Mary) then became the first president of the Concilium. At the time of her appointment as president, Mrs. Kirwan as the oldest member of the group (64 years old) and was considered the poorest.

The Unsung Heroes

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William Thomas Cosgrave a Laureate member of the Legion of Mary was the first president of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State from 1922-1932. He was a good friend and supporter of Frank Duff and was very instrumental to some of the early needs of the Legion of Mary - such as the government granting to the Legion the premises at 76 Harcourt Street (Sancta Maria Hostel) - endorsed the Legion to the Papal Nuncio Paschal Robinson when it was seeking official recognition as a Church organization. W.T Cosgrave

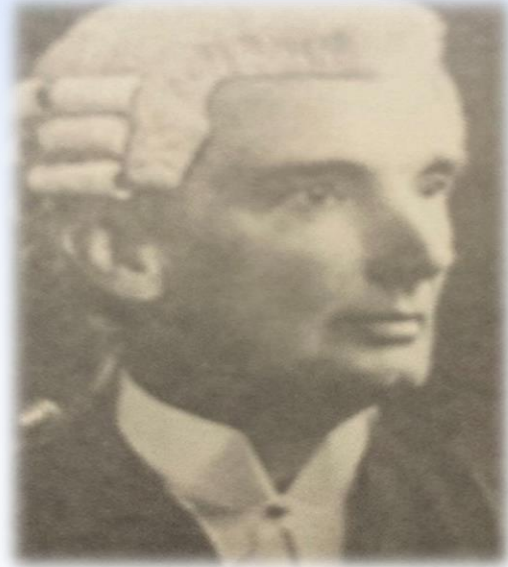
The Unsung Heroes



Bartley Oliver, a Laureate member of the Legion of Mary a wealthy businessman from San Francisco was introduced to the Legion of Mary thinking of expanding his business venture into the hostel and accommodation business after reading an article written by Alice Curtayne on the Morning Star Hostel. Mr. Oliver wrote a letter to the Legion of Mary in Dublin asking to send a representative to San Francisco. He paid the way for Celia Shaw, a Legionary, to come over to San Francisco in October 1933 on a fact finding mission. She started a number of praesidia and eventually Oliver saw the potential in the Legion's world wide growth that he decided to finance the first Legion Envoy, Mary Duffy to come to the US and eventually Canada for expansion.

The Unsung Heroes

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Frank Sweeney was a distinguished barrister and Blackrock College alumnus, president of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (Saint Nicolas of Myra Conference) and was regarded by Frank Duff as a 'great friend and backer.' The Myra House was gifted to Saint Vincent de Paul Society because of Frank Sweeney's connection and friendship to its owner **Mrs. Keogh Donnelly**.

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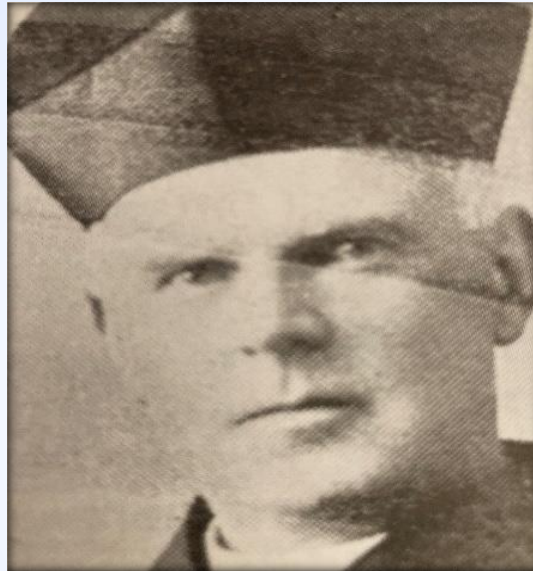
The Unsung Heroes

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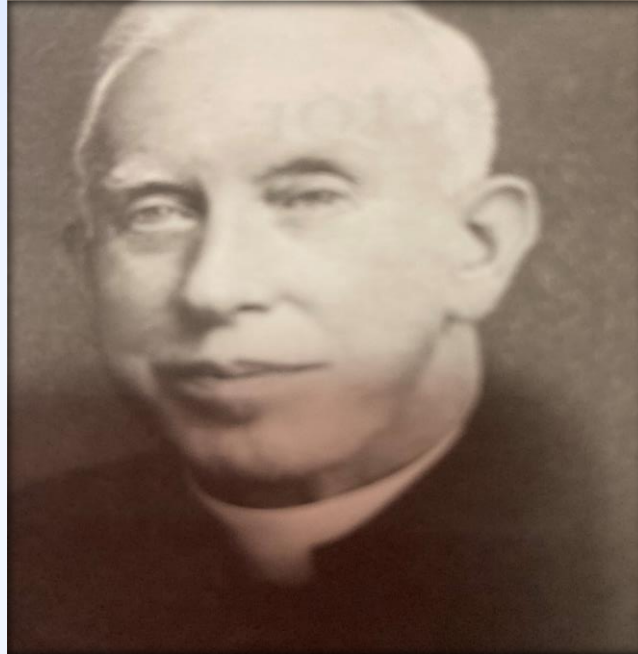
Misses Scratton and Plunkett - were early members of the Legion of Mary who were instrumental in the Legion's work for the organization of its retreat in 1922 for the street girls in Dublin, Josephine Plunkett accompanied Fr. Devane in search of the venue and also was with Frank Duff as they set off to Monto to visit some of its brothel owners. Miss Scratton became the VP of the Concilium (with Mrs. Kirwan as president).

The Unsung Heroes



Fr. Ernest Mackey - was one of the three Jesuits (Fathers Devane and Roche) who conducted the Lenten Mission in the Pro Cathedral attended by some Monto residents. Fr. Mackey inspired Frank Duff to work towards the closure of Bentley Place

The Unsung Heroes



Fr. Michael Toher - was the Spiritual Director of the first praesidium of the Legion of Mary. A fellow student of Frank Duff at Blackrock College, the Secondary School run by the Holy Ghost Congregation, he was quiet and unassuming and filled with concern for the poor specially women and children. After the death of Fr. Michael Creedon, he became the Spiritual Director of the Concilium Legionis.

The Unsung Heroes

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Fr. Michael Creedon - was the first Spiritual Director of the Concilium Legionis Mariae.

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Fr. Donncha O'Floinn - succeeded Fr. Toher as the Spiritual Director of the Concilium Legionis Mariae. He was professor of Irish in the National Seminary, St. Patrick's College Maynooth, Ireland, greatly respected as a Gaelic scholar and profound thinker. He was a very kind man and was most devoted as praesidium Spiritual Director.

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Sis Joaquina Lucas with Mary Cierkin, Envoy to Brazil and Alfie Lambe,

Joaquina Lucas - was considered as one of the longest serving envoys of the Legion of Mary (1946 -1965). A university professor and the founding member of the first praesidium in the Hospicio de San Jose, Manila, Joaquina brought the Legion to the Latin America beginning her work in Mexico, then later in the South American continent particularly in Peru, Argentina and Brazil. She spoke English and Spanish fluently and had the opportunity to polish Alfie Lambe's Spanish whom she met in 1953. She also later learned how to speak Portuguese. After her assignment in South America, she went to Dublin, after which she became an Envoy to Portugal. In 1963 , she took on another assignment to Japan, Indonesia and Korea. She died in 1988 on the Feast of the Miraculous Medal.

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Pacita Santos - was a law graduate from the University of Santo Tomas (Manila) and recruited by Joaquina Lucas in the Legion of Mary. She went to Bilbao, Spain on February 5, 1950 to serve as a Legion Envoy in this predominantly Catholic country. Like many other envoys worldwide, Pacita encountered many challenging opposition to the Legion from Spain's ecclesiastical authorities. Her courage and determination finally won over many priests and bishops. To this day the Madrid Senatus recognizes her valiant efforts.

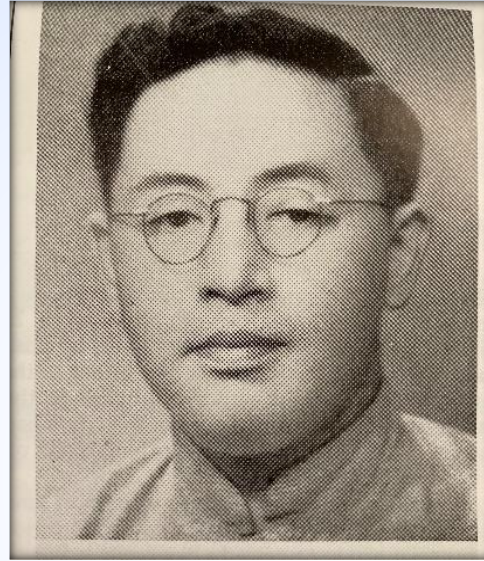
The Unsung Heroes



Fr. Aedan McGrath - was a Columban priest who took on the challenge of Archbishop Riberi to spread the Legion in this communist country. As the Communist party began to take a stronghold in China (1949), the Legion of Mary was doing its own expansion with an estimated 2000 praesidia formed. The Chinese officials soon began to take notice of the Legion activities. The Chinese government decided to establish the China Catholic Patriotic Association in its attempt to control the Roman Catholic Church. Many Catholics particularly the Legion upon instructions from Bishop Kung refused to comply. This resulted in arrests, imprisonment and martyrdom of Legionaries. Fr. McGrath was imprisoned on September 7, 1951 and was released three years later on April 28, 1954.

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Fr. Joseph Seng- was a Spiritual Director of the Legion of Mary in China and a joint translator of the Legion Handbook was arrested together with five other priests (including Fr. Aedan McGrath), died while in prison as a result of his refusal to cooperate with the Communist Chinese officials. He died as a martyr of the Church a Legionary till the end.

The Unsung Heroes



Michael Ekeng - was a founding member of the Legion of Mary in Africa and president of the first praesidium in the entire African Continent. The praesidium was started by the Most Rev. Dr. Moynagh on September 7, 1933. His capacity for work was amazing - from his diocese in Calabar, he would travel 18 miles by Canoe to Oran, attend a Legion meeting 55 miles away and after the meeting cycle on 12 miles to go to the nearest mission, fasting all the time to receive Holy Communion.

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Sister Antonella Marie and Amalia Duran (from Cuba) smuggled out of China two vexilla to protect them from being confiscated by Chinese officials. The Vexilla were dismantled and reassembled in the US and went back to Loretto Heights College in Shanghai.