



Legion Of Mary and Parish Engagement

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Article History

Received: 25-01-2023

Accepted: 14-02-2023

Published: 01-03-2023

Keywords:

apostolic work;
discipleship; lay
ministry

Abstract: This article examined the significance of the Legion of Mary's participation in parish life as a representation of lay apostolate within the Catholic Church. The aim was to elucidate the Legion of Mary's role in carrying out the five duties of the Church. The content was derived from experiences gained while accompanying the Presidium of Mary, the Mother of the Church in Christ the King Parish, Surabaya. A qualitative research approach was employed in this study. The findings demonstrated that the Legion of Mary, as a Catholic group, instilled valuable principles in its members or Legionaries, emphasizing self-purification through acts of service driven by the needs and circumstances within the praesidium. The active involvement of the Legion of Mary members in parish life served as a tangible expression of the lay apostolate. Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that members of the Legion of Mary contributed to implementing the Church's five duties, thereby supporting and enriching the lives of the parish community. The Legion of Mary's participation in parish life played a significant role in fostering a sense of community and strengthening the faith of its members. This study sheds light on the importance of lay apostolate and the contributions of Catholic groups like the Legion of Mary in fulfilling the Church's mission within the parish context.

INTRODUCTION

The Church is an actively engaged community of believers, not a static institution (Anoja, 2021). This perspective suggests that the Church is a communion characterized by dynamism. However, it doesn't end there. The ultimate goal of the Church's vitality is to extend itself in serving society as a whole, encompassing all parties and aspects. The Church exists and grows not for its own sake but to provide care and assistance to those in need. This missional focus is at the core of the Church's purpose. The Church is always dynamic as a living communion despite occasional challenges. This dynamism arises from the inherent nature of each individual within the Church, responding to God's call and fulfilling their missionary responsibilities. However, these challenges should not be viewed as obstacles that hinder the Church's development. Instead, they should inspire self-reflection and foster a profound reflective attitude towards every happening within the Church (Hirang, 2020).

In this context, the author aims to share their personal experience in pastoral work within a parish in Surabaya, East Java, particularly in serving alongside the Legion of Mary group from the Presidium of Mary, the Mother of the Church. The Legion of Mary is an approved Catholic association that assists the Church in its duties, primarily providing services to Catholics (Kasprzak, 2019). However, their assistance extends to Catholics and anyone in

need. The Legion of Mary has experienced growth in Indonesia and has spread to various countries. Initially founded by Frank Duff in Ireland, the members of the Legion of Mary are commonly referred to as legionnaires.

The purpose of the Legion of Mary is to glorify God through "sanctification" in the realm of prayer, sacraments, and active cooperation under the hierarchy of the Church (Setiana, 2021). The Legion of Mary itself has a spirituality based on the advice of St. Louis G. de Monfort, as stated in the handbook of the Legion of Mary (De Monfort, 2007). Frank Duff also spread adoration for the third person of the Trinity through the intercession of Our Lady. All of this is, of course, done in compliance with the written rules in the official handbook of the Legion of Mary. The Legion of Mary assists the bishops and parish priests of their respective parishes in all forms of ministry. Therefore, the Legion of Mary is in line with the Church's purpose, which is the proclamation of the Gospel and the sanctification of mankind, as well as the formation of the Christian faith.

The Legion of Mary requires legionaries to be present at meetings of the Legion. In addition, to "purify oneself" through prayer and the sacraments, the Legion develops it as an apostolate in the surrounding environment (Nenobesi, 2020). The Legion spreads the apostolic spirit to those around him. The Legion requires that legionaries have an essential and primary obligation to carry out the weekly active work given by the praesidium (Treanor, 1969). Members report on the results of work assigned by the praesidium in weekly meetings. The task given is a follow-up to the gathering and as proof of Legionnaire's obedience.

This study centres on the engagement of Legion of Mary members in fulfilling the Church's five duties for their selves, their families, and the wider community. It explores how these members participate in various aspects of parish life, including fostering sanctification (liturgia), spreading the Good News (kerygma), cultivating and nurturing communion (koinonia), advancing charitable acts (diakonia), and serving as witnesses (martyria). The research examines the level of involvement and contribution of Legion of Mary members in these areas within the parish community.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to delve into the chosen theme, utilizing a literature review as the primary approach. The informants involved in this research belong to the Legion of Mary Presidium of Mary the Mother of the Church. The data collection process incorporates interviews, observations, and documentation methods. For data analysis, the content analysis method is applied. It is a structured approach to examining qualitative data by identifying and categorizing specific themes, patterns, or characteristics within the content. Content analysis aims to gain insights and understandings or draw conclusions about the communication, messages, or representations in the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Context

By and large, the Legion can approve any active work the Legionary does to fulfill his weekly duties. But what the Legion cares about is that the work must be a meaningful task and meet the needs of others. A Legionary is expected to be ready to give himself to others to repay God's love for him. Praesidium of Mary, the Mother of the Church, has weekly active duties, distribution of communion, and visits to the people in *Dr. Soetomo* Hospital, Surabaya, is included in the parish territory where the *praesidium* of Mary Mother of the Church is located. The activity is held almost every week, every Friday, accompanied by a pastoral assistant. This activity is not easy, but with a high spirit of service, the legionaries of the Presidium of Mary, the Mother of the Church, do it with great enthusiasm according to the teachings of the Legion of Mary. However, most Legionaries are mothers whose age is also relatively old. This example can move these individuals in totality and provide meaningful service to themselves and those around them.

Implementation of the Five Duties of the Church by Legionaries

Koinonia comes from the Greek word for fellowship. In the New Testament, it is found in Acts 2:42 the early church "persevered in the teaching of the apostles and fellowship." The task of *koinonia* is to establish the existence of the Church as a communion. *Koinonia*, or communion, is a task of the Church, which is to build relationships with others as a fraternity centered on Jesus Christ. So in this fellowship, every believer is called into the close union of God the Father and man through Jesus Christ in the light of the Holy Spirit so that the presence of this fellowship is none other than the presence of Christ Himself.

As a communion, the Legion of Mary can perform this task well. This work can be seen from their purpose, which is the "sanctification" of members, where the first thing they have to do is none other than to be compulsorily present at various legion meetings where prayer and devotion are so close to each other that they can provide beautiful patterns or colors in various other activities (Leu, 2020). In short, *koinonia* (fellowship) is a task and the root of the Legion of Mary itself.

The next task is preaching or *kerygma*. *Kerygma* means the work of preaching the Good News. In Hebrews 5:12, it is written that *kerussein* has a relationship with *kerygma*; it refers to preaching activities for people who do not know or believe in Jesus Christ. Then, it is written in Hebrews 6:1, which means teaching those who have faith to develop and demonstrate their growing faith.

The Church carries out its *kerygma* duty based on the command of Jesus, who sent His Apostles to proclaim the Gospel to the world (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). *Kerygma* is thus the proclamation of Jesus Christ, who carried out the work of salvation through His death and resurrection.

The form of preaching can be determined based on the subject of the purpose of preaching. In general, it can be grouped into two groups. The first group is for believers in Jesus Christ, where preaching can be in the form of religious lessons, faith sharing, faith deepening, and development that can be done during Advent, the month of Mary, and other Church celebrations.

The second group is for those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. In the second group, this can be applied through three forms of preaching, namely preaching to those who are open so that there is no taboo or awkward talking about Christ and the Gospel. The preaching to those who hold fast to their faith but still associate with Christians is to build a life together in fraternity and work together for common interests. Lastly, for those who are closed and fanatical is the preaching displayed in the testimony of personal faith in good and righteous behaviour.

As understood above, the understanding, purpose, and method of preaching have been implemented in the Legion of Mary. This idea can be seen from the Legion's duties that pay attention to needy places. As the author's experience in accompanying the praesidium of Mary Mother of the Church, the routine task performed by members of the Legion is to visit the sick and distribute communion. Indeed, this only happens to those who believe in the Catholic faith. But members of the Legion did not only visit those in the hospital and distribute communion. But also visit sick people who no longer have a family to accompany them, such as elderly widows. So, it seems clear that the task of *kerygma* is also one of the spirits of the Legion of Mary.

In its *liturgical* work, the Church helps its members, God's people, to have a closer relationship with God through worship. Worship is performed according to ordinances authorized by authorized Church leaders. But more deeply, the Church in this task not only then offers various forms and formulations of prayer. Instead, it is a deep understanding and appreciation of the meaning of prayer, which is a means or container of communicating with God personally. So that in prayer, communication between God and man can occur and become the core of one's life of faith.

As a prayer group, the Legion of Mary does not only offer prayer and devotion together in meetings. But also the prayers and personal devotions of the Legionaries. It is clearly stated in the main task that personal prayer is also an obligation as a member of the Legion of Mary,

whether active or inactive. Even the members of the *pretorian*, that is, the highest members in the structure of the Legion of Mary, should pray daily the obligatory prayers of the Legion, attend the celebration of the Eucharist, receive the holy communion, and even pray daily worship as authorized by the Church.

Diakonia (ministry) is one of the dimensions of the Church in charge of service to society. The Church is built for others, not for oneself. It emphasizes Jesus coming to serve, not to be served. For the Church, service is an encouragement of God's call to love God and be as good as ever. The Church is called to then serve one another in not only partial but also universal communion. And, of course, the ministry of this Church is centred on the ministry of Christ.

The Legion of Mary in this field is visible. Just as Jesus walked from village to village to serve His people, the Legionaries served those they were to serve. For example, praesidium members visit the elderly and sick in hospitals and their respective homes.

Martyria comes from the Greek meaning testimony, with the root word witness. It means a person who sees or knows an event. In other words, a person who knows and experiences an event and can give helpful information. *Martyria* is a field of life or ministry of the Church centered on witnessing to society through words and actions, especially concrete works.

The living witness of the faithful is the quality of the depth of one's life of faith. This life testimony is seen in two things: word and deed. As far as the author's experience in the praesidium of Mary Mother of the Church, many Legionaries have dared to give/share their life experiences with others. Testimony is nothing but where people can see God's work and share that experience with others (Dhendi, 2021). Indeed, this requires harmony between word and deed. But it becomes possible when one can establish one's heart, mind, and intention in preaching, as the author experienced with the praesidium of Mary, the Mother of the Church.

The family is the smallest element or part of social and Church life. The family becomes the basic foundation of a person's intellectual, moral, social, and faith education. In short, family is the most fundamental element in human life.

As the foundation of faith, the family is the primary source for individuals to self-actualize. This actualization process is essential. According to Maslow, self-actualization is a process by which individuals seek fulfilment of themselves and their potential for their development.

It can be seen in the function of parents in educating their children about understanding and living the faith in everyday life. In the process, parents don't just show their children. But also allow their children to actualize their abilities. This action is evident in the invitation of

parents to teach their children to pray, go to Church, and participate in activities in church ministry.

In carrying out its functions related to the five duties of the Church, the family has several vital roles, including the family as a community of individuals whose lives are based on love. The love meant here is the love that brings goodness to every family member. It is undoubtedly by the role of *koinonia* where the Church is a communion. The fellowship in this family is directed into a life-sustaining connection.

In addition to *koinonia*, the family also takes a role in *leitourgia* where the family is a tangible manifestation of the relationship between Christ and His people in the marriage bond that is the basis and foundation of the mission of family to the center of the world. Prayer and sacraments in the family strengthen and deepen relationships and dialogue with God (Leu, 2020).

In preaching or *kerygma*, the family plays a role by hearing, living, exercising, or living out the word of God. The family should be like the Church, as the vessel through which the Gospel is distributed and radiates the light of the Holy Spirit. Parents convey the Gospel to children and provide examples or examples of life as concrete actions from the Gospel or God's glad tidings that have been infused before (Leu, 2020).

In the ministry or *diakonia*, families are called to practice that love through devotion or service to others, especially to people experiencing poverty. The spirit of service must be imbued with love. The Christian family prepares itself to be a devoted servant or servant. Family services should be in the form of empowerment so that other families can be independent (Leu, 2020).

They do not forget that *martyria* or family testimony play a role by being courageous and witnessing life passionately. This testimony is a word and an actual deed without covering up the truth. That testimony must be bold and unquestioning. The family should also be critical of anything that goes against faith. Injustice and degrading human dignity must be rejected based on trust and love for one's neighbor. Love for others is also love for the Lord God (Leu, 2020).

In short, as the foundation of human life, the family has an essential role in education, intellectual, social, and faith. The family becomes the initial vessel for an individual to live and apply the five duties of the Church. Love is the underlying strength of a family. Love must be owned and infused by all family members. Love animates and becomes the mainstay of legionaries when doing service. Legionaries who have families or give service through visits to other Christian families should make charity the central pillar of Christian families.

In the legionnaires, the spirit of love is still alive. It penetrates the family and makes a positive and irreplaceable contribution. This love must be fulfilled and cared for entirely because today's family is no longer a private community of love. Love is the main strength because the family will not get along and be happy without love. Parental love for children should be coloured by spontaneity. Spontaneity means that the child is instilled with the belief that he does not have to be a good or sweet child first to get love. Parents do not need to wait for high-achieving children first to give gifts or invite recreation. Likewise, a wife or husband does not need to wait to do something good to get praise and appreciation but praise him because he must be loved and guarded (Palindang, 2022).

Love is the principle and strength of unity because the family will experience unity without love. The need for love in every human being must be met in the family. Love encourages unity in all family members. In this case, there is no system of favouritism or the golden child. The main task in every family is to live the reality of unity based on love and constant effort to develop an authentic person.

The love between husband and wife undergoes a marked expansion in children. Love is all-encompassing: parents and children, brothers and sisters. The union is closely attached to the spirit of love even though it is ordered by the current development of the times. However, that union must be preceded by the indissoluble union of husband and wife.

Love is not a relationship with a particular person but an attitude or character orientation that determines a person's relationship with the world. It is called loving the world in one person and giving up all life. Love is not merely about a particular object but travels through the whole scope of humanity. Love is an invincible soul power. One person he loves will not use the laws of economics to gain or suffer losses. Love is an inseparable part of human spirituality and should support unity. The union of husband and wife is complementary. The partnership was then developed with the willingness of husband and wife to participate in each other's entire family life project (Situmorang, 2001). The marriage of husband and wife is not only monogamous but also indissoluble. In this case, it means that there is complete reciprocal self-giving. This close association supports the well-being of children. This union invites great loyalty and sacrifice. This unity is also reflected in the spirit of service of the Legion of Mary, which has always faithfully given itself and total wholeness to those served for the sake of duty and proclamation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Legion of Mary is a vital force within the lay apostolate, playing an active role in the Church's mission and embodying the spirit of devout believers. With the Church's approval and guidance, this Catholic lay association wholeheartedly dedicates itself to the service of both the Church and the faithful, seeking to sanctify the world. The Legion of Mary's strength lies in its members' enthusiastic participation and deep involvement in the apostolic work. Legionaries experience personal growth and spiritual development as they engage in this mission, strengthening their devotion as they faithfully serve. Their commitment to Christ is evident through their unwavering dedication to the Blessed Virgin Mary, adherence to the Magisterium's teachings, and obedience to ecclesiastical authority.

Legionaries embody the spirit of Jesus' mission, recognizing their duty as integral to the Legion of Mary. Their apostolic endeavours reflect their genuine dedication to Jesus and desire to contribute to the Church's mission actively. In doing so, they demonstrate themselves as faithful laity, embracing their role in bringing the message of Christ to the world. The Legion of Mary is a shining example of how lay associations can effectively contribute to the Church's mission. With their enthusiasm, commitment, and devotion, legionaries inspire others to engage actively in the apostolate and live out their faith in practical ways. By following the footsteps of the Legion of Mary, the laity can continue to play a crucial role in advancing the Kingdom of God and spreading the love and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Acknowledgement: The authors expressed their gratitude to all who helped them during data collection, conducting in-depth interviews, doing observations, gathering information, data analysis, and writing research results.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declared that the research results that have been carried out are free from conflicts of interest from certain parties who may claim the results of his research.

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