

THE LEGION OF CHRIST

Kelly Luttinen[♦]

1. Who We Are

The Legion of Christ is a religious congregation of pontifical right, founded in 1941. Its mission is to extend the Kingdom of Christ in society according to the requirements of Christian justice and charity, and in close collaboration with the Catholic bishops and the pastoral plans of each diocese. Today, the Legion has more than 800 priests and 2,500 major and minor seminarians, with houses in 22 countries.

2. The Regnum Christi Lay Movement

Our lay organization is Regnum Christi. The movement shares in the charism of the Legionaries of Christ. Membership consists of Catholic lay people and diocesan priests who wish to live their baptismal commitments more intensely in their own state of life and transmit Christian charity. Members total about 70,000 youths, adults, deacons and priests in more than 30 countries. The movement includes 1060 consecrated men and women. The organization oversees 15 universities, 50 institutes of higher learning, 176 elementary and secondary schools with more than 132,300 students total. In the year 2008, we had more than 205,000 volunteers involved with the movement, and we reached about 3 million people through outreach services in the mass media, education, mission and other services.

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Regnum Christi's mission is to extend Christ's Kingdom in full collaboration with the Church and its bishops. Regnum Christi's goals and activities are primarily spiritual, transcendent, and salvific. As a whole, Regnum Christi's apostolic goal is to form a particular kind of Catholic: one who is actively committed to Jesus Christ and his Church at the service of all people.

In the movement each person has a particular mission to serve the Church and all men. Consecrated men and women carry out a wide variety of apostolates in universities, schools, institutions, Regnum Christi sections and the mass media, and are ready and willing to do what is needed for the good of the local and universal Church. As lay people they are able to exercise professions that would not be proper for priests, such as in the business world or public administration. They seek to imbue everything they do with Christ's charity and to accomplish their apostolic mission according to the Regnum Christi charism.

The wide range of apostolates available to Regnum Christi members include: missions, service projects, educational works, catechetical schools, youth and family ministries, works of cultural transformation, and mass media projects.

The Regnum Christi consecrated women put all their work and prayer at the service of the Church, uniting themselves to the Church in our daily Mass and prayer commitments, and working to build it up through personal growth in holiness. Their apostolic work seeks to be a sincere and visible offering to the needs of the local parishes and dioceses where they live. They strive to collaborate with bishops and pastors in the formation of the faithful to become active members of the Church for the transformation of society.

The Regnum Christi consecrated men have a similar vocation. Those who at some point discover a call to the priesthood are at liberty to follow this vocation. But the lay consecrated life is not merely an intermediary step, but an authentic and complete vocation in itself. Consecrated laymen and Legionary priests share the same spirituality and total self-giving, but the way in which they live them is different.

3. Legion Charism and Spirituality

Christ Centered: For each Legionary, Christ is the standard, center and model of his religious, priestly and apostolic life. The Legionary strives to know and experience Christ in a personal way, especially in the Gospel, in the Eucharist and in the cross. He aims to love Christ

with a personal and passionate love, and strives to imitate him and to preach him to others.

Filial Love for Mary: A Legionary fosters a tender and filial love for Mary, the Mother of the Church and of his vocation. He consecrates his religious, priestly and apostolic life to her and venerates her in a special way by trying to imitate her virtues of faith, hope, charity, obedience, humility and effective cooperation with Christ's plan of redemption.

Love for the Church: A Legionary passionately loves the Church, which continues Christ's mission and is the start of his Kingdom in the world. He loves her with a real and objective love, just as she is and just as Christ wants her to be. It is a love that meditates on her mystery in faith, welcomes her through obedience, builds her up through apostolic action and sanctifies her through a holy life. The Legionary walks in step with the Church, neither ahead nor behind.

Loyalty to the Pope and Bishops, in Communion with Him: Every Legionary adheres to the Vicar of Christ with ardent and personal love. He studies and spreads his teachings and desires, and defends the charism of his primacy and magisterium. In a spirit of faith, he venerates the bishops in communion with the Roman pontiff and seeks to support them in the fulfillment of the diocesan pastoral programs, especially in the field of education, family and charitable outreach and the mass media. In this way, he unites his efforts to those of the diocesan pastors, while contributing his own God-given charism for the good of the Church.

Preaching the Kingdom of Christ: This ideal inspires, stimulates, directs and shapes the Legion's apostolic objectives, which are to make Christ reign in the heart of each human person and society as a whole, to transform mankind according to the ideal of the new man in Christ, and to create the civilization of love and justice. This is the guiding mission of the Legionaries of Christ.

Love One Another With Christ's Charity: The charity preached and demanded by Christ in the Gospel is at the heart of the Legion of Christ's spirituality. A Legionary seeks to love all men, committing himself to serve them regardless of language, race, sex, culture or social condition. He sees and serves Christ in others, and he wants the gifts of redemption to reach all people. He especially practices the virtue of speaking well of others, and lives in community with a spirit of joy, unity and communion. He takes on his brother's burdens, joining with them to form one body in Christ in the Church.

4. Our Structure

Subdivision into Territories: In order to facilitate the government of the institutes of consecrated life, religious orders or congregations are subdivided into provinces. Each province has a set of several houses of the institute which are managed by the same provincial superior. In the Legion of Christ, these provinces are called “territories.” The territorial directors depend directly on the general director and manage their territory both in matters of religious life and in matters of the Legion’s apostolates. The major directors of the Legion of Christ are also the directors of Regnum Christi. At present, the Legion of Christ has 11 territories.

5. Religious Communities

In each territory there are two types of Legionary religious communities: Formation centers and Religious Communities. The Legion of Christ has the following formation centers where its members are preparing for the priesthood: for the first phase of formation it has nine novitiates: Cornwall (Canada), Cheshire (U.S.A.), Monterrey (Mexico), Medellín (Colombia), São Paulo (Brazil), Dublin (Ireland), Salamanca (Spain), Bad Münstereifel (Germany) and Gozzano (Italy). In Salamanca and Cheshire there are also centers of humanistic studies for the second phase of the preparation of future Legionary priests.

The Legionaries live in “Centers for Higher Studies” during their years of philosophical and theological study. These are located in Rome (Italy) and Thornwood (U.S.A.). The Legionary religious acquire academic titles by studying at pontifical universities and athenaea, mainly at Pontifical Regina Apostolorum College, which is directed by the Legion of Christ, with its main campus in Rome.

The priests and religious who work in a specific geographical area live in the Legion’s religious communities. They live in community and exercise their ministry by directing, advising, or collaborating in apostolic works. Some of these apostolates include: the groups of adolescents of ECYD, youth and adult members of the Movement, and educational, social and missionary projects and institutions. They also serve the Church in several priestly and pastoral faculties, such as chaplaincies or university professorships, by preaching and giving spiritual assistance, and by responding to the requests of diocesan bishops.

6. Our Leadership: In Transition

On July 9, 2010, the Holy See announced that Pope Benedict XVI had appointed Archbishop Velasio De Paolis, CS as his papal delegate to the Legionaries of Christ, whose main purpose will be to bring to completion the revision of the Constitutions.

On April 30 and May 1, 2010, the Cardinal Secretary of State chaired a meeting at the Vatican with the five bishops in charge of the apostolic visitation of the Legionaries. In the report presented to the Holy Father, it stated "that the past behavior of the now deceased Legion of Christ founder, Father Marcial Maciel Degollado (1920-2008), has had serious consequences for the life and structure of the Legion, such as to require a process of in-depth revision." The report also stated the need to redefine the charism of the Legionaries of Christ, preserving its true core, that of the "militia Christi", to review the exercise of authority, and to preserve through appropriate formation the enthusiasm of the faith of young members and their apostolic dynamism.

In March 2010, Legion of Christ General Director Fr. Alvaro Corcuera issued a communiqué to the Legion and Regnum Christi and "to all those who have been affected, wounded, or scandalized by the reprehensible actions of our founder." The letter also declared that the Legionaries are resolved to continue to seek reconciliation and to reach out to those who have suffered, to continue to offer safety, especially for minors, in the Legionaries' institutions and activities, to continue to insure that the administrative controls and procedures are implemented on all levels, and to seek holiness with renewed effort, guided by the Church.

Fr. John Connor, Territorial Director for the Atlanta region, wrote in a letter to Regnum Christi members issued on August 15, 2010: "God has allowed us to experience these challenging times and we must face them with an authentic spirit of humility and hope. I have no question that this time of purification will make us stronger, more humble and more fruitful according to the will of God."