

The Servant of God

FRANK DUFF

1889 - 1980

His Early Life



Frank Duff was born on 7th June 1889 in Dublin, Ireland, the eldest of seven children born to civil servants John Duff and his wife Susan (Nee Freehill). He was educated at Belvedere College and subsequently, when the family moved to Dun Laoghaire in 1899, he attended Blackrock College. It was here that he showed considerable ability at running, cycling, tennis and cricket.



As A Young Man

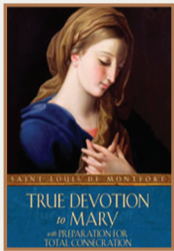
Serious illness forced Frank's father to retire from the Civil Service in 1909, leading Frank to step into the role of family breadwinner by joining the Civil Service, thereby sacrificing a third level education and marriage.



Frank's spiritual life developed when in 1913, he joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and undertook the daily recitation of the Rosary; soon after he began the lifelong practice of attending daily Mass. He published his first pamphlet "Can we be Saints?" in 1916, in which he expressed the conviction that all people are called to be saints.

The Legion of Mary

Frank's involvement with the St Vincent de Paul Society in 100 Francis Street, Dublin, led him to become acquainted with some ladies who wanted to help but were barred from joining the all-male society. Following a discussion one Sunday evening about the Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary by St. Louis Marie de Montfort, a meeting was arranged for the following Wednesday 7th September 1921, to see how they might put the devotion into practice. Gathered



around a little altar of the Immaculate Conception, Fr Michael Toher, Frank and fifteen ladies held what was to be the first meeting of the 'Legion of Mary'. Their first apostolate was the visitation of patients in the South Dublin Union Hospital. An encounter with street girls led to the setting up of a 'safe house' the Sancta Maria Hostel in 1922 and the herculean task of tackling the Red-Light district colloquially known as 'Monto', leading to its closure in 1925.



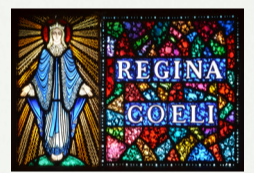
FR. TOHER



The Hostels and Early Retirement



In 1926 the new Irish government set up a Commission on poverty and Frank was invited to give evidence. This led to the setting up of the Morning Star Hostel in 1927. The Regina Coeli Hostel for homeless women was opened in 1930 and later unmarried mothers were allowed to rear their children there, something unprecedented at that time.



The Legion continued to expand. New groups, known as 'praesidia' opened in other countries. The Legion continued to spread to the 170 countries in which it is present today.

Frank retired from the Civil Service in 1934 to give the Legion his full attention. Many unique and pioneering initiatives followed, including the ecumenical Mercier Society, the Pillar of Fire Society for Catholic-Jewish dialogue and 'True Devotion to the Nation' whereby legionaries set about improving all aspects of life within a locality.

Second Vatican Council

In 1965 Frank was invited to the Second Vatican Council as a lay observer. Cardinal Heenan of London held the floor as Frank entered; when the Cardinal made reference to Frank, it prompted the more than 2500 bishops present to give him a standing ovation, a suitable recognition of his standing in the universal Church and of his contribution to promoting the lay apostolate, one of the prevailing topics of the Council documents.



POPE PAUL VI AND FRANK AT THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Final Days

Frank continued to devote himself tirelessly to the Legion until his death at his home on Morning Star Avenue on 7th November 1980. At his funeral mass, Cardinal O'Fiaich described him as the "Irishman of the Century".



GLASNEVIN CEMETERY

Frank is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. The cause for his beatification was introduced by the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1996 and he has been bestowed with the title 'Servant of God'.

Favours attributed to his intercession should be reported to: Concilium Legionis Mariae, Morning Star Avenue, Brunswick Street, Dublin 7.

