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075 - Second Congress of Sodalties -- World Federation

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Second Congress of
Sodalities – World Federation

Marian Reprint No. 75

ABOUT THE REPRINT

Any attempt to summarize the message of the magnificent congress which brought together hundreds of members of the hierarchy and the religious and diocesan clergy and more than 5,000 laymen from every part of the globe will necessarily prove insufficient. Probably the best succinct account is that given by the Central Secretariate of Sodality of Our Lady in its report on the World Congress in *Acies Ordinata* (September-December, 1959), p. 125-126:

Particular characteristics of this Congress, mentioned at all times and in all places were: universality, mutual charity and perfect organization.

Universality of nations and languages, of races and ages, of the most different professions, social conditions and intellectual levels. All of them enthusiastically united in one spirit and one vocation, all of them trying to be ever better sodalists of Our Lady. Just walking around the campus about lunchtime, you could meet representatives of the whole worldwide Sodality family: young and old, rich and poor, yellow, black and white, learned and unlettered, minister and laborer, student and professor, father and mother, nun and brother, bishop and seminarian, priest and laity, all of them together like old friends.

This was another splendid reality: *charity*. Is this not *the* sign to recognize true followers of Christ? A delegate from the Far East at parting after the Congress, was simply weeping, when he told us: "Here I have seen and understood what Catholicism means." In the intolerable heat of the burning afternoons, about 70 workshops were active! "Caritas patiens est . . . omnia suffert, omnia credit, omnia superat, omnia sustinet"

The National and local organizers could not have done more. They deserve our immense gratitude for their really *perfect organization*. The New Jersey team-work (with national instructions and international supervision) was technically not always easy, but they have done it in a spirit of unlimited devotion and the most rigorous self-denial. Symbol and climax of their organizational talent was the Marian demonstration.

The first two documents of this reprint precede the actual World Congress; they are given here, since they present in a concise fashion the very reason for the existence of the Marian Sodality in the words of the highest body of the Sodality, the Central Secretariate, and the superior of all sodalities, Pope John XXIII.

We are deeply indebted to Rev. James J. McQuade, S.J., National Coordinator of the World Congress and Moderator of the Committee on Documents, for his most generous cooperation in preparing this issue.

(published with ecclesiastical approval)

A
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REPRINT

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Second Congress of Sodalities – World Federation

THE PURPOSE OF THE SODALITY

Address of Pope John XXIII Trinity Sunday, May 24, 1959, after having celebrated Mass for the Sodalities of Rome in the Vatican Basilica of St. Peter.

In a world which follows a philosophy opposed to the message of Christ, in a world lost in materialism and sensuality, the mere presence of a Sodality of Our Lady amounts to a marvelous diffusion of purity of mind and heart with all respect and friendliness.

Membership in a Sodality in itself means the introduction, maintenance and service of spiritual fervor in the whole vast general movement and in all the various groups which constitute Catholic Action properly so called in cooperation with the hierarchical apostolate of the Church.

In the complex of present day organizational life, every Christian knows that Sodalities of Our Lady do not stand by themselves apart, away from the general movement of Catholic Action, but that they produce in every diocese a whole complex of spiritual forces directed to the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ under the guidance of the bishop.

It is for this reason and for no other that the Church has been called militant: that it brings discipline to its sons, penetrates them with it, supports them and elevates them. We wish to state that the apostolate of Sodalities of Our Lady through the vitality and simplicity of the pure souls of which they are composed, through the freshness of their burning energies, can bring the whole general movement of the apostolate to a level of greater heights, to a foretaste of joy, of spiritual victory and of heavenly beatitude.

MARY AND THE CHURCH

Issued by the Central Secretariate of Sodalities of Our Lady for World Sodality Day, May 11, 1958

For the Mother Mary and the Mother Church, the Sodalities of Our Lady have special devotion. Their spirituality, turned completely toward the person of Jesus Christ, leads them consequently to love the Mother Mary and the Mother Church. Mary is Mother, the Church is Mother; two mothers who, therefore, through their deep union in the mystical order, may be called the sole Mother of the Total Christ. Consequently, one who loves Mary but separates her from the Church commits the mis-

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take of loving Christ without the Church. The Church is the continuation and the fulfillment of Christ. But in another sense, the Church is also the continuation and fulfillment of Mary. Without the Church Mary cannot be understood, and, in the actual order of salvation, without Mary the Church cannot be understood.

In fact, we see the Church in Mary, which as the Mystical Body of Christ belongs to the Virgin Mother and also continues today, and shall continue until the end of time, to create and to perfect itself under her motherly influence. In the Church we see Mary, the Immaculate, the immaculate origin of the whole Christ: the Head and the members. A similar mystical union between Christ, Mary and the Church determines evidently the nature of a total and perfect love of Christ. The love of Christ, which does not want to be partial or imperfect, necessarily includes a sincere desire to love the Mother Mary and the Mother Church.

For four centuries, Sodalitys of Our Lady developed this great devotion to the Madonna and the Church. This is an essential element of their spirituality, and that is precisely because their ideal is, to speak with the Apostolic Constitution *Bis Saeculari*: "to follow Christ in a perfect and absolute form." The most important thing for any sodality must be to restore Christ in themselves by a perfect and absolute imitation.

It can be easily understood that such imitation cannot be but a mere exterior expression. It must come from the interior and we must leave it to Christ to create in us the internal effects of grace. The life of Christ in us is that of Mary also, as well as that of the Church — it's the fruit of Mary, the fruit of the Sacrament of the Church. It is not only in our becoming Sons of God in the First-Born Son of the Father that we are fully depending on the Mother Mary and the Mother Church, but also for our particular and constant progress and perfection in Christ. Let us, therefore, be always more "equal to the Son's Image, Who is the First-Born among many brethren" (Rom. 8, 29), under the condition that we are created for the purpose of the Son's submission to the Father; with the purpose of identifying ourselves totally with the intention of Mary expressed in her "Fiat," and of identifying ourselves completely with that of the Bride, namely the Church.

With the *Bis Saeculari* there has been introduced a new period in the history of Sodalitys of Our Lady; a period of renewal that is accomplished in the restoration of the authentic Sodality Spirit, and in the technical arrangements of organization to suit the needs of modern times. Ten years after *Bis Saeculari* we can state with great satisfaction that the Apostolic Constitution of Pius XII has most favorably influenced the Sodality movement. Sodalitys did not fail to put into effect the great norms set by the Church, and thus have brought it about that the *Bis Saeculari* did not remain a dead letter only, but has become a living

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reality. Deepened in the interior life by the prescribed Spiritual Exercises and by ascetic Christianity carried on by militant lay people, a renewal of the apostolic spirit in the sense of modern Lay Apostolate did develop in the service of the Church as the most precious fruit of the *Bis Saeculari*.

In 1954 there was created the World Federation of Sodality of Our Lady, which was accepted as a Permanent Conference of the O.I.C. in 1956. This World Federation has given permission to all Sodality to develop an international activity which they did not fail to use during the past years. The World Federation has brought about a federated national and diocesan life, met the needs of modern life, promoted special projects in favor of Vietnam, Hungary, the Church in Silence, and Pontifical Works of Assistance.

Sodalities of Our Lady throughout the world are proving today the great importance of the Lay Apostolate.: The Apostolic Constitution *Bis Saeculari* gave them the impulse to conquer the World for Christ, an encouragement of greatest effect, proclaiming them solemnly as associations which can be called most definitely as "Catholic Action under the auspices and the inspirations of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Thus Sodality of Our Lady may themselves harmoniously work with those numerous unions of Catholic Action which are one of the dearest ideas of the Pope concerning the official Lay Apostolate.

Mary and the Church have thus sent their message to all Sodality of the world. The voice of Mary, the Lady of Massabielle, calls them to prayer and penance; therefore, the voice of the Church, especially in the *Bis Saeculari*, significantly resounds to have "Groups of Sodalists who are striving to fight for Christian Perfection for themselves and to communicate it to others," finally to restore the world in Christ, in Mary, in united and close collaboration with the Church. That is the most significant and most practical application of the theme of the World Sodality Day.

ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN XXIII TO SECOND WORLD SODALITY CONGRESS

We bid you give glory and power to the Lord; We bid you give glory to the names of Jesus and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His glorious Mother, in order that you may abound in hope, in joy and in the works of the apostolate.

This good message, which we deeply enjoy sending, this word from Our own lips and from the depths of Our Paternal Heart, you will hear, most beloved members of Sodality of Our Lady, gathered as you are for the Congress of the World Federation at Newark.

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It is not without congratulations and best wishes that we first greet most affectionately Our Venerable Brother Joseph Gawlina, Titular Archbishop of Madita, your general director, and then all the other Bishops present, your leaders of every degree, and the multitude of your Sodalists, the strength and flower of your youth in whose virtue we place the highest hope: "Look how they bloom in youth's fresh flower, what promise their of martial power!" (Aeneid VI, 771)

This very year on the feast of the Most Blessed Trinity, when We spoke to your fellow Sodalists of Rome in the Vatican Basilica, Our words about how much We think of you and with what love We embrace you, flowed spontaneously from Our inmost heart. We are happy now to affirm again this esteem for and this personal interest in you.

The Church is an "acies ordinata," a "battle line drawn up." There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the divisions of its devoted army greatly hasten the inevitable victories of the King of Peace if they work together striving to excell in virtue.

You have a record of which you can be justly proud. Your banners shine brilliantly with achievements for the glory of the name of Jesus. We know very well that you are the shock troops of this army. Day by day we propose ever greater things to you: We desire you to be second to none among the disciplined forces of this army in the exercise of the apostolate wherever the faith wavers, wherever charity calls you, wherever devotion to the law of God and its protection demands.

The heart of the matter which you have undertaken to discuss in your Congress is this: to what vocation are the members of Sodalities of Our Lady called in the crisis of the world today?

With good judgment you have decided to explore and to reduce to practical applications the proposals which were laid down in the Second Congress of the Lay Apostolate which was held in Rome in 1957. This shows most clearly how intimately you think with the Church, how you study the complexities of the world-wide scene and how, to the utmost of your forces, through suitable resolutions, you apply the force and efficacy of your action to the ever fluctuating crises of our time whatever the circumstances of these may be.

It is for this reason that the Sodality way of life is nourished at the very sources of Christian devotion and why it is directed to the work of the apostolate by the impelling force of divine love. Members of Sodalities of Our Lady embrace a life of personal holiness dedicated to the apostolate; they do this through consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This consecration by its very nature contains the pledge of rising to the challenges of the Sodality way of life for all of one's years on earth. This is the source from which there rises and flows forth the zeal by

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which nothing but the divine good pleasure is desired in everything and by which they have as a fixed norm or standard of action the service of the Church and the salvation of souls through prayer, through vital action and through the example of all the virtues.

However, it seems to Us, in order to respond to your vocation fruitfully and to come up in a more perfect and complete way to what all expect of you, that it is most important for you to be ever more and more that which you are by your very name: devotees of the Mother of God, promoters of devotion to her, dedicated to the extension of her maternal kingdom. Unquestionable signs seem to point to the fact that ours is a Marian Age and it likewise becomes clearer day by day that the way for men to return to God is assured by Mary, that Mary is the basis of our confidence, the guarantee of our security, the foundation of our hope.

We address you, most beloved, in the words of the Mellifluous Doctor: "Take away Mary, this star of the sea, a sea that is vast and extensive, and what else is there but rolling fog, but the shadow of death and densest darkness? Let us therefore venerate this Mary with every pulse of our hearts, with every movement of our desires and affections, for this is His will Who wishes us to have all through Mary. This, I say, is His will for us: that Mary, caring as she does in all and through all for the unfortunate, may quiet our anxieties, enliven our faith, strengthen our hope, banish our diffidence, abolish our smallness of spirit." (Sermo De Aquaeductu, VI-VII)

This is why, by cultivating earnestly the deepest love in your hearts for Mary, you are to make her virtues permeate your way of life, why you are to bring as many as possible to your way of imitating her, beseeching the Mother and Queen of Heaven and earth in the words: "Draw us, we will run after Thee in the odor of Thine ointments." (Cf. Cant. 1,3)

Peace and benediction to you and to your undertakings now and forever; may you have the power and help of the name of Jesus on through the ages; may you have the favor of the smiling eyes of the Virgin Mary; and may yours be the triumph of justice and truth! Amen.

THE SODALITIES OF OUR LADY AS A WORLD MOVEMENT

Rev. Louis Paulussen, S.J., Director, International Sodality Secretariate, Rome

If I may mention one conclusion that I draw from all this, I would say if we go on at the same tempo and with the same inspiration as in the past ten years, after twenty years Sodalities as a world movement will be renovated. The main reason for this statement is the serious development of interior life. I read the following in a report of the Second

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Professional Sodality Interchange in the United States, held in Cleveland last October: "In the Cleveland Alumni Sodality, the Sodality almost never accepts a candidate if he has not made an eight day retreat. It will never admit to the temporary or permanent Act of Consecration a person who had not made an eight day retreat, and who does not intend to make one annually as far as possible."

Ten years ago the practice of daily mental prayer was almost not adhered to at all in Sodalities. Today in all the countries which I have visited, I have seen the most generous attempts to keep this rule, which is, in its obligatory character, unique among the forms of Catholic Action. This is the main reason for my great optimism for the future . . . everywhere interior life is stressed, and the spiritual exercises — mental prayer, daily Mass, reception of the Holy Eucharist and Spiritual Direction — are practiced.

The World Federation of Sodalities, started in 1953, will be the most important organizational means to the ever greater realization of the high ideals of the true Sodality. What the World Federation has accomplished up to this point in its few years of existence has surprised the highest authorities in Rome. First of all, the international-minded spirit in many countries has been fostered by the World Federation. This is seen in the manner in which they reacted to Vietnam in 1955, to Hungary in 1956 and in the great work for the Church of Silence in 1957-58. Secondly, the cooperation of the World Federation with the Conference of the International Catholic Organizations and with the Permanent Committee of the Lay Apostolate in Rome has been most valuable. And, thirdly, everywhere in the world new national and diocesan federations have been established, in great measure because of the influence of the World Federation. Here in the United States, the National Federation of Sodalities is the immediate result of the World Federation. These federations result in a closer union with the hierarchy and with a greater cooperation with other associations.

Above all, the greatest hope for the future lies in the consciousness on the part of many Sodalists of the perpetuity of the Act of Consecration to Our Lady. The aim of the Sodality is to form perfect Catholics, and that is the reason why we have Our Lady as Our Queen, Our Advocate and Our Mother. Only she can give each Sodalist the clear knowledge of his own vocation in the lay apostolate. How strong we will be if all of us have an understanding of a vocation that is personal and irreplaceable! Our Lady, especially, will give her dedicated servants, her "visible hands on earth," this particular grace to know completely and practically the will of God in our lives.

VOCATION OF SODALIST TO LIVE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Miss Josette Beaubien, Canadian Delegate

WE may become saints by praying to and being docile to Mary, who has called us to the Sodality. Mary has received for her mission the forming of Jesus and the forming of all other men in the image of her Son. How will we be able to let ourselves be formed by her? A child can be educated by its mother only by living close to her. If we wish to become other Christs, we ought to live with Mary and to remain in her presence.

Mary is our model of the interior life in the mystery of the Incarnation. The angel was able to say to her, "The Lord is with you," because she was always with Him.

Mary is our model of the apostolic life in the mystery of the Visitation. She had only to greet her cousin in order that John the Baptist leap with joy in the womb of his mother. It is because she was bearing Jesus in her that Mary changed something in Elizabeth.

Mary is our model of life in the Church. At Pentecost, she had grouped the apostles around her to await the Holy Ghost.

SODALITY ACTION ACCORDING TO THE MIND OF THE CHURCH ON THE GREAT PROBLEMS OF TODAY

Robert A. Hays, M.D., American Delegate, Gesu Men's Sodality, Cleveland

There can be no rest for Sodalists until this unity of the entire world in Christ is accomplished. The magnitude of the task is no reason for discouragement and inactivity. Christ does not ask us to work alone. He and His Blessed Mother are always with those who are dedicated to Them. Christ does the work, but we must be His and Mary's human instruments. We must develop and nourish in ourselves that deep faith which Christ so much desired in his first apostles. He told them, "If you have Faith, though it be but like a grain of mustard seed, you can remove mountains."

MARIAN CHARACTER OF THE SODALIST'S INTERIOR LIFE

Rev. Michael Tsu, S.J., National Sodality Director, Formosa

"This solid interior education and the apostolic life which flows from it," recommends Pius XII, "must have a distinct Marian character."

To Sodalists, Mary appears as Mother of the Total Christ, of the Head as well as of the members of the Mystical Body. Mary, in a certain way, conceives and gives birth through the power of the Holy Spirit to all

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Christians, and especially to the *elite*. Sodalists desire intimacy with God. But they desire it through Mary. They desire Jesus but they will have Him only through her who gave Him birth. Jesus is our goal; Mary, the necessary channel. Also, all her life was one of intimacy with God, her immaculate heart was united to that of the God-Man, her Divine Son; as such, she is the perfect model of those who desire to live in God. No one can better form us to the image and likeness of Christ than Mary. Therein is found all the significance of the motto: *Ad Jesum per Mariam*; and of the first rule: "Through devotion to Mary and protection of so good a Mother, we labor at our own perfection and that of others.

The Sodalist is not only a devotee of the Blessed Virgin, he consecrates himself totally to her. By the act of consecration to Mary he pledges right from the outset his entire life and the very essence of his spiritual life to Mary. This is not a mere manifestation of piety to him, but something that resembles the "step" of a sub-deacon or the profession of a religious. "Consecration to the Mother of God in the Sodality is an entire gift of oneself throughout life and for all eternity. It is an operative gift consummated in the intensity of the life of Christ and Mary, in the apostolic life in which it makes the Sodalist the minister of Mary and, so to express it, her visible hands upon earth." (Pius XII)

The act of consecration is a signed contract between the Sodalist and Mary. Faithfully kept, this pact assures him on Mary's part the powerful assistance of a good Mother. She will undertake the task of giving Jesus to us and will help us communicate Him to others.

PARTICIPATION AT THE CONGRESS

Registered Delegates

United States	1,471	England	16	Japan	3
French Canada	290	Equador	22	Nicaragua	7
English Canada	185	Formosa	5	Panama	20
Mexico	385	France	2	Philippines	4
Colombia	60	Iraq	1	Peru	1
Rhodesia	1	Germany	9	Portugal	1
Argentina	9	Guatemala	4	Puerto Rico	4
Australia	2	Holland	3	Spain	12
Brazil	20	India	11	Switzerland	2
Chile	6	Ireland	7	Vietnam	2
China	3	Italy	15	Austria	1
Cuba	32				

Totals
 2,615 Full Registrations
 2,444 Daily Registrations
 5,059 Registrations

Delegates, not registered, from:

Ukraine	Czechoslovakia	Ghana
Hong-Kong	Hungary	Malta
Ceylon	Poland	

Totals: About 5,100 Delegates from 41 countries.

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