



# BLUE ARMY MILESTONE

by JOHN M. HAFFERT

The meeting of the Blue Army leaders in Rome, from January 8 to 12, was often an emotional one.

Sr. Mary Grace, A.M.I. (who for several years has been responsible for Blue Army organization in the United States) had worked for a year-and-a-half in preparation for the national election of Blue Army officers last October 12-14. These elections had to be approved by the International leaders and Sr. Mary Grace was present with me in Rome to defend their validity. (Her report appears elsewhere in this issue of SOUL.)

After exactly 30 years in this Apostolate (during which I have participated in many national and international meetings) two events in the Rome meeting stand out above any in meetings of the past 30 years.

### *First: My Wife Speaks*

My own wife (who is not even a national officer) asked to address the international meeting. At intervals she asked repeatedly that she might have just five minutes at the end of the session.

When the President adjourned the meeting, to my ever increasing amazement she spoke of my work and my personal life as no one had ever done before.

One of the leaders present (a woman from French Canada) had written a letter to many persons accusing me of personal financial gain from the Blue Army and of other matters which were not true (including a direct reference to my wife). And my wife called *specifically on this leader* to translate her talk into French for the international leaders!

"My husband is an exceptional and dedicated man," she said. "He gave more money to the Blue Army than he has ever received. I know. I have all of his personal records for the past 27 years. He did not want me to speak here. I decided to come and speak on his behalf because he would never tell you all he has done."

By now tears were in my eyes. Only a short time before this the Council had asked if I wanted a censure of the woman who had written calumnies and I said that I preferred that the entire matter be left in the hands of her spiritual director... and that I would send all information to him through our international secretary.

### *Swallowed Fear*

What is particularly touching about this is that my wife has a terrible fear of flying. I was amazed when she agreed this time to keep me company on the trip to Rome.

Now I knew why she had swallowed her fears and made the flight! Her concern and love suddenly made the ingratitude of many others over the years fade away.

### *Second: The Vote*

The second development was the result of the vote... despite an appeal from the President for a "no vote."

While it seemed evident beyond any doubt (*at least to the majority*) that the recent elections in the U.S. were valid, the President called for a "no vote" because the Council of the Laity said it *preferred* that a Bishop should not be president of a lay organization, and the U.S. Blue Army had elected a Bishop.

Abbé André Richard of Paris replied:

"A 'preference' is not a command, and the Blue Army is not a lay organization. It is, as its statutes say, *an association of the faithful* and it is as open to priests and religious (thousands of whom are members) as to laymen."

It was also added by our delegation that our recent elections in the United States were for only ONE year... (a year of consolidation and structure following our *first* elections after 30 years!). And the Bishop of the diocese of our National Center for all of these years was (even if he were not a bishop) *the one person most capable of giving our movement the stability it needed at this moment.*

The votes were cast.

Four members of the Council abstained. Five voted approval. By Robert's Rules... it was a *unanimous approval* of our U.S. elections and of our newly elected national officers!

### *Milestone for Blue Army*

This is a milestone in the history of our Apostolate (in which Satan lets no step be taken without contest!) because the U.S. elections were the first valid national Blue Army elections ever held. Bishop Venancio (Second Bishop of Fatima and until recently International President of the Blue Army) expressed joy in the result of the elections and sent a letter of congratulations to Bishop Ahr and Bishop Hastrich, the newly elected President and Vice-President. His Excellency said: "*May they [the U.S. elections] be of value [to the Blue Army] internationally.*"