

Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Principles

Visitation in Pairs

By Father Francis J. Peffley

There are several reasons why the Legion incorporated into its system the rule of working in pairs. Before looking into the practical reasons, I think the biblical suggestions should be noted: the saying of Christ that where two or more would gather in his name he would be with them through the working of the Holy Spirit, and his example of sending out his apostles two by two to evangelize. This is the formula adopted and adapted by the Legion: to know there is a presence at its meetings in the unseen persons of Mary and the Holy Spirit, and the assigning of pairs of legionaries to go out and evangelize. And just as the apostles came back and reported what they had experienced, so the legionaries do the same.

As for the practical side, the handbook mentions that being sent as a team is a source of mutual support and encouragement which negates timidity or the lack of courage that may be present where difficult assignments are concerned. And having an assigned partner can also help in the development of legionary discipline. If the legionary were assigned to work alone, he would have the freedom to choose or change the time and day convenient to his mood or desire – sometimes resulting in work left undone. Having to keep an appointment with a partner assures the completion of the assignment and personal development of the members.

There is also the aspect of certain assignments that are considered dangerous by the praesidium, where the assigning of only one legionary could never be considered. And in the special situation of a partner unavoidably prevented from keeping a working appointment – unless it is an unthreatening work such as a nursing home or hospital – the waiting partner is not to do the assignment. This rule includes all home visitations, regardless of the purpose of the intended visit, since all home visits must be assigned in pairs.

There is one unwritten rule that is probably followed by most teams of legionaries worldwide, and that is to pray together before, during, and after the assignment. During the assignment, while one member speaks, the other silently prays. Before the assignment, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament if a church is available, or a short prayer in the car on the way or at the doorstep of the home before and after the visit, is the legionary prelude to successful evangelizing work.

I once knew a very prayerful legionary in California at Thomas Aquinas College. Before going on his door-to-door assignment he would kneel in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament for *two hours* – an hour of prayer for each hour he would spend going door-to-door visitation! He said he spent the time praying for the people they were going to meet on the work. That legionary is now a Carthusian

monk living out a life of prayer. Naturally, the Legion doesn't expect its members to become monks and nuns, but it does recommend that attitude toward prayer – the importance of praying for souls that are sought in legionary work, whether or not they are contacted. The personal visit, wrapped in prayer, will in Our Lady's hands touch the ones that she intends to reach.