

*Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Things*

## **What to Bring to a Praesidium Meeting**

By Father Francis J. Peffley

To help insure that the praesidium is what it should be, ten “things” are necessary for members to bring to the weekly meeting.

### **1. Bring Yourself**

For legionaries of Mary, the weekly meeting – next to Holy Mass and receiving the sacraments – is the most important part of their spiritual life. Faithful attendance at every Legion meeting is a proof of love and provides weekly spiritual direction and formation. These come from the praying of the rosary, the spiritual readings, discussions on the readings and reports, the advice from the other members, and the Allocutio. Every meeting can be likened to being in the cenacle with Our Lady and the Apostles praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

### **2. Bring Your Love for Jesus and Mary**

The second “thing” to bring is our love for Jesus and Mary – *our* love for Jesus and Mary. In the legionary Promise the member says, “I take *my* place in the ranks of the Legion,” so at every meeting the member can say, “I bring *my* love for Jesus and Mary to this gathering,” remembering Our Lord’s promise that he is there where two or three are gathered in his name. Frank Duff once said that the Legion is “Mary all over again,” so we believe that she is mystically present at the meeting. It is the member’s opportunity to prove that love by faithful attendance.

### **3. Bring Love for Others**

Love for souls should be the apostolic trademark of the legionary, and what better place than at the meeting to show that love for our fellow members and subsequently those who are contacted on the work assignment. A dominant doctrine of the Legion is the Mystical Body of Christ, and legionaries are called to see Christ in each person they meet. This expression of one’s love for others is especially appropriate for new members and guests before, during and after the meeting.

### **4. Your Handbook**

The fourth thing needed at the Legion meeting is your own personal copy of the handbook. Our handbook should be considered a very precious possession. I have saved all my handbooks, in 5 different amended editions, from the time I

was a 10 year old junior legionary. And in each one there are notes and comments in the margins and lots of underlines. The handbook should be appreciated by being well read, well studied and well marked up!

## **5. Your Notebook**

The fifth necessary item is the companion to the handbook – the personal notebook. Just as the meeting and the work assignment are an inseparable unit, so are the notebook and the work report. Without the use of the notebook, the handbook says, “a suitable report will not be made,” and, more emphatically, “every member should have a notebook.” There is an ancient Chinese proverb which says that the faintest ink is stronger than the most powerful memory: things written down are more easily remembered. The handbook also advises business-like approach to the assignment and the report by use of the notebook: keeping things in order, noting important follow-up cases, being able to look up things all in one place, and even a birthday list of fellow members. It becomes a record of achievement for times of discouragement or disappointment; looking back over the compiled information will show a great gift of sacrifice and love for the Church and Our Lady given by the legionary.

## **6. Your Rosary**

Although God has given the members a sort of built-in rosary by giving them ten fingers, the Legion expects them to use the rosary. To say the rosary without the actual beads can cause distraction by forgetting which thumb or finger one is supposed to be on! And also, you will find no crucifix at the end of the fingers! It has been known too that the motion of the beads passing through the fingers helps relieve stress. A Catholic psychiatrist I know recommends the praying of the rosary for people who are stressed because tension leaves the fingers through the smooth, rhythmic motion of the beads. Also, the saying of the group rosary at the Legion meeting is an occasion for gaining a plenary indulgence, whereas the rosary prayed alone does not gain a plenary indulgence under that condition. It should also be remembered that saying the rosary with nine other people is worth the grace of ten rosaries, not just one.

## **7. The Tessera**

Number seven is the tessera. I like to think of it as the Legion of Mary credit card or as a token of membership. The word tessera is Latin for token, and the dictionary mentions the token as “a piece or part of the whole.” Although the prayers might be memorized, the habit of holding the tessera or viewing the picture can give one a sense of belonging, of realizing that, worldwide, there are countless other members, each possessing their part (or tessera) of the same “identification card,” which can be considered a symbol of the total Legion membership.

## 8. A Pen

The eighth thing to bring is not a pencil, but a pen. As already mentioned, the notebook is an important tool for the legionary, and the pen makes permanent what goes into the notebook. Aside from the necessary entries in the notebook, it should be realized that the praesidium meeting is a formation session in spirituality, and there are often occasions for writing down ideas or thoughts from the reading, comments or allocutio that the Holy Spirit inspires the member to record for personal use at a later time. The permanent notebook deserves the permanent writing with a pen! I still have my very first Legion notebook from my Junior praesidium days and the notes are clear and legible, thanks to my Legion of Mary pen!

## 9. The Sacrifice for the Secret Bag

Week after week, year in, year out, legionaries faithfully sacrifice their time and effort coming to meetings and doing assignments. Week after week, year after year, the secret bag makes its journey around the praesidium table. Members are conscious, according to rule, of taking their weekly turn of placing their hidden donation into the passing bag. Primarily the money is used for the global extension of the Legion, by supporting Envoys, Extension Workers and Legion missionaries. The secret bag money goes to spreading the Catholic Faith by the Legion worldwide and it is used to purchase the literature and sacramentals that are given out on legionary assignments.

Over all, the Legion exhorts the member to the two sacrifices of time and effort in the Legion cause of serving the Son of Mary in his Mystical Body. Little is mentioned, however, about the third sacrifice – the donation to the secret bag, which is the Legion's only source of income. This hidden sacrifice, which is known only to the member and our Blessed Mother, should have the same quality of generosity that is given to the other two sacrifices. Many times a legionary, out of love for her, will attend the meeting with a headache or with some other more serious disposition; *that same selfless outlook toward sacrifice should be present when the decision is made to put a donation into the secret bag*. Perhaps there are members who feel the giving up of the price of a weekly treat is an adequate donation, and are unaware of its disproportion to the personal sacrifice made to attend the meeting and to do the assignment. So members should ask themselves, in preparing the things to be brought to the weekly meeting, "Is my personal monetary love offering to Our Lady in the secret bag equal to my weekly sacrifice of membership?"

## 10. Bring Someone With You

Last but not least, the members should bring to the meeting a report of their recruiting contacts, and, if possible, an actual, real live guest! This means that between weekly meetings, members should be on the lookout for opportunities to

invite people, offering a ride if needed. Let them know there is no obligation, that they can't join for three months, and what a blessing it is to be in the Legion. If a praesidium of eight, trusting in our Mother, concentrated on this suggestion, she would see to it that more than eight would be around her table, and that many more souls would be reached for her to share her love. So let all members be sure not to bring less than all ten things to the praesidium meeting.