

Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Work

Home Visitation

By Father Francis J. Peffley

The title *Home Visitation* is an umbrella term for several sub-divisions of the work of home visitation. From Shut-ins to New Families to Parish Census to Lapsed Catholics to Door-to-Door evangelization, the Legion considers *the home* to be its most important apostolic target because it is the dwelling place of souls, the ideal location for personal contact. The handbook says it is the avenue of greatest good for the Legion and is its basic characteristic.

Whenever an organization of the Church does what it's made for, it is blessed with special grace from heaven. Since home visitation is the main charism of the Legion it can expect great results if remaining true to it. Our own parish has proven this rule where, on a yearly basis, an average of thirty people come into or back to the Church, because of contact with them in their homes. This is the preferred work of the Legion – to visit people on their home ground, making personal contacts and building friendly relationships for continued visits. The handbook calls attention to the principle that every home should be viewed from the angle of rendering service.

There are different methods of approach: "We're visiting all the homes in the area at the request of the pastor of _____ Catholic Church (or "at the request of Father _____" if parishioners); would this be a good time to come in and visit?" usually evokes a pleasant reception; the promotion of Enthronement of the Sacred Heart or the Pilgrim Virgin program gains entrance, wherein conversation often leads to the uncovering of spiritual conditions that need pastoral attention – a fairly common result – and often the main reason for the visit! A smiling, friendly presence on the doorstep usually assures a friendly welcome in return.

During the conversation the legionaries will be conscious of determining – without asking direct questions – three levels of information: the state of life, the state of mind and state of soul of their contact. Depending on the outcome of the conversation and personal circumstances, using this simple, non-intrusive method of observation, the legionaries will have gleaned basic information needed to offer spiritual help through future visits: their social status – family background, where they work, etc.; whether they happened to be emotionally upset or worried; their religious opinions and relationship with God.

It is said that a 70/30 ratio makes a good Legion visit: let those visited speak 70 percent and legionaries speak 30 percent. But once into a good conversation, legionaries should – without lecturing, which is contrary to Legion spirit and attitude – keep in mind the "triple state" method mentioned above by gently

drawing out the contacts in order to diagnose the progress of the visit. I think legionaries, in representing the priest, can be sort of “doctors of souls” on their assignments – assessing the conditions, contemplating remedies, and prescribing the medicine of prayer and spiritual exercises!

This kind of visitation will bring legionaries into occasional contact with practicing and non-practicing Catholics, non-Catholics and even non-Christians; where they will be challenged to raise good people to a higher level of holiness; where there will be poverty situations that will be opportunities for acts of service. But more importantly, when legionaries find themselves in homes where everyday living includes sin, breeds social unhappiness or harbors pastoral problems, it is here that they become “Occasions of Grace” by offering the loving and courageous service of “bringing the people to the priest” as the handbook says.