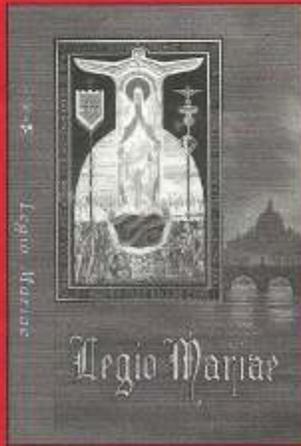




*Some  
Handbook  
Reflections*



The material in this booklet has been compiled, for the benefit of legionaries, in order to help them with the study of the Handbook. In particular it attempts to give certain sections of the Handbook in greater detail, such as the Government of the Legion.

It should not, however, be taken as a substitute for the study of the Handbook, but rather as an extension of, or an aid to, such study.

**April 1996**  
**Issued by the Legion of Mary,**  
**Morning Star Avenue,**  
**Brunswick Street,**  
**Dublin 7,**  
**Ireland.**

# CONTENTS

True Devotion to Mary	
Study of the Handbook	
The Praesidium Meeting	
Duties of Officers of Praesidia	
Reports at the Praesidium Meeting	
Standing Instruction	(First Part)
	(Second Part)
	(Third Part)
	(Fourth Part)
The Junior Legion	
Auxiliary Membership	
The Breviary	
The Patricians	
Some Aspects of Legion Government	
Planning	
An Annual Planning Meeting	
Planning the Year's Programme	
Extension of the Legion	
Annual Audits	
Visitation of Praesidia	
Elections	
Exploratio Dominicalis	
The Legion Congress	
Establishing Legion Councils	
The Comitium	
Attendance at Council Meetings	
Council Reports	

## **TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY**

It is desirable that the practice of the Legionary devotion to Mary should be rounded off and given the distinctive character which has been taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort under the titles of “The True Devotion” or the “Slavery of Mary”, and which is enshrined in his two books, “True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin” and the “Secret of Mary.” (Legion Handbook, Chap. 6.5)

“Furthermore, Marian spirituality, like its corresponding devotion, finds a very rich source in the historical experience of individuals and of the various Christian communities present among the different peoples and nations of the world. In this regard, I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of this spirituality, the figure of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments. I am pleased to note that in our time too new manifestations of this spirituality and devotion are not lacking.” (Pope John Paul II: Redemptoris Mater, 48)”

“It is intriguing that the Legion should start immediately after what I might call a “Patrician discussion” on the subject of the True Devotion, as if the minds of the future members had to be fully acclimatised to Mary before they were fit for membership; before they could become the Legion of Mary.” (Frank Duff: Virgo Praedicanda, 21)

“The fact is that one cannot emphasise too much the value of the True Devotion as a supplement to the Handbook and the entire Legion system. St. Louis-Marie’s words of fire uplift Our Lady from the level of pure doctrine and give her substance as a person, our Mother with intimate charge of our lives, utterly indispensable to us, our Queen, our leader, the very thought of whom inspires courage and stimulates one to undertake the impossible.” (Frank Duff: Victory through Mary, 39)

The following books on the True devotion to Mary are available from the Concilium: -

- Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. (St. Louis Marie de Montfort)
- The Secret of Mary. (St. Louis Marie de Montfort)
- The De Montfort Way. (Frank Duff)
- True Devotion to Mary. (Rev. Michael Kennedy, C.C.)

## **STUDY OF THE HANDBOOK**

Chapter 33, Section 10, of the Handbook deals with the importance of studying the handbook. The section opens with the following: “It is imperative that every member should study the handbook thoroughly. It is the official exposition of the Legion. It contains in briefest possible compass what it is important that every

properly equipped legionary should know of the principles, the laws, the methods and the spirit of the organisation.” We cannot say we know the Legion of Mary if we do not know the handbook. This means we need to study it every week. This section continues – “Members – and in particular officers – who do not know the handbook cannot possibly work the system properly; while, on the other hand, increased knowledge will always bring increased efficiency.”

How much more we can know about the splendour of the Eucharist, the wonders of the Mystical Body and the treasures of the True Devotion to Mary if we study it. Many of the difficulties about Government of the Legion would be solved if the relevant section was read carefully. Duties of officers are well explained; are they read often?

The ideas of the handbook are not obscure – “This has been proved by the fact that countless legionaries, ordinary and even simple people, have completely grasped those ideas and have made them food and fibre for their lives.”

In addition to the wealth of material carried over from previous editions, the current edition (1993) of the Handbook contains the up to date Church teaching, up to date scripture quotations and new material. Even very young legionaries should be given a copy. Here the senior legionaries play a very important role in helping these young people to understand the beauty of the handbook. If we all resolve to study it better, Mary’s army of legionaries will be better equipped to do great things for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

## **THE PRAESIDIUM MEETING**

“In an atmosphere made supernatural by its wealth of prayer, by its devotional usages, and by its sweet spirit of fraternity, the praesidium holds a weekly meeting ...” (Handbook 11:5)

The handbook devotes many pages to the praesidium meeting. It may be worthwhile reflecting on some aspects of this fundamental and vital part of the Legion system, mindful of the words of the handbook: “So it can be expected that a praesidium which is true to its ideals will bestow around itself life and renewal and healing and solutions.” (19:23)

**SETTING OF THE MEETING:** The members should sit around a table at one end of which the Legion altar is placed. Traditionally, the President sits at the other end facing the altar. The altar must not be separated from the meeting-table or so placed as to remove the statue outside the circle of the members.

**THE LEGION ALTAR:** “It should be regarded as an honourable duty on the part of some legionary to keep the vexillum and the vases and candlesticks clean and bright, and duly provided with flowers and candles at the expense of the

praesidium.” (Handbook 18:1) It should not be necessary to add that the statue and altar cloth also should be kept in good condition.

PUNCTUALITY: “... a punctual start (so necessary for the proficiency of the praesidium) will not be possible unless the officers are in attendance some time in advance in order to make the requisite preparations.” (Handbook 18:2)

THE PRAYERS: Regarding the manner of saying the prayers “...pray as if Our Blessed Lady herself, instead of her statue, were visibly present.” (Handbook 19:13)

The prayers are to be one with the meeting: “What the breathing is to the human body, the Rosary is to the Legion meetings” (Handbook 19:14). In regard to special prayers at the meeting: “If it is a question of supplementing the Legion prayers by some other prayers for special intentions, the ruling is that the existing prayers are already long enough, and should not ordinarily be added to.” (Handbook 19:16) At a fixed time, usually about an hour after the opening of the meeting, the Catena Legionis is recited, all standing.

SPIRITUAL READING: “Its duration should be limited to about five minutes.” (Handbook 18:5)

THE ALLOCUTIO: “In the event of the absence of the Spiritual Director, the commentary (on the handbook) should be made by the President or by any member designated by the President. It is stressed that a mere reading from the handbook or any other document does not suffice for the allocutio. The allocutio should not occupy more than five or six minutes.” (Handbook 18:11)

WORK SHEET, ETC.: “No praesidium meeting is ever to begin without its written programme, termed the “Work Sheet.” This should be drawn up in advance of each meeting and from it the President will call the business.” (Handbook 18:2) The Minute book, Attendance roll, Treasurer’s book and secret bag will be required also at the meeting. The praesidium should have also roll books for praetorians, auxiliaries and adjutorians.

MINUTES: “... the minutes should be written in ink or typed, and in a book of good quality.” (Handbook 34:4:3)

MEMBERS’ REPORTS: “In its own way the report is as important to the meeting as the prayers.” (Handbook 18:9) “Every member should have a notebook ... without its aid a suitable report will not be made.” (Handbook 33:5)

“A particular application of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ may be made to the Legion meetings, especially to the praesidium meeting which forms the heart of the Legion system.” (Handbook 21)

## DUTIES OF OFFICERS OF PRAESIDIA

“Obviously, one’s first care must be for the natural sources of zeal, the officers ... If the officers fail, everything withers. If they lose fire and enthusiasm, the body they control will reproduce the same process.” (Handbook 14:12)

Chapter 34 of the handbook details the duties of officers of praesidia. With the aim of encouraging officers to make themselves familiar with the full content of that chapter, a few points from it are quoted below:

**THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR:** “As the Legion judges its success entirely according to the spiritual qualities developed in its members and brought to bear by them on their work, it follows that the Spiritual Director, on whom the duty primarily falls of inspiring the members with these qualities, is the very mainspring of the praesidium.”

**THE PRESIDENT:** “A principal duty of the president shall be to attend the meetings of the Curia .... He shall allocate the work and receive the members’ reports on their work. He shall remember that he is there as the Legion’s trustee for the faithful carrying out of the system in all its details. In the absence of the Spiritual Director, he shall give the Allocutio or assign someone to give it. ...He shall instruct and supervise the other officers in the performance of their duties .... He shall cultivate the spirit of fraternity in the praesidium, knowing that when this is gone all is gone. ... He shall satisfy himself that the work of each legionary is being done: (a) in the right spirit; (b) along the right lines; (c) that all the good the Legion would wish to see reaped in each case is in fact achieved; (d) that old work is from time to time returned upon; and (e) that an enterprising spirit is kept alive in the members by the regular breaking of new ground. ...He shall secure from the members the degree of effort and self-sacrifice of which they are capable. He shall, like every other officer and member, satisfy the obligations of membership by doing the ordinary work of the praesidium. ... he must never be found wanting in the virtue of docility to ecclesiastical authority, ...”

**THE VICE PRESIDENT:** “It shall be the duty of the Vice President to attend the meetings of the Curia. ... He shall preside at the praesidium meeting in the event of the absence of the President. ... In particular the Vice President is charged with the duty of looking after membership. ... He shall keep the various registers relating to active, praetorian, adjutorian and auxiliary membership. ... He shall see that auxiliary members are visited at the end of their probation period. ... He shall notify the active probationers of the drawing to a close of their probation, and shall make all arrangements for the taking of the Promise. ... He shall note the fact that a member is absenting himself from the meetings; and ... endeavour to prevent a complete falling away from membership. ... He shall see to it that the duty of prayer for the deceased members is not neglected.

... He shall visit the sick members, or secure that they are visited by other members. ...

THE SECRETARY: "The Secretary shall attend the meetings of the Curia. ... Great pains should be taken with the preparation of the minutes, which should be read in distinct tones. The minutes should be written in ink or typed, and in a book of good quality. ... He shall punctually furnish all information and all returns which may be required by the Curia."

THE TREASURER: "The Treasurer shall attend the meetings of the Curia. ... He shall be responsible for the making and receiving of all payments by and to the praesidium and for the keeping of full and properly written accounts thereof. He shall see that the secret bag collection is made at each meeting. He shall pay money only on the direction of the praesidium, and shall lodge funds in hand to the credit of the praesidium in such manner as the latter may direct. He shall bear in mind the recommendation as to accumulated funds which is contained in chapter 35 on Funds, and shall from time to time bring the matter before the praesidium."

## **REPORTS AT THE PRAESIDIUM MEETING**

"The report connects the work with the praesidium and therefore it must be a clear presentation of the doings of the member – in a sense as vivid as the picture on a cinema screen – such as will enable the other members mentally to engage in that work, to judge it, to comment on it, to learn from it. Accordingly, the report must show what has been attempted and achieved, and in what spirit; the time spent; the methods used; what has not been gained and the persons who have not been touched." (Handbook 18:9)

It may be useful to remind ourselves of what the handbook says in regard to reports at the praesidium meeting as set out particularly in chapters 18, 19 and 33. Some points from those chapters are mentioned below:

The report, and all discussion upon it, must be delivered in a tone of voice which will reach every part of the room. Presidents must refuse to accept reports which require an effort to hear.

In its own way the report is as important to the meeting as the prayers. They supplement each other. Both elements are necessary to a praesidium meeting.

The meeting should be bright and cheerful. Therefore the reports should be such as will interest as well as inform the meeting.

The report must not be too long; nor too brief; above all, it must not be a routine phrase .... The praesidium cannot supervise a work unless it is fully informed about it .... If the report gives little indication as to what the legionary is really

doing then the praesidium can exert only a vague control over that member's actions. It will not stimulate him. It will not safeguard him.

No legionary should be content to give a merely good report. Why not aim high, and deliberately set out to add to the perfect performance of the work a model report to the praesidium.

It is certain that anyone, who tries to make his report as he imagines Our Lady would make it, will not deliver a report which is inadequate from any point of view.

An important part of the training of the member should lie in the learning of the methods of other members, as disclosed through their reports, and in the hearing of the comments which one's own reports elicit from experienced legionaries. It follows that if a report gives only meagre information, it cannot be the means of helping either the member who makes it or those who listen to it.

To remove from members the obligation to furnish adequate reports is also to remove that sense of minute control which means so much in the Legion system. No effective advice or guidance or criticism can be given so that the essential idea of the praesidium is frustrated. The education and safeguarding of the members which are based on the reports, are rendered impossible.

Unless the members' weekly reports are adequately detailed to enable the minute control already referred to, indiscretion will almost certainly occur, with perhaps detriment to the Legion.

Every member should have a notebook in which will be kept a brief record of cases .... without its aid a suitable report will not be made.

### **STANDING INSTRUCTION (First Part)**

Legionary duty requires from each legionary:-

"First the punctual and regular attendance at the weekly meetings of the praesidium, and the furnishing there of an adequate and audible report on the work done." (Handbook 18:7)

It may be worthwhile reflecting on the following extracts from the handbook which deal with points contained in the first part of the Standing Instruction quoted above:

**PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE:** "Punctually at the appointed time, the members shall be in their places, and the meeting shall begin. But a punctual start (so necessary for the efficiency of the praesidium) will not be possible unless the

officers are in attendance some time in advance in order to make the requisite preparations.” (18:2)

“Legionaries arriving late for the opening prayers shall kneel down and recite privately the prayers (on the Tessera) which precede the rosary and the invocations which follow it. But the loss of the praesidium rosary cannot be repaired. In no circumstances can the persistent late-coming or early departure of a member be permitted. It is true that the work may be done and reported upon, but indifference to the missing of the opening or concluding prayers may well be believed to denote a cast of mind alien to or even hostile to the real spirit of the Legion, which is a spirit of prayer. Harm, not good, would be the fruit of such a membership.” (19:10)

REGULAR ATTENDANCE: “Foremost in its system, the primary obligation of each member, the Legion sets the duty of attendance at its meetings.” (11:4)

“The legionaries shall therefore regard attendance at their weekly praesidium meeting as their first and most sacred duty to the Legion. Nothing else can supply for this; without it their work will be like a body without a soul.” (11:5)

“It is easier to see the value of doing a work than the value of attendance at a meeting to report on that work, yet the meeting is the prime duty. The meeting is to the work as the root is to the flower; the latter will not live without the former.” (33:1)

ADEQUATE REPORT: “In its own way the report is as important to the meeting as the prayers. They supplement each other ... The report connects the work with the praesidium and therefore it must be a clear presentation of the doings of the member – in a sense as vivid as the picture on a cinema screen – such as will enable the other members mentally to engage in that work, to judge it, to comment on it, to learn from it. Accordingly, the report must show what has been attempted and achieved, and in what spirit; the time spent; the methods used; what has not been gained and the persons who have not been touched. The reports should be such as will interest as well as inform the meeting ... The report must not be too long nor too brief; above all, it must not be a routine phrase. Failure in these directions not only shows that the member is neglecting his duty but also that the other members are assisting him in this neglect. This strikes at the whole legionary idea of the supervision of the work. The praesidium cannot supervise a work unless it is fully informed about it.” (18:9)

“Every member should have a notebook: without its aid a suitable report will not be made.” (33:5)

AUDIBLE REPORT: “The report, and all discussion upon it, must be delivered in a tone of voice which will reach every part of the room. A report, however full and faithful, which is inaudible to many of those present is – having regard to its

depressing effect on the meeting – worse than no report. Whispering is no sign of modesty or gentleness, as some apparently imagine. Who so modest, who so gentle as Mary? Yet could anyone imagine her mumbling her words, or talking in such a fashion that those close to her could not hear what she was saying? O legionaries! Imitate your Queen in this, as in all other ways.” (18:9)

## **STANDING INSTRUCTION (Second Part)**

“Legionary duty requires from each legionary: -

... Second, the daily recitation of the Catena” (Handbook 18:7)

### **BASIC DUTIES OF LEGIONARIES ... THE DAILY RECITATION BY EACH LEGIONARY OF THE CATENA LEGIONIS (CHAIN OF THE LEGION)**

composed principally of the Magnificat, Mary’s own prayer, the evening hymn of the Church, “the most humble and grateful, the most sublime and exalted of all the Canticles.” (St. Louis-Marie de Montfort) As the name implies, this is the link between the Legion and the daily life of all its members, active and auxiliary, and the bond which unites them one to another and to their Blessed Mother. The name is suggestive, too, of the obligation of daily recitation. Let the idea of a chain, composed of links – each link vital to perfection – be to the legionary an admonition against forming a broken link in the Legion’s chain of daily prayer. Legionaries whom circumstances have forced to relinquish active membership (and even those whom less weighty reasons have caused to forsake the ranks) should still keep up this beautiful practice and preserve at least this bond with the Legion unbroken during life.” (Handbook 33:6)

“I lay special stress on the Magnificat because it seems to me that it may be considered, in a way perhaps not commonly realised, a document of outstanding importance in its bearing on Mary’s Motherhood of grace. The most holy Virgin , identified with Christ as we know her to have been from the moment of the Annunciation, proclaims herself the representative of the entire human race, intimately associated with ‘all generations’ and bound up with the destinies of those who are truly her own. This canticle of hers is the song of her spiritual maternity.” (Bernard, O.P.: Le Mystere de Marie)” (Handbook 18:10)

“The Magnificat is Mary’s prayer par excellence, the song of the Messianic times in which there mingles the joy of the ancient and new Israel. As Saint Irenaeus seems to suggest, it is in Mary’s canticle that there was heard once more the rejoicing of Abraham (cf Jn 8:56) who foresaw the Messiah, and there rang out in prophetic anticipation the voice of the Church ... And in fact Mary’s hymn has spread far and wide and has become the prayer of the whole Church in all ages.” (Marialis Cultus 18)” (Handbook 18:10)

“THE LEGION PICTURE ... 2. The picture is a most complete, in fact an astonishing showing forth of the devotional outlook of the Legion. 3. The

legionary prayers are made visible ... 4. The Catena is represented as to its name by the chain border ... Truly befitting the antiphon is the portrayal of Mary, coming forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in battle array. On her brow she bears a brilliant star, to mark her who is the true Morning Star, bathed from the first in the beams of redeeming grace and heralding the dawn of salvation. The Magnificat is represented by its opening verse, the ever-present thought of Mary's mind, appropriately set in letters of fire above her head. The Magnificat sings of the triumph of her humility. It is no less now than then the will of God to depend upon the humble origin of Nazareth for his conquests. By the agency of those united with her, he continues to accomplish great things for his name. The versicle and response are those of the Immaculate Conception, a primary devotion of the Legion, which is expressed in the crushing of the serpent. The words set in the border: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head." (Gen 3:15) have the same reference. The picture shows this undying warfare: Mary and the serpent; her children and the serpent's offspring; the Legion and the powers of evil, which fall back scattered in defeat. The Catena prayer is that of Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, Mother of God and Mother of all men." (Handbook 25)

### **STANDING INSTRUCTION (Third Part)**

"Legionary duty requires from each legionary: - .... Third, the performance of a substantial active legionary work, in the spirit of faith, and in union with Mary, in such fashion that in those worked for and in one's fellow-members, the Person of our Lord is once again seen and served by Mary, his Mother." (Handbook 18:7)

The following are just a few extracts from the wealth of material in the handbook dealing with the contents of the third part of the Standing Instruction quoted above:

**SUBSTANTIAL ACTIVE LEGIONARY WORK:** "This work should be "substantial", that is, the legionary should spend a couple of hours a week at it. The work must represent some definite active duty assigned by the praesidium, not something dictated by the pleasure of the individual legionary. Prayers or other spiritual exercises, however considerable, do not satisfy this obligation, or even supply in part the place of active work." (33:2(a))

**IN THE SPIRIT OF FAITH:** "The Legion is built in the first place upon a profound faith in God and in the love he bears his children. The legionaries' essential mainstay must be this knowledge of the companionship of God, their good Father, in their two-fold work of sanctifying themselves and serving their neighbour. Nothing can stand in the way of success except want of trust. If there be but faith enough, God will utilize us to conquer the world for him." (5)

IN UNION WITH MARY: “As no one can even attempt the service of his neighbour other than in the company of Mary, similarly no one can discharge this duty worthily except by entering to some degree into the intentions of Mary. It follows that the more close the union with Mary, the more perfectly is fulfilled the divine precept of loving God and serving one’s neighbour. (1 Jn 4:19-21)” (9:2)

IN THOSE WORKED FOR AND IN ONE’S FELLOW-MEMBERS THE PERSON OF OUR LORD IS ONCE AGAIN SEEN AND SERVED BY MARY, HIS MOTHER:

“At the very first meeting of legionaries the supernatural character of the service, which they were undertaking, was stressed. Their approach to others was to be brimful of kindness, but their motive was not to be that merely natural one. In all those whom they served they were to see the Person of Jesus Christ himself. What they did to those others – even the weakest and lowest – they were to remember that they did it to Our Lord himself, according to his own words: “Truly, I tell you, Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Mt 25:40) As at the first meeting, so ever since. No effort has been spared to bring home to legionaries that this motive is to be the basis of their service, and likewise that the discipline and internal harmony of the Legion rest chiefly upon the same principle. In their officers and in each other they must recognize and reverence Christ himself. In order to ensure that this transforming truth will remain impressed on the minds of the members, it is incorporated in the Standing Instruction which is read monthly at the praesidium meeting. In addition, the Standing Instruction emphasises the other legionary principle that the work must be done in such a spirit of union with Mary that it is she, working through the legionary, who really performs it.” (9:1)

“Always will the legionary bear in mind that he is visiting not as a superior to an inferior, not as one equal to another, but as an inferior to his superior, as the servant to the Lord.” (39:17)

“... it is most certain that Mary wills that there be shown to the Mystical Body of her Beloved Son just such another love as she lavished on his actual body. In this she will help her legionaries. Where she finds in them the gleam, the readiness to love, she will fan it to a consuming flame.” (39:18)

### **STANDING INSTRUCTION (Fourth Part)**

“Legionary duty requires from each legionary:-  
... Fourth, absolute respect for the confidential nature of many matters discussed at the meeting or learned in connection with the legionary work.” (Handbook 18:7)

The contents of the fourth part of the Standing Instruction, quoted above, are dealt with particularly in section 20, chapter 19, and section 4, chapter 33, of the handbook. The following are some extracts from the handbook:

**“Confidentiality of paramount importance.** The Standing Instruction, read to the members month after month, should bring home to them the all important place of confidentiality in the Legion’s scheme of things. Lack of courage in a soldier is accounted shameful, but treachery is infinitely worse. It is treachery to the Legion to repeat outside matters of a confidential nature learned or discussed at the praesidium meeting. At the same time, there must be reason in all things. Sometimes over-zealous people may urge in the interests of charity legionaries should withhold from the praesidium all names and reports which involve neglect of religion. In this apparently plausible suggestion there is an error, and a threat to the Legion’s life, as the praesidium could not function satisfactorily under such conditions.” (19:20)

**“Inviolable confidence must be preserved** by the legionaries in regard to what they hear at their meetings or in the course of their work. This knowledge comes to them because they are legionaries, and it would be an intolerable treachery to the Legion for them to divulge it. Reports must, of course, be made to the praesidium meeting, but even here there must be circumspection. This question is more fully discussed in section 20, chapter 19, The Meeting and the Member.” (33:4)

In dealing with the question of reports to the praesidium meeting, section 20, chapter 19, says among other things: “The unit of action and knowledge and charity is neither the individual member nor the pair of co-visitors. The praesidium is that unit, and the detail of all ordinary cases is due to that unit. If the reports are withheld, the unit becomes ineffective. Under the plea of charity the real interests of charity are prejudiced.” To remove from members the obligation to furnish adequate reports is also to remove that sense of minute control which means so much in the Legion system. No effective advice or guidance or criticism can be given so that the essential idea of the praesidium is frustrated. The education and safeguarding of the members, which are based on the reports, are rendered impossible. Unless the members’ weekly reports are adequately detailed to enable the minute control already referred to, indiscretions will almost certainly occur, with perhaps, detriment to the Legion.” “Strangest of all, the bond of confidentiality itself becomes loosened. For the guarantee of legionary confidentiality (so wonderfully honoured at present) is the praesidium grip upon the member. If this grip is weakened, the bond of confidentiality weakens with it. In a word, the praesidium is not only the unit of charity and confidentiality, but is also their mainstay.” It is recognised, of course, that an occasional extreme case may be encountered in which the circumstances will suggest an absolute privacy. Recourse should at once be had to the Spiritual Director (or, if he be unavailable, to some other competent adviser) who will decide the point.

## THE JUNIOR LEGION

“ ... it should be regarded as a necessary part of the system of each senior praesidium to conduct a junior praesidium.” (Handbook 14:22)

Senior praesidia which do not have junior praesidia attached might give serious consideration to the above words. Obviously, some praesidia experience difficulty in this matter, particularly, in regard to providing senior officers for a junior praesidium. Due weight should be given, however, to the value of the junior Legion to young people and every effort should be made to overcome the obstacles which lie in the way. The following words, taken from the Papal Exhortation, “Christifideles Laici”, which are quoted in chapter 36:22 of the handbook, should be an incentive to senior praesidia in this regard:

“ ... young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as leading characters in evangelisation and participants in the renewal of society.” (CL 46)

The following are just suggestions in regard to some steps which might be taken by a senior praesidium towards setting up a junior praesidium:

1. Consideration by the praesidium;
2. Consultation with the senior Curia and with the junior Curia, where one exists;
3. Consultation with the Parish Priest and school authorities;
4. Set a date for the first meeting;
5. The members of the praesidium pray for this intention and invite their auxiliary members to pray for it also;
6. A small hand-out might be prepared inviting young people to consider membership;
7. The praesidium canvasses young people in their area through visitation of homes, schools and recreation areas;
8. In the course of home visitation, as well as speaking to the young people they meet, the legionaries inform parents of the proposal and explain to them the value of Legion membership to their children;
9. One of the senior members is asked to take on the Presidency of the new junior praesidium. If possible, a second senior member should be asked to become Vice President;
10. Consideration should be given to a programme of works for the juniors.

The following points are taken from chapter 36:1 of the handbook, on the subject of Junior Praesidia:

- (a) Praesidia for persons under 18 years may be established with the approval of the Curia and subject to any special conditions which may be deemed necessary;

- (b) It is to be regarded as an essential that at least the President should be an adult and a second adult officer would be desirable. If these senior legionaries remain members of the senior praesidium, the work of officering the junior praesidium satisfies their work obligation;
- (c) The purpose (in setting up a junior praesidium) is not primarily the doing of a certain amount of useful work, but the training and spiritualising of its members ....;
- (d) No junior who has reached 16 years should be given work which would not be accepted from seniors;
- (e) A minimum of one hour's work may be accepted from the junior member;
- (f) It would be permissible for a junior to perform his work in company with a senior legionary;
- (g) In suggestions for works for juniors, emphasis is placed on: teaching the Catechism, recruiting for catechism classes, visitations of children in hospital or other institutions, or in their own homes, and visitation of the infirm and the blind and the performing for them of all sorts of needed services.

## **AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP**

“Every praesidium which has a sense of appreciation of the power of prayer will strive to possess a well-filled roll of auxiliary members. Consider the generosity of these auxiliaries who have given up to the Legion part of the precious breathings of their souls. What possibilities of sanctity are in them! The Legion is under infinite debt to them. That debt it can beautifully repay by leading those auxiliaries on to perfection.” (Handbook, Chapter 37:14)

The following points are taken from AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP. (Handbook 16:2)

This membership is open to priests, religious and laity. It consists of those who are unable or unwilling to assume the duties of active membership, but who associate themselves with the Legion by undertaking a service of prayer in its name.

This service need not be offered directly on behalf of the Legion. It will suffice to offer it in honour of Our Blessed Lady .... However, it is strongly recommended that this and all other legionary service be offered to Our Lady as an unreserved gift to be administered according to her intentions.

AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP is divided into two degrees:

**THE PRIMARY DEGREE: THE AUXILIARIES:** Its service consists in the daily recitation of the prayers comprised in the tessera, namely: the invocation and prayer of the Holy Spirit; five decades of the rosary and the invocations which follow them; the Catena; and the prayers described as “concluding prayers.”

These may be divided throughout the day, as convenient. Persons who are already saying a daily rosary for any intention whatsoever may become auxiliaries without obligation to say an additional rosary.

**THE HIGHER DEGREE: THE ADJUTORIANS:** It comprises those who will (a) recite daily all the prayers of the tessera and in addition (b) agree to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion daily, and to recite daily an Office approved by the Church.

Failure once or twice a week to fulfil the required conditions would not be regarded as a notable failure in the duty of membership. An Office is not required from religious who are not bound by their Rule to say one.

This twofold auxiliary membership is to the Legion what its wings are to a bird.

There are no age limits in the case of auxiliary membership. Special appeal is addressed to priests and religious to become adjutorians. The Legion earnestly desires union with this consecrated class, which has been specially deputed to lead lives of prayer and close intimacy with God, and which forms in the Church a glorious power-station of spiritual energy. Effectively linked up with that power-station, legionary machinery would pulsate with irresistible force.

The effort should be made to lead on the ordinary auxiliary to adjutorian membership, for it offers a veritable way of life.

The keeping in touch with auxiliaries for the purpose of preserving their membership will be necessary ... in the interest of the full development of the auxiliary soldiers of Mary, the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin – or entire consecration of one's life to Mary – should at least be explained to them. Persons should not be lightly accepted as auxiliaries. In advance they should be made fully acquainted with the obligations, and there should be reasonable assurance that they will be true to them. Membership of the auxiliary degree is effected by the entry of name upon the auxiliary roll of any praesidium.

**ADDITIONAL NOTE:** It is desirable that auxiliary members be made aware of the official magazine of the Legion of Mary, "Maria Legionis" and be given the option of becoming subscribers.

## **THE BREVIARY**

"Next in the Liturgy comes the Office, the corporate utterance of the Church, in which Christ prays. In any Office built upon the psalms we use the prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus get closer to that corporate Voice which must be heard by the Father. That is why an Office, and not meditation, is a condition of praetorian membership." "As grace develops in us, our love must take on new forms," said Archbishop Leen to his legionaries." The reciting of the entire Divine

Office for those in a position to do it, would represent such an expansion of love,” (Handbook 16:1)

“A Shorter Breviary” containing Morning and Evening Prayer from the Psalter of The Divine Office with selected texts for the Seasons, Feasts of the Lord and Solemnities and a supplement of prayers from The Proper of Saints, has been published for the Legion of Mary by Collins Liturgical Publications and is available from the Concilium.

The following is the Foreward to “A Shorter Breviary” by Bro. Frank Duff:

“Why should people say an Office? The special value of the liturgy is that it is the official prayer of the Church, the voice of the Mystical Body in which all our poor voices intermingle with the voice of Our Lord and take on the quality of His prayer. This places liturgical prayer on an eminence above our own individual prayers.

But there is another vitally important aspect. In itself, and quite apart from the other official value possessed by it, the Office is a supreme form of pure prayer. It puts us facing God, using the words of the Holy Spirit. The office is made up for the most part of the Psalms and extracts from the Scriptures, interspersed with lovely hymns, including the supreme canticles – the Te Deum, Magnificat, Benedictus, Nunc Dimittis.

Some of the verses are set in the mouth of God and some in the mouth of the person addressing God. Therefore it is a case of dialogue between God and that person. There we have the ideal form of prayer: a conversation with God.

Secondly, as the words and those of the Holy Spirit, we can rest content with them. We have not to distract ourselves by having to work out phrases of our own. We lie in the arms of God, just as a child would in the arms of a beloved parent, holding our effortless chat with Him.

Every line of The Psalms affords food for thought and love. There is literary beauty in them, not that this represents an ingredient that can be called vital; nevertheless, it is of help. All the emotions and the trials of life are covered. All the time we can readily apply the words to our own personal circumstances. Either we are pleading with God in regard to our necessities or we find He is replying to us about them.

The whole course of the Divine history is reviewed. The names of all the special persons and places recur. As we proceed we encounter the items of prophecy concerning the redeemer and the Woman who is to be His co-operator.

Taking all these aspects into consideration, I suggest that this Legion Breviary wonderfully offers us all the ingredients of a perfect prayer. It does another thing.

It commits us to a half hour of it daily. This commitment is psychologically important. It tends to ensure the fulfillment of the duty with regularity, fitting it into the daily schedule and not permitting it to be elbowed out by all sorts of secondary things. It establishes its own place in the life.

But a primary consideration must never be lost sight of. It is that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and an inseparable part of the plan of salvation. As the Council terms her, she is Helpmate, Advocate, Co-operator, Mediatrix. It is His will to do all things in union with her and to bestow through her His gifts and graces. If we desire to draw fully from that treasure we must be attentive not only to Him but to her also.” (Frank Duff)

## **THE PATRICIANS**

“Its purpose is to build up the religious knowledge of the people, to teach them how to explain themselves and to encourage them to apostleship.” (Handbook 38) It is evident from the above that the establishment of branches of the PATRICIANS on a wide scale is very desirable. Praesidia, which do not have a branch, are encouraged to give serious consideration in their planning to the possibilities of setting up one. A study of chapter 38 of the handbook on the PATRICIANS might be taken as a first step. It may be useful to quote here some points from that chapter:

“Analysis shows the PATRICIANS to be a true child of the Legion, for it contains the various characteristic elements which combine to form the Legion itself; it is a projection of the Legion system into the sphere of religious education. In this department, Mary presides. It was she who brought Jesus down and gave him to the world. She has charge of all subsequent communicatings of him to men. This dominance of hers is signified by the Legion altar which must form the centre point of the Patrician meeting. The Patricians gather round her to talk about the Church in all its aspects, that is, about Jesus who is present in their midst according to his promise.”

“In the praesidium, the primary requirement is the obtaining from each member of a verbal report. The PATRICIANS strikes the same note; its primary aim is the eliciting of a vocal contribution from everyone.”

“If the family spirit is established in which the “smallest people” feel at home, then the Patrician foundation has been laid. Each contribution will tend to ‘spark off’ another one, as each link of a chain draws another along. Gaps in knowledge are filled in, detached items are formed into the mosaic of Catholic doctrine. As knowledge and interest grow, the individuals merge more into the oneness of the Mystical Body of Christ and are penetrated by its life. In its other features, too, the Patrician procedure represents the application of legionary doctrine and technique. It is important that the legionaries should fully realise this so that they

will throw into the working of the PATRICIANS the same sort of conviction that they give to the praesidium.”

“The PATRICIANS is a society controlled by the Legion. Each branch must be affiliated to a praesidium, and the chairperson must be an active legionary. A praesidium may have charge of several branches. A branch must have a Spiritual Director approved by the Spiritual Director of the praesidium. A Religious may act as Spiritual Director and (where ecclesiastical authority permits) a lay person.”

“The Patrician meeting is held monthly. Punctuality and continuity are essential. Meetings should not be omitted except it is genuinely impossible to hold them. It is not obligatory that a member attend every meeting. A system of reminding members of the next meeting will be necessary.”

“There is no work obligation. No tasks are to be assigned from the meeting. Pressure is not to be put on the members to take on additional activities. But the friendly contacts which develop should be used to lead people on in every way, particularly into Legion membership, active, auxiliary or adjutorian. Wisely used, the PATRICIANS can send out such strong impulses as will give benefit to everyone in the community.”

## **SOME ASPECTS OF LEGION GOVERNMENT**

“The government, local and central, of the Legion shall be carried on by its councils, whose duty in their respective spheres shall be to ensure unity, to preserve the original ideals of the Legion of Mary, to guard the integrity of the Legion spirit and rules and practice as set forth in the official handbook of the Legion, and to spread the organisation. The Legion in any area will be as good as these councils wish to make it.” (Handbook: Government of the Legion)

For the benefit of councils and, in particular, of council officers, it may be useful to draw attention to some aspects of Legion government as follows:

1. **PRE-COUNCIL MEETING:** Experience has shown that a monthly meeting of the officers of a council (pre-council meeting) is invaluable for the effective functioning of a council. The agenda for the pre-council meeting might include some or all of the items mentioned below:
2. **SPIRITUAL FORMATION:** Promotion of Praetorian membership – is the Legion Breviary (or other) available? Retreats; Doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and the True Devotion to Mary – through study of the handbook, etc.
3. **PLANNING:** Frequency of reports from affiliated praesidia and councils; Visitation of praesidia and councils; Extension; Legion Functions – Acies, Annual General Reunion, Congress.

4. EXTENSION: Knowing the strength of the Legion in the council area – in each parish and each diocese; having a map of the area; Planning systematic approach to parishes and dioceses without the Legion; Selecting legionaries for this work – for a day or a weekend, a week or a month, or longer; Planning approach to Parish Priests to seek permission; Arranging for help from other legionaries to back up the work of the Extension workers; Helping new praesidia in initial stages.
5. ELECTIONS OF COUNCIL OFFICERS: Giving notice in advance; Consideration by council officers of possible candidates (this does not imply, of course, any pressure on officers to agree on one candidate); Correct procedures to be followed; Ratification of elections of officers of affiliated councils to be considered.
6. VISITATION OF PRAESIDIA AND COUNCILS: Planning visitation and giving due notice; Selecting legionaries to make the visits; Considering reports on the visits and taking whatever follow-up action may be necessary.
7. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS OF PRAESIDIA: Keeping record of terms of office; Consideration of prospective officers and consultation with Spiritual Director and President of praesidium; Interviewing prospective officers.
8. FINANCE: Control of all financial transactions; Annual Audits in praesidia and councils; Signatures of at least two officers on cheques desirable.
9. LEGION LITERATURE: Availability and distribution; Promotion of Maria Legionis; Distribution of Concilium Bulletin.
10. SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS OF COUNCILS: Appointments by Bishops.
11. DUTIES OF OFFICERS: Specific duties for each council officer.
12. CONSIDERATION OF WORKS: Apostolate in parish; Meeting urgent needs; Tackling difficult work, etc. PLEASE NOTE: It should be remembered that it is the council (not the council officers) which is the governing and decision-making body.

## **PLANNING**

“We must have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16).” We must reflect with a view to producing good work and advancing in every respect. We must plan. We must be ingenious. We must strive as a very part of the work itself to devise better methods, to hammer out new ideas, and to solve the problems. In a word, we must give to religion the same concentrated and intelligent approach that we lavish on the world.” “So as a first principle of our effort we must THINK. Our mind is the highest part of our natural make-up and we must place it fully at the service of Jesus Christ. We must think and plan as if everything depended on it.” “So when we plan, it should be with faith, ambitiously a little beyond what we judge to be our reach, so as to leave some room for Him to operate.” (Frank Duff: Thinking in Christ: Mary Shall Reign: 18)

## AN ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING

To fulfil the need to plan, officers of a praesidium or council might consider the value of meeting once a year for the purpose of planning for the year ahead. It is desirable that sufficient time be allowed for the meeting so that ideas and suggestions can be well discussed. It would be helpful, also, if the President invited the other officers to submit suggestions in advance for the agenda of this meeting. If the officers approach the meeting in a spirit of faith and union with Mary and conscious of Brother Duff's words, quoted above, they will be giving scope for the Holy Spirit to work through them. The plans formulated at this meeting can then be brought to the praesidium or council for consideration and, if approved, can then be put into effect through the weekly praesidium meeting or the monthly council meeting. For councils, of course, the pre-council meeting provides opportunities for follow-up and on-going planning.

**Planning for the Praesidium:** There are many items which might be considered at an annual planning meeting: Recruiting new members, active and auxiliary; promoting Praetorian and Adjutorian membership and True Devotion to Mary; Improving reports and study of the handbook; Exploratio Dominicalis; Auxiliary Rally; Retreats; Praesidium function in September, etc. The development of the members and of the work is a priority. The handbook speaks of an enterprising spirit being kept alive in the members by the regular breaking of new ground. Is the praesidium tackling the most urgent needs? What more should the praesidium be doing?

**Planning for the Council:** In addition to such items as: Frequency of reports; Visitation of praesidia and affiliated councils; Legion Functions: Acies, Annual General Reunion, Retreat, etc.; Elections; Appointment of officers of praesidia; Annual audit, etc. there is the great need to plan Extension and the development of the apostolate in the council area. It can be a great help to sit down with a map of the area and note the strengths and weaknesses both as regards places with or without the Legion and also in regard to the extent of the Legion apostolate. Do higher councils consider delegating responsibility for Extension in certain areas to affiliated councils? Is the Legion apostolate directed to the most urgent needs in the council area? Do the officers think that they have to do everything themselves? The handbook says: "The denial of some responsibility to those who are fit to assume it does injustice both to those individuals and to the whole Legion." (HB 28:2:16) The handbook also says that the consideration of new works forms an important part of the work of the Curia.

If planning is to be effective, it will be necessary to assign specific tasks to individual officers or members, who should be asked to account for them. Otherwise, plans may remain just that, plans.

## PLANNING THE YEAR'S PROGRAMME

The following notes are intended as a follow-up to the previous section, with emphasis on the drawing up of a programme for the year so that planning may be more effective. These are offered as suggestions to both praesidia and councils.

**PRAESIDIUM:** The President might consider having some form of diary in which items discussed at the officers' planning meeting might be entered and to which attention would be drawn at specific times during the year.

Some examples:

- (1) The promotion of the True Devotion to Mary over a certain period;
- (2) Likewise with praetorian membership and explanation of the Breviary – its value and manner of recitation;
- (3) Highlighting the feasts of the Patrons of the Legion as they occur;
- (4) Dates for Exploratio Dominicalis, Praesidium Function in September, Auxiliary Rally;
- (5) Preparation of the annual report and deadline for the audit of funds;
- (6) Parish functions or events to which the praesidium could lend its support and assistance;
- (7) Introduction of new works for example, the Patricians; apostolate to young people;
- (8) Follow-up on works;
- (9) Dates for certain activities in connection with the works of the praesidium, for example; a Retreat, a Mass for the Sick, a Talk for non-Catholics;
- (10) Closing dates for the Peregrinatio Pro Christo.

Each praesidium may have its own particular items for inclusion in the year's programme.

**COUNCIL:** The officers might consider drawing up a programme for the year at their planning meeting and list such things as the following:

- (1) Dates of Legion Functions: the Acies, the Annual General Reunion, the Annual Outing, a Retreat, (a Congress);
- (2) Praesidia (and councils) to report each month;
- (3) Praesidia (and councils) to be visited each month;
- (4) Deadline for audit of funds;
- (5) Parishes (and Dioceses) to be visited each month on the work of Extension of the Legion;
- (6) Expiry dates of officerships in praesidia and councils.

Each council will probably have various other items for inclusion in the year's programme.

It should be of assistance to the members of praesidia and councils to have dates fixed well in advance for Legion functions, etc., however, it should be understood that councils (not just the officers) make the decisions in this regard. It is also desirable that plans drawn up by the officers of a praesidium should be presented and discussed at the praesidium meeting.

## **EXTENSION OF THE LEGION**

The Handbook states that the extension of the Legion forms an important part of the work of a Curia. (See Legion Handbook, Government of the Legion).

As a help towards undertaking systematic extension, it is suggested that Curiae might:

1. Enlist the prayers of both active and auxiliary legionaries and others for this intention;
2. List the Parishes in their area where the Legion is not yet established;
3. Each month appoint two legionaries to visit the Parish Priest of at least one of these Parishes;
4. Having obtained permission from the Parish Priest, send in a team of legionaries to help with the establishment of a Praesidium;
5. Give the Extension team guidelines such as the following for carrying out this work: -
  - (a) Contact people after Masses with invitations to a first meeting;
  - (b) Visit those who give their names;
  - (c) Hold first meeting with specific duties for the members of the team;
  - (d) Give special attention to Allocation of Work. A variety of works should be offered. The second meeting should be set for the following week on a day suitable to most people present;
  - (e) Members of the Extension team should work with the new legionaries, in this way training them in the apostolate and imbuing them with the spirit of the Legion;
  - (f) Acting Officers should be selected as soon as possible and clearly briefed on their duties and made aware of the grace of office;

NOTE: The new Praesidium having been affiliated, it is vital that the Curia maintain contact with it.

## **ANNUAL AUDITS**

“The Treasurer’s books shall be audited annually. It is suggested that two members of the Praesidium or the Council (as the case may be), other than the Treasurer, be appointed to that duty.” (Legion Handbook, 35.8)

The attention of Council Officers is drawn to this requirement of the handbook. Councils have the duty of seeing that this requirement is met. Curiae should

ensure that the annual audit is carried out by each of its Praesidia. Higher Councils should ensure that it is carried out by each of its affiliated Praesidia and Councils.

It is suggested that reference to the audit should be made in the annual reports of Praesidia to their Councils and also during visitation of Praesidia by Councils. It seems desirable that the audit should be carried out at the same time each year. In the case of a Praesidium it might be considered suitable to have it done when the annual report is being prepared.

It is also suggested that reference to the audit be made in the Minutes of Praesidia and Councils and in reports of Councils to Higher Councils. Correspondents are requested to draw the attention of Councils to this requirement and to monitor Minutes and reports with this in mind.

It is important that the audit should cover all income and expenditure and any monies on deposit and that the auditors verify, through current bank statements and/or actual cash in hand, the balance shown. The audit should also cover all financial transactions related to the works of Praesidia, for example, sales newspapers, books and magazines, clubs, Patricians, etc. and also financial transactions related to property, sales of Maria Legionis, Handbooks and other Legion literature, etc.

It is desirable that the auditors' report be presented at a meeting of the Praesidium or Council. It would be of assistance to all Councils in carrying out their responsibilities towards the Praesidia and Councils affiliated to them if copies of the auditors' reports could be presented or forwarded to them.

“It would be impossible to associate the idea of wastefulness with Our Lady's housekeeping. Therefore it goes without saying that every Legionary body must handle its property and its funds watchfully and economically.” (Legion Handbook, 35.9)

## **VISITATION OF PRAESIDIA**

The Curia shall cause each praesidium to be visited periodically, if possible twice a year, with a view to encouraging it and seeing that all things are being carried out as they should be. It is important that this duty be not fulfilled in a carping or fault-finding fashion which would end by causing the advent of visitors to be dreaded and their recommendations to be resented, but in a spirit of affection and humility which will presume that there is as much to be learned from as taught to the praesidium visited.” (Handbook: Government of the Legion)

Some other points from the handbook in regard to this visitation should be noted:

1. At least a full week's notice should be given.

2. The various membership rolls, the Secretary's and Treasurer's books, the Work Sheet and the other items of the praesidium system must be examined with a view to judging if they are properly kept, and to ascertaining if the Legionary Promise has been made in the case of each member who has fulfilled the required period of probation.
3. The visitation should be made by two representatives of the Curia, not necessarily Curia officers; any experienced legionary may be appointed.
4. The visitors are to submit a written report to the Curia officers.
5. Defects which are found should not, in the first instance, be made the subject of open comment either at the praesidium itself or at the Curia. They should be discussed with the Spiritual Director and the President of the praesidium. If this does not secure rectification, the matter should be brought before the Curia.

It is evident from the above that advance planning by the Curia officers is required if each praesidium is to be visited twice a year. It may be useful to draw up a plan for the year so that, depending on the number of praesidia, one or more praesidia will be visited each month. It will be necessary also to plan for the availability of legionaries to carry out the visitations, taking into account the days and times of the various praesidia meetings. It seems desirable that notice of the day of visitation and the names of the visitors be given at the previous Curia meeting, if possible, and that the Curia be informed at its next meeting whether the visits have been made or not. Without some such system of accountability, there is a danger that visits might be deferred or omitted. The handbook states that each praesidium should insist that this duty is not overlooked by the Curia.

Regular and careful visitation of praesidia is one of the most effective ways of strengthening the Legion in the Curia area. It provides an opportunity for encouraging the members and officers of the various praesidia; for legionaries to learn from other praesidia; for raising standards; for suggesting improvements; and for noting members with potential for officership or other responsibilities such as extension work or pioneering heroic work. Regular visitation enables the Curia to become aware of problems early on and it ensures that important items are not overlooked as, for example; the making of the Legionary Promise in due time; that work is properly assigned and reported on; that recruiting is being given attention; that auxiliary membership is not neglected; that the handbook is being studied; that the Standing Instruction is read each month; that the annual Mass for deceased legionaries has been offered; that the Maria Legionis is available to the active and auxiliary members; that the annual audit has been carried out; and that the members are kept informed of the activities of the Curia and the Legion worldwide. Regular visitation also enables the Curia to monitor the progress of the praesidia and the manner in which previous suggestions have been implemented. The Curia officers have a particular responsibility to study the visitors' reports and to take whatever follow-up action may be judged necessary.

## ELECTIONS

“The fact that the election is in respect of officers of a spiritual organisation is not to be held to justify casual methods.” (Legion Handbook (1993 Edition), Ch 28, 1, 13.)

While officers of praesidia are appointed by the council to which the praesidia are affiliated, officers of a council are elected by the members of the council.

It is important that these elections be carried out according to the procedures laid down in the handbook, therefore, it is desirable that the relevant sections of the handbook be consulted when elections are due to take place. It may be useful to quote here the following points from the chapter, Government of the Legion:

1. The officers of a council shall be elected at an ordinary meeting of the council by the members of the council.
2. All elections of officers shall be subject to ratification by the next-highest council.
3. Notice of the taking of nominations and the holding of an election shall be given to the members, if at all possible at the meeting prior to that of the election. It is desirable that nominees should be made aware of the duties of the office.
4. The election shall be made by secret ballot. The manner of such election shall be as follows:

The election for each officership is to be taken separately, and in descending order. **Each name put forward must be formally proposed and seconded.** If only one name be put forward, it is of course unnecessary to proceed to a ballot. If two or more names are duly proposed and seconded, a ballot shall be taken. A voting paper is to be given to each member of the council (including the Spiritual Directors) who is present and entitled to vote. Careful attention is to be given to the latter requirement; only members of the council are entitled to vote. When filled up, the papers are to be folded carefully and then collected by the scrutineers. The name of the voter is not to appear on the voting paper.

If the count shows that one candidate has obtained a clear majority of the votes, that is, a number greater than those of all the other candidates added together, then that candidate is to be declared elected. But if no one has secured a clear majority, the results of the voting are to be read out; then the same candidates are to be re-voted for. Should this second ballot fail to yield a clear majority to one candidate, then the candidate who has secured the lowest number of votes is to be eliminated and a re-vote taken on the remaining candidates. If this third ballot is also ineffectual, procedure is to be by way of successive eliminations and re-

- votes until one candidate has secured the necessary clear majority of the votes.
5. The elections must be carried out in strict and proper form, and with due regard to the secrecy of the individual voting paper.
  6. It is necessary that a complete record of the elections, including the names of the proposers and seconders and the number of votes received by each candidate (when there is more than one candidate) be included in the minutes of the meeting and be submitted to the next-highest council so that ratification may be considered.

## **EXPLORATIO DOMINICALIS**

“Exploratio Dominicalis is the term by which is known what might be called a mini-Peregrinatio and which might be translated as the Sunday search for souls.

Every praesidium in the world is urged, if possible as a body, to devote at least one Sunday in the year to an expedition to some place – possibly a problem area – at a little distance away, but at the same time not so far as to absorb undue time in travelling. The Exploratio need not be limited to one day; two or three days might be found possible. Exploratio Dominicalis enables the majority (in many cases all) of the members of a praesidium to undertake such a venture. It is recognised that even with the best of will, the Peregrinatio Pro Christo itself is not a possibility for the majority of legionaries.

Experience shows that it is necessary to stress, what the Concilium has repeatedly emphasised, that is, that Exploratio Dominicalis is essentially a praesidium project. Councils and praesidia are asked to keep this point in mind when Exploratio Dominicalis is being organised.” (Handbook 40:9)

It is strongly recommended that Exploratio Dominicalis should be one of the items to be considered when a praesidium is planning for the year ahead. If all the members are to take part, something which is very much to be desired, the choice of date, well in advance, will be of great importance. If a date is not agreed on at an early stage, it is likely that the Exploratio may be deferred, perhaps several times, and possibly omitted altogether.

The praesidium, obviously, will require permission from the parish priest and the Legion council, which is responsible for the parish in which it is proposed to carry out the Exploratio. It seems desirable, therefore, that the praesidium should work through its own Curia (or other council to which it is directly-affiliated) when planning the Exploratio. If the Exploratio is being carried out in another council area, then the praesidium’s own council should liaise with the other council. It is important that each council’s area of jurisdiction should be respected. It should not be necessary to add that if the Exploratio is planned for a parish in which a praesidium already exists, then, of course, the permission of that praesidium, also, should be obtained.

While new members may be recruited or even the nucleus for a new praesidium obtained in the course of an Exploratio, extension is not its main purpose. The handbook describes it as “the Sunday search for souls” (see above.) It is evident, therefore, that the Exploratio should reach out to people with the aim of “bringing the full riches of the Church to every person.” (Handbook 37:9) As the carrying out of an Exploratio calls for self-sacrifice and a valuable contribution of time and effort on the part of the legionaries it is desirable that it should be directed as far as possible to areas of greatest need. The Exploratio can be a valuable asset to Legion councils in having an intensive apostolate carried out in areas which, otherwise, might be partially or totally untouched.

As a praesidium may succeed in having only one Exploratio during the year, it is desirable that a full day, at least, should be devoted to it and that a substantial portion of that day, after attendance at Mass and the recitation of the Legion prayers and Rosary, should be spent on the actual work of visitation or contact.

## **THE LEGION CONGRESS**

The Legion Congress forms a valuable part of the legionary system of formation. While not intended to be an annual event, “an area should not hold a Congress more often than every second year” (Handbook 30:5), the holding of a Congress every two or three years, while not mandatory, would seem very desirable.

The Congress is essentially a Curia function, at which all the members, not just the officers, of the praesidia in the Curia, can come together to discuss the main principles of the Legion. It is important that every member should have an opportunity of contributing to the discussions. This would not be possible in a very large assembly or where the function consists of a series of long talks by selected speakers.

In organising a Congress, it would be well to study carefully the relevant section in the handbook. Some points from that are listed here:

1. A whole day should be devoted to the Congress.
2. If possible, the proceedings should begin with Mass, followed by a short address by the Spiritual Director, or other priest, and should terminate with Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament.
3. The day is divided into sessions. Each session should begin and close with prayer. Each subject should be very briefly opened up by someone who will have previously prepared his contribution.
4. Congresses are to be run on the parliamentary method, that is, on lines of universal participation, regulated from the chair. Careful timekeeping is important.
5. The assistance of some representatives of a higher governing body would be desirable.

6. The Congress should apply itself to the fundamentals. The subjects to be dealt with should concern the main principles of the Legion:
  - (a) The devotional system of the Legion;
  - (b) The legionary qualities, and how they are to be developed;
  - (c) The methodical system of the Legion – including the conducting of the meetings and the members' reports;
  - (d) The Legion works, including the improvement of methods and the planning of new works.
7. An item of the Congress should be a special Talk on some aspect of legionary devotion, idealism or duty. This is usually given as a Concluding Talk, at the close of the last session.
8. All the lessons learned at the Congress should be put into force by the Curia.
9. There should be changes in the programme from one Congress to the next. "It is necessary that over a period of years much new ground be ploughed up." (Handbook 30:5d)

It is important that the Congress be planned well in advance. To find a suitable date and venue and to draw up the programme, it seems desirable that preparations should be made at least six to eight months beforehand. It is also desirable that the next-highest governing body be consulted on the programme and that their suggestions be taken into account. As the attendance of some representatives of the higher council is desirable, adequate notice will be required. If the Congress is to be a success, it is obvious that all the members of the praesidia should have copies of the programme well in advance, at least six weeks beforehand, if possible, so that they will have time to prepare themselves to contribute fully to the Congress. Study of the subjects at praesidium meetings prior to the Congress would be very beneficial. Above all, all the legionaries should be encouraged to pray for the success of the Congress, which can be so important for themselves and for their apostolate.

## **ESTABLISHING LEGION COUNCILS**

No praesidium or council shall be instituted without the formal permission of its next-highest council or of the Concilium Legionis, and the approval of the appropriate ecclesiastical authority. (Handbook 28:1:5)

The structure and functions of the various Legion councils are described in the handbook, chapter 28, Government of the Legion. That chapter merits careful study, especially by officers of praesidia and councils, if councils are to function as they should. In regard to the establishment of councils, it may be helpful to list here some points which might be borne in mind:

1. As the quotation from the handbook above shows, formal permission is required from the next-highest council or from the Concilium and from the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, normally the Bishop of the diocese.

2. A Curia may be established only with the sanction of a Regia, a Senatus or the Concilium. Where a Comitium (which is a Curia on which certain powers of superintendence over one or several Curiae has been conferred) deems it desirable to have a new Curia established in its area, it should seek sanction from the council to which it is affiliated.
3. A Comitium may be established (that is, a Curia raised to Comitium) only by a Regia, a Senatus or the Concilium.
4. A Regia or a Senatus may be established only by the Concilium. In practice, a Regia or Senatus is established through the raising of a lower council, that is, Curia or Comitium to Regia or Senatus, or in some cases, Regia to Senatus.
5. Any change in the composition of the lower council raised to higher status requires the sanction of the council which raised it, as any change may weaken the council and affect its capacity to function as a higher council.
6. It follows, therefore, that a Regia or a Senatus may not establish a Curia composed, in full or in part, of praesidia directly-affiliated to it, without the sanction of the Concilium. A Regia or Senatus should also seek sanction from the Concilium for any proposal to form a Comitium composed, in full or in part, of Curiae directly-affiliated, which would significantly affect the core attendance at the Regia or Senatus meeting. This also applies to the transfer of directly-affiliated praesidia or Curiae to another council, which would have a similar effect.
7. The proposal to set up a new council should take into account the number of directly-affiliated praesidia. While a Curia may be set up with two or more praesidia, it is desirable that a higher council should have a reasonable number so that it may have sufficient personnel to carry out its functions. It is not desirable to divide small existing Curiae into smaller ones unless there are very good reasons (for example, excessive distances which officers of praesidia have to travel) for doing so.
8. When a new council is set up it should be given a definite area and the various parishes (and/or dioceses) should be specified. It is desirable that the designated area should include parishes (and/or dioceses) without the Legion as well as those which have it so that the council may have scope for extension.
9. The appointment of a Spiritual Director by the ecclesiastical authority is an important element in the establishment of a new Curia.
10. It is desirable that any proposal for the establishment of a new council should be examined in detail by the officers of the higher council, however, it is only at the meeting of the council that sanction may be given and this should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

## **THE COMITIUM**

As misunderstandings occur sometimes in regard to the role and functioning of a Comitium, it may be useful to analyse here what the handbook says on THE COMITIUM in chapter 28:2:2:

1. "Where it is found necessary to confer on a Curia, in addition to its own proper functions, certain powers of superintendence over one or several Curiae, such higher Curia shall be styled more particularly a Comitium." (Handbook)

**Comments:** The raising of a Curia to Comitium may only be done with the sanction of a Regia or a Senatus or of the Concilium. It may not be done by the Curia itself or by an existing Comitium. Where an existing Comitium sees a need for raising one of its attached Curiae to Comitium, it should consult with its own higher council (Regia or Senatus or Concilium). The "certain powers of superintendence" include (1) the affiliation of the Curia(e) to the Comitium; (2) the ratification of elections of officers of the attached Curia(e); (3) the taking of reports from the Curia(e); (4) the periodic visitation of the Curia(e). It should be noted that the Comitium is the link for its attached Curia(e) to the wider Legion, whereby they will receive news of the worldwide Legion. The raising of a Curia to Comitium also requires, of course, ecclesiastical sanction.

2. "The Comitium is not a new council. It continues to act as a Curia in respect of its own area and to govern directly its own praesidia. In addition it supervises one or more Curiae. Each Curia and praesidium directly related to a Comitium shall be entitled to full representation on the latter." (Handbook)

**Comments:** A Comitium is not just a council or committee of officers of Curiae only. The officers of its own praesidia form the core attendance at its meetings. The members of the Comitium are (1) the officers of its directly-attached praesidia; (2) the officers of its directly-affiliated Curia(e); and (3) the elected officers of the Comitium. The Comitium continues to hold a monthly meeting as it had been doing when it was a Curia, except that now the monthly meeting is called a Comitium meeting. (It is incorrect to describe it as a Comitium meeting only some months, for instance, when officers of affiliated Curiae are present, and to describe it as a Curia meeting other months.) When a Curia is raised to Comitium, the officers of the Curia continue as officers of the Comitium until their terms expire. If they are on a first term they are eligible to stand for re-election to the same office in the Comitium when their first terms expire. If they are on a second term, they are not eligible for re-election to the same office until an interval of three years has elapsed.

As each Curia and praesidium directly-attached has full representation on the Comitium, the officers of each of these Curiae and praesidia have the right to vote in elections of Comitium officers (when these elections fall due), provided they are present at the meeting at which an election takes place. It is important that the officers of directly-affiliated Curiae should be given notice of elections due to take place. As they may not be present at

the Comitium meeting at which notice is given, the Comitium should ensure that they are made aware of it. It is expected that officers of attached Curiae always receive a copy of the agenda of every Comitium meeting in advance.

3. "In order to relieve the representatives of a Curia from attendance at all the meetings of the Comitium (which, added to the meetings of their own Curia, might form an undue burden), it would be permissible to deal with the business of that Curia and to require the attendance of its representatives only at every second or third meeting of the Comitium." (Handbook)

**Comments:** The officers of Curiae affiliated to a Comitium are entitled to attend the Comitium meeting each month, however, they are only obliged to attend and report every second or third month. This does not mean that the officers of all the affiliated Curiae have to attend on the same month.

4. "A Comitium shall not ordinarily cover an area larger than a Diocese." (Handbook)

**Comments:** If a Diocese has many Curiae, more than one Comitium may be necessary. There may be special circumstances where it is desirable that a Comitium should have Curia(e) from another Diocese (or Dioceses) affiliated to it and for which ecclesiastical sanction can be obtained.

## ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

"The Curia stands in much the same relation to its members as a praesidium does to its members. Thus, all that is said in these pages regarding the attendance and conduct of legionaries at their praesidium meetings is to be taken as applying equally to the attitude of praesidium representatives towards their Curia meetings. Zeal in other respects will not compensate for failure on the part of officers to give a faithful attendance at meetings of their Curia." (Handbook 28:2:12)

While the above quotation refers to attendance at meetings of the Curia, it also refers obviously to attendance at meetings of higher councils by officers of directly-attached praesidia. These officers form the main core attendance at meetings of higher councils and their regular and punctual attendance is vital, therefore, to the life of the councils.

In regard to a higher council which normally combines with its own proper functions the functions of a lower council, particularly that of a Curia, the handbook says: "The combination of the functions of such higher body with those of the lower will ensure a large and constant attendance of members. These will not only perform the duties proper to the lower council, but will be

interested and educated in the work of the higher body. It then becomes possible to enlist them in the all-important supervisory, extension, and clerical work of the higher body.” (28:1:19(b))

It is evident from the above that the officers of praesidia directly-affiliated to a higher council have an important role to play in the functioning of that council. They are being given the opportunity of assisting in the government of the Legion over an area wider than their own local area. It would be a pity if they failed to take this opportunity. Irregular attendance or lack of active participation in the meetings of the higher council can only be detrimental to the functioning of the council. It would be a mistake for officers of directly-affiliated praesidia to think that they should be concerned only for their own local area and that the wider area governed by the council is of concern only to the officers of the council and the officers of affiliated councils and correspondents.

Attendance at higher council meetings of officers of affiliated councils is also, of course, of great importance. In the case of a Curia attached to a Comitium, the handbook says: “ ... it would be permissible to deal with the business of that Curia and to require the attendance of its representatives only at every second or third meeting of the Comitium.” (28:2:2) In the case of a Senatus or Regia, however, in view of the greater responsibilities which such a council bears, it is expected that officers of affiliated councils will attend each month unless due to distance, etc. this is not possible. The handbook says: “The representatives of every affiliated council have the duty to attend and no doubt conscientiously do so to the best of their ability.” (28:1:19(b))

It is important that officers of praesidia and councils as well as all members of praesidia should realise the spiritual value of attendance at meetings. In chapter 21, the Mystical Home of Nazareth, the handbook says: “A particular application of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ may be made to the Legion meetings ...” Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Mt 18:20)

These words of our Lord assure us that his influential presence in the members of his Mystical Body is intensified according to the number in which they unite to serve him. He specifies number as a condition for the complete displaying of his power.” While this chapter refers mainly to the praesidium meeting, it surely applies also to Council meetings.

## **COUNCIL REPORTS**

“ ... it would be permissible to deal with the business of that Curia only at every second or third meeting of the Comitium.” (Handbook: The Curia and the Comitium)

It is evident from the above that a Comitium, which has a responsibility for one or more Curiae, is expected to deal with the business of that Curia (or Curiae) regularly and frequently and that an annual report by the Curia to the Comitium would be completely inadequate. It is important for both the Comitium and the Curia that reports should be frequent so that the Comitium may carry out its functions of superintendence of the Curia.

If this is the situation in the case of a Comitium and its Curiae then it seems appropriate that the same should apply in the case of all higher councils and their affiliated councils. If they are to carry out their functions of government of the Legion over a large area then it is desirable that they should be well-informed of what is happening in their area. As they have overall responsibility for the Legion in the area assigned to them then they will need frequent reports from their affiliated councils on how those councils are governing the areas allotted to them. A report only once a year or even twice a year would hardly be adequate in keeping the higher council informed of what is happening in their area. It is very desirable that reports should be taken from affiliated councils at least every three months, if possible.

Frequent reports to higher councils will enable them not just to know what is happening but, also, to assist their affiliated councils with advice and suggestions, to stimulate extension in each council area, to deal with problems at an early stage and to encourage the officers and members of those councils. Frequent reports will also help the other affiliated councils by way of examples, which they might follow, and will also help them to know how the Legion is progressing throughout the whole area of the higher council.

Many higher councils are taking frequent reports from their affiliated councils, but some are not doing so. It is hoped that all higher councils will see their way to taking reports every three months, if possible.

It should be mentioned that when reports are presented frequently, it is not necessary that they be so detailed that their preparation represents an undue burden on the officers of the councils presenting them. The reports should show how the council is carrying out its functions of government, for example, in regard to extension, visitation of attached praesidia or councils, vacant officerships, functions such as the Acies, etc., consideration of new works, some details of reports, presented and attendance at the council meetings.

These reports may be presented, of course, by officers of affiliated councils present at the higher council meetings. However, in the case of distant councils, the correspondents appointed by the higher council for those councils, may present the reports compiled from the minutes received monthly.

To ensure that reports are presented regularly and frequently it will be necessary for the higher council to draw up a programme with a quota of reports for each

month with councils reporting on a rota basis. Obviously, in the case of a higher council with many affiliated councils, it is important that reports be concise so that the required number of reports may be presented and dealt with in the time available.