

Allocutio Toronto Senatus Council, May 15, 2022. (Rev.) Joseph Moncada  
Chapter 14: The Praesidium, Pages 86-88, 11.-15.

11. This number in the Handbook tells us that “it is the practice” when there is a vacant officership for the president of the Curia to perform a careful inquiry to discover and determine the most suitable person to be appointed. This process must not be omitted. Sometimes a Curia in its urgency to appoint a legionary to a vacant praesidium officership or as an ill-advised shortcut will not inquire about the suitability of the person whose name it has submitted to the Curia. This should never be so. The Curia has a crucial and essential duty of care toward all its praesidia in this regard. I appeal to you Curia officers to examine yourself on this point. If you are deficient in any way, it’s time to remedy it. These are the functioning bonds that must be tightened between a Curia and its praesidia. Curia officers see this as an exercise of Mary’s maternal care for your praesidia. Praesidia, in no way, view this as an intrusion of your higher Council in your affairs, rather welcome its oversight. Dear legionaries, when you made your Legionary Promise you were not outfitted with a “rubber stamp.” We know that when governments, businesses, and organizations consistently act in thoughtless, laissez-faire and perfunctory ways, they write their own death certificates. Beware of the “rubber stamp” mentality which quickly becomes a quiet harbinger of decline and ultimate demise of any part of the Legion.

12. The Handbook outlines the particulars of the tenure of office. The three-year term may be renewed once for any legionary in any specific office. It warns of the possible danger of anyone being fossilized in an officership. I’m assuming we’ve all seen fossils: the remains or impression of a prehistoric plant or animal embedded in a rock and preserved in a petrified form. The word fossil is used for a person or organization when it is outdated or resistant to change. A fossil leaves a beautiful and accurate impression of what was once a living thing but it is quite dead. Likewise, we want to protect ourselves from remaining in office, while going through the motions, in a spirit of routine, with little or no enthusiasm. Even one’s methods may become stereotyped, that is to say, lacking originality and creativity. Evidence of this is when legionaries use legitimate Legion words and phrases in a banal, clichéd and tired way, usually as a mask for a lack of insight, energy and freshness. Let’s keep watch so that this does not creep into our officership! The handbook calls it “The danger to be kept in view from first to last in any organization.”

The fossilization that may occur in one’s tenure is “the process of deterioration” that ends in ineffective work and indifference.” (p.87) As a consequence our organization, parts of our organization or a unit of it will fail to attract or retain the most desirable type of member. (p.87) They are the praesidia that are truly “living” which will attract new members and keep the existing ones. No one wants to go sail aboard a sinking ship! If you think you have fossilized in your position then it’s time to either renew yourself or step down and find a suitable replacement. If you think somebody else has fossilized in his position then find a firm and charitable way to bring it to his attention while offering and encouraging him to take remedial steps. If this fails then request that he step down. I counsel that these remedies be used in a spirit of prudence and above all charity.

To counteract or keep at bay the process of deterioration, the Legion system has in place a process of amelioration or improvement which provides the condition for the springing of perpetual enthusiasm, namely, a rule stipulating the periodic renewal of the period of office. Without political connotations, we can call this term limits. There is great wisdom in a system of changing officers irrespective of merit or other circumstances. We find the same wise practice of the restriction of the period of office to six years in religious orders.

13. "There are no bad soldiers," said Napoléon," only bad officers. While this maxim admits of some exceptions, it is generally true. Dear officers, you yourselves, aim at the highest standards of spirit and work so that you may draw up the legionaries with you to those standards. When good officers are continuously appointed, the quality of the praesidium constantly improves. The strength, expertise, devotion and zeal of a new officer build upon the already existing strength, expertise, devotion and zeal of the outgoing officer. The new officer should be counted upon to not simply maintain but to build and improve upon what he has inherited from the outgoing officer, ever elevating the edifice of his praesidium. Our organization is meant to experience growth and expansion and not contraction and decline.

14. Especially the appointment of the President should be the subject of anxious thought. Are you anxious about the appointment of your praesidium President.? You have my permission to be anxious about it. Our anxiousness should be a holy anxiety but not anxiousness that diminishes our trust in Our Lord and Our Lady to provide for the Legion. St. Paul experienced holy anxiety. He wrote to the Corinthians, "There is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches." (2 Cor.11:28). The President of a praesidium should have Pauline-like holy anxiety for its members, and likewise the President of a Curia for its praesidia. As a best practice, we should appoint Presidents from members who have a history of exhibiting holy anxiety for the Legion.

15. The Handbook states that almost always the neglect or the inability of the President to govern is the cause of a defective praesidium. When this occurs, it is incumbent upon the Curia to change the President along with the reorganization of the praesidium, unless very special reasons make it impossible to do so. Sometimes those reasons include a shortage of members to choose from.