

Allocutio Toronto Senatus, June 12, 2022. (Rev.) Joseph Moncada
June 2022: chapter 14: The Praesidium, Pages 88-90, 16.-22.

16. The most likely circumstances for a legionary on probation to hold an acting or temporary officership in a senior praesidium are when there is a lack of professed legionaries able to take on officership or there is a new praesidium with legionaries necessarily on probation. In the last number of years, our council and attached councils have established new praesidia, and so by necessity, the new legionaries were at the same time on probation and exercising officership.

17. Cases have arisen and may arise when a legionary of one praesidium wants to leave it to join another praesidium. This requires the permission of the President of the legionary's current praesidium. This safeguards the abandonment of membership in one's praesidium for another for trivial and superficial reasons or for the lack of desire to resolve personality conflicts between members or for the unwillingness to heal deficiencies in one's praesidium. Normally the permission should not be unreasonably denied. For example, a legionary's work schedule may conflict with his praesidium's meeting day or the day of the work assignment, while another praesidium's schedule may be more convenient and accommodating. Suppose a case where a legionary wants to carry out a particular work suited to his zeal, desires and gifts such as the heroic work of door-to-door home visitation, which his current praesidium is unable to provide him. As a solution, he may want to join a different praesidium which performs such a work. In cases like this, the President of his praesidium ought to give him permission to leave the praesidium and join the other assuming that it will accept him. The Legion President should welcome the possibility of a fellow praesidium member flourishing in another praesidium. Of course, should his request be denied by his current praesidium, he has recourse to appeal to the Curia.

18. The President's authority to suspend any member of the praesidium for any reasons deemed sufficient is a powerful tool used to safeguard the integrity of the praesidium. It should never be used trivially, frivolously, or vindictively. It needs to be justified according to the Handbook both in letter and in spirit. Any suspension only occurs after consultation with the other officers because there is wisdom in gathering different points of view, and the president needs to avoid arbitrariness in fact and appearance.

19. As the Legion of Mary does not contain courts and courts of appeal, the Curia nevertheless does contain a mechanism for the resolution of conflicts and disputes through the expulsion or suspension of a legionary from his praesidium. While this may at first seem like a harsh and heartless measure, understand that the praesidium has a right to protect itself from a member whose action may immediately or eventually bring about disfunction and or demise. No society--and indeed the Legion of Mary is a society of lay Catholics--can exist without laws and authorities who administer them. To protect members from any unjust suspension or expulsion or to uphold a prudent suspension or expulsion, the Legion wisely allows for the right of appeal to the next highest governing body, which is either a Comitium or a Senatus. Any decision in favour of the legionary or the lower Curia is final and therefore no longer subject to appeal.

20. There may arise disputes between praesidia regarding the allocation of work. Suppose that two praesidia lay claim to the apostolic work of visiting the nearby prison but the prison allows only for a specified number of visitors which would be exceeded by the two praesidia or the prison lies on a shared boundary line of both parish praesidia. The Curia would have the authority to settle this dispute. It should do so fairly and swiftly lest the dispute turn into bickering, and without any favouritism or appearance of favouritism all the while preventing discord and calming any strife and God forbid animosity that may have arisen.

21. The essential duty of the praesidium to establish and preserve around itself a strong body of auxiliaries needs to be taken to heart. We can in no way underestimate the intercessory prayer power of the auxiliaries, these supporting host of workers who daily storm heaven with prayers for the benefit of the “on-duty soldiers,” the active legionaries. The auxiliaries are your benefactors. Without the great degree of their prayer support, the active legionaries would encounter more and greater obstacles and less spiritual protection. I believe we need to make a greater effort to keep in touch with our auxiliaries in a personal way. We want to let them know that they are cherished, their prayers valued, and that they are crucial to our legion work.

22. This is an action item for every praesidium. According to the Handbook, every senior praesidium needs to establish and run a junior praesidium. This is a wonderful work for the formation and sanctification of our youth. The junior legionaries can be expected to rise to the rank of senior legionaries. They are like military cadets being trained to be soldiers. The health, growth and maintenance of our Legion depend on junior praesidia where the young are zealously and lovingly incubated to grow into senior legionaries. If we are finding it difficult to maintain our numbers in the senior ranks, it is in measure due to our lack of junior legionaries. Two senior legionaries need to be assigned to the junior praesidium as officers. Those who teach our young will have a great reward. They will be light shining stars in the sky. (cf. Dan 12:3) It should be obvious that not every senior legionary has the required qualities for this work. Some are not fit for it. Think of high school or college teachers who despite all of their higher education and learning are usually not fit to teach kindergarten and elementary school students. As a teacher, I have seen this first hand. If you are assigned as an officer to a junior praesidium, the work will satisfy your work obligation for your senior praesidium. Let these final words of mine be a call to prioritize the establishment of a junior praesidium in your parish. Our future well-being depends upon it!