



***Written Elaboration of the Allocutio for January 2025
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***Based on the Handbook, Chapter 19, The Meeting And The Member,
Sec 18. Harmony the expression of unity, pages 122-123***

Unity is the root of harmony; harmony is the expression of unity.

Harmony must reign supreme in your meeting. It indicates that peaceableness, friendliness and agreeableness are at work among you. As the spirit of love or charity for one another, in word and deed, “builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1), it will generate for you harmony as its byproduct and concrete demonstration. As your praesidium abides in Christ’s love, you will attain harmony. There is a Latin maxim: “Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est,” where true charity is, God is there. It is equally true that where true charity is, harmony is there. The much-coveted unity that you jealously safeguard will outwardly manifest itself as harmony among you, marked by an environment of mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration. In essence, unity is the glue that binds you together, and harmony is the air you breathe, enabling you to function as a microcosm of the Church’s communion.

Legion efficiency, which refers to the optimal functioning of the meeting with minimal time and effort wasted, should never be perceived as a threat to Legion harmony. Never pit efficiency against harmony. Never sacrifice the respect owed to any of your members solely for the sake of running your meeting efficiently. For example, members who tend toward verbosity and useless digressions should be gently reigned in and never curtly interrupted. So, carefully guard against behaviours that offend against fraternal charity. Bear in mind that even subtle offences against charity can often go unnoticed.

Be wary of false agreements and convenient compromises within your praesidium, as they always come at the expense of true unity. When conflicts remain unresolved, don’t settle for superficial harmony. Lingering and festering issues will eventually break through any deceptively calm exterior, causing harm.

As preventative and preservative measures, practice the virtues that nurture harmony, specifically humility, meekness, obedience, and especially fraternal charity, which unites them all. Simultaneously, regard as toxic those vices that disrupt harmony, especially pride, anger, defiance of authority, and even the slightest offences against fraternal charity. Preserve harmony and prevent discord at all costs but never at the expense of the truth of the Legion system and Handbook. Never compromise or violate the Handbook's rules, either in letter or in spirit, even if it seems necessary for the sake of peace among you. Such compromise would yield a superficial harmony, ultimately leading to spiritual treachery and potentially catastrophic consequences if

left unaddressed. If a legitimate compromise is to be reached among you, it should be limited to matters of non-essential importance. Examples of such matters might include rescheduling a praesidium meeting, determining the appropriate approach to a specific apostolic work, or relinquishing one work in favour of another.

I have spoken about some of the common threats to the integrity of your praesidium. I must elaborate further. Your harmony can be undermined by both immediately dangerous and gradually insidious factors, as well as impediments and obstacles that act as poisons to the foundations of your unity. These can be broadly categorized into internal and external factors. I wholeheartedly invite you to examine your conscience and, if needed, to sincerely repent.

Internal factors within individuals that disrupt unity include pride and ego, which manifest as an inflated sense of self-importance or a reluctance to compromise, leading to division. Jealousy and envy often breed conflict, as resentment toward others' success or recognition undermines harmony. Lack of forgiveness, characterized by holding grudges, hinders reconciliation and mutual trust. The absence of empathy, or failure to understand or consider the feelings and perspectives of others, also contributes to discord. Additionally, fear and insecurity, stemming from anxiety about one's position in the praesidium, can lead to defensive or divisive behaviours.

Relational factors between individuals that disrupt unity include poor communication, where misunderstandings or lack of transparency erode trust. Gossip and slander, involving the spreading of rumours or speaking ill of other members, create division and discord. Conflict avoidance, characterized by suppressing disagreements rather than addressing them, often leads to unresolved resentment. Favouritism or bias, whether perceived or actual, breeds feelings of inequality and discontent. Excessive competition undermines collaboration and mutual support. Oppositionalism, characterized by consistent resistance, disagreement, and challenges to the authority of the praesidium and the Legion itself, strains and deteriorates relationships within the praesidium.

Group-level factors that contribute to disunity include a lack of clear vision or goals, which arises when members do not share a common purpose. Power struggles, marked by competition for authority or control, disrupt the praesidium's morale and cohesion. Cultural or value clashes, stemming from differing worldviews, beliefs, or traditions, often create friction among members. Unresolved conflicts, if ignored, can persist and intensify, ultimately harming relationships. Additionally, a lack of leadership, whether through poor guidance or the absence of direction, can fragment the praesidium and hinder its effectiveness.

External factors that contribute to disunity include outside interference, where external influences such as criticism or sabotage sow discord among members. Additionally, pressure or stress from high-stakes situations can amplify conflicts and weaken the praesidium's harmony, making it more challenging to maintain unity.

While I have spoken about factors that contribute to disunity, I will now emphasize positive factors in the service of unity. You need to establish and maintain open and honest communication, cultivate a culture of forgiveness and humility, and encourage empathy and active listening, where members feel valued and supported. You should set clear goals and shared legion values, resolve conflicts promptly and constructively, and promote fairness and inclusion in decision-making while respecting and adhering to the executive and hierarchical structure of the praesidium. Strong, servant-hearted leadership, exemplified by Our Lord Jesus Christ, is vital in guiding and sustaining unity among yourselves.

Harmony will reign supreme when the members of your praesidium share a clear sense of purpose and direction, making you more likely to work together towards a common goal and foster a sense of camaraderie and shared accomplishment. Remember to keep your roles and responsibilities defined by the Handbook to help you reduce confusion and conflict. Be flexible to adapt and adjust to changing circumstances. Developing emotional self-awareness and regulation, paired with effective conflict resolution skills, is crucial for managing your behaviour and responding thoughtfully to others. By cultivating these fundamental skills, you will be better equipped to navigate conflicts with confidence and contribute to a cooperative environment.

Ultimately, the Legion of Mary entrusts its officers, particularly the President, with the responsibility to promote unity through exemplary leadership. As officers, you are expected to model virtuous behaviour, communicate effectively, and empower your fellow legionaries to contribute to a harmonious environment. Moreover, it is your duty to treat everyone justly and respectfully, thereby preserving trust and cooperation. Legionaries who hold no office in the praesidium should also do their part to strengthen the roots of unity and protect the harmony which is its expression. By diligently adhering to all these counsels, make it your steadfast hope, as it is mine, that everyone in your praesidium, by God's grace, may come to participate in the unity and harmony of the Mystical Home of Nazareth. ■