



Allocutio for June 2024
by Rev. Fr. Joseph Moncada, Toronto Senatus Spiritual Director

Based on the Legion of Mary Handbook, Chapter 19, The Meeting And The Member, Section 10. Late arrival or early, page 119

The late arrival and early departure of legionaries is the concern of this section. Both should be guarded against as serious infractions of the Legion system and spirit. On the contrary, punctuality and remaining for the entirety of the meeting are Legion norms.

Habitual punctuality demonstrates that the legionary takes his responsibilities seriously and is someone upon whom one can rely. It shows that he respects his fellow legionaries' time commitment and is considerate enough to avoid disrupting the meeting with his tardiness. The legionary recognizes that his absence from the beginning of the meeting, or any portion of it, will result in missing the valuable communal recitation of the opening prayers of the Tessera, and perhaps the portions of the meeting that follow. These are failures to give one hundred percent of his time to the meeting.

All that can be said about earnestly safeguarding punctuality can likewise be said about guarding against the habit of departing the meeting early. Few workplaces tolerate employees who make a habit of arriving late and departing early from work without their employer's permission; most require punctual arrival and timely departure as conditions of employment and desirable qualities in employees. Similarly, legionaries as coworkers with Mary and the Holy Spirit have included in their conditions of employment, so to speak, being on time for meetings and seeing them through to the end. After all, if punctuality and finishing the workday on time are prized in the civil sphere, how much more should these values be upheld by the legionary in his praesidium meeting, which operates in the spiritual realm?

Any legionary who arrives late for the opening prayers must first kneel and privately recite the prayers that precede the rosary and the invocations that follow it, before joining the others. He is not required to recite the rosary individually. Missing the communal recitation cannot be repaired in any way; it is a substantial loss. The fact that no reparation can be made for it within the meeting indicates the great spiritual value placed on the legionary's recitation of the rosary with fellow legionaries.

This section uses the words "obliged to leave before the conclusion of the meeting" (p. 119). The word "obliged" indicates some unavoidable necessity that requires a legionary to depart before the conclusion of the meeting. Such a necessity would be rare. Note that the Handbook does not use expressions such as "the legionary wishes to leave the meeting," "feels like leaving the meeting," or "thinks it is a good idea to leave the meeting." The words "obliged to leave... the meeting..." foresee a departure for good reasons, such as a sudden illness or an emergency. All of us can agree that legitimate causes for an early departure would be rare, while legitimate causes for a late arrival would be even rarer.

Whether it be late arrival or early departure, this section of the Handbook specifies the parts of the Legion's prayers that should be recited by the legionary while kneeling. These prayers cannot be omitted. By omitting them, a member may set a bad example, potentially encouraging others to do the same when arriving late or departing early from the meeting. Instead, those members who kneel down to recite their prayers, when they arrive late or are obliged to depart early, provide an edifying example of fidelity to the Legion system to their fellow members.

This section of the Handbook clearly states a Legion standard: persistent late coming, or early departure of a member is in no way permitted. There is nothing unreasonable about this. Frequent early

and late departures suggest that the praesidium meeting is not being taken seriously and may be easily disrespected; furthermore, this behaviour sets a bad example. Remember that the Legion of Mary is a serious apostolic organization, absolutely dedicated to God through its total devotion to Mary. As a disciplined body of men, women, and young people, operating for the highest objectives - namely, the salvation of souls, the extension of God's kingdom on earth, and our sanctification - legionnaires are impelled to start praesidium business on time and adjourn at the scheduled end. Our Lady runs a tight ship, so to speak; therefore, she expects punctuality and adherence to schedules. In the case of a legionary, who is consistently late, and/or departs early, the praesidium President will need to remind him of the Handbook requirements and the reason for these requirements, and admonish him with the hope that no further disciplinary action will be needed. In the case of a legionary who is consistently late and/or departs early, the praesidium President will need to both remind him of the Handbook requirements and their underlying reasons and admonish him, in the hope that no further disciplinary action will be necessary.

When a member is obliged to leave before the conclusion of the meeting, he should first ask the President's permission (Handbook, p. 119). To modern sensibilities, the idea that a member of a voluntary organization needs to ask permission to leave a meeting may seem surprising, bewildering, or bemusing, and may even be met with resistance. Yet, this too, forms part of the authority structure of the Legion. To omit or contradict it would erode its cohesion. The application of this rule neither patronizes nor condescends to the legionary, but instead respects and empowers him to make his best contribution.

The final judgment of this section is that indifference to missing the opening and concluding prayers is a mindset that is foreign and hostile to, and in enmity with, the true spirit of the Legion - a spirit of prayer. Only harm and, in fact, no good results from it. Thus, the entire tenor of this section on late arrival or early departure, like every other part of the Legion system, sets a high apostolic and religious standard worthy of Christ's disciples, who seek to conquer the world for God through Mary. ■