



*Allocutio for November 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 16. Special prayers at the meeting, pages 121-122*

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### *Special prayers at the meeting*

Given the legionaries' unwavering devotion and profoundly humble reliance on divine grace for their apostolate and personal needs, as well as those of others, the question naturally arises whether it is permissible to offer the prayers of the meeting for specific intentions. This section of the Handbook provides a comprehensive and clear resolution to this inquiry, presented in a three-part response.

Firstly, the ordinary Legion prayers should remain dedicated to Our Blessed Lady, the Queen of the Legion, and offered solely for her intentions, not ours, not anyone else's, and not for any other purpose. While we can envision numerous intentions for which the Legion prayers could be offered, none are permitted. This rule is not arbitrary. We second her prayer intentions and not the other way around. By doing so, we make her prayer intentions our own, thereby achieving a perfect identification of our hearts and wills with her heart and will. Since her intentions are perfectly aligned with the intentions of her Son's heart, we can be certain that our prayer intentions will reach him most effectively through her. If we were to offer the Legion prayers for our own special intentions, we would, so to speak, be sounding discordant notes into the Legion's song of prayer; we would be interweaving the Legion's fabric of prayer intentions with alien threads and patterns. Any commingling of our special intentions with Mary's prayer intentions would be a weakening, a corruption, and ultimately a falsification of our official Legion prayer intentions.

Fundamentally, the Legion's praesidium prayers participate in Mary's own prayer intentions to God. While we do not vocalize or share our personal prayer intentions with her, she possesses a superior understanding of our needs, rendering her prayer intentions for us vastly superior to our own. Our prayers constitute a grand, unqualified trusting plea for her intercession!

Secondly, as a general rule, it is not permitted to add any additional prayers to the existing meeting prayers. The Legion prayers need not be supplemented with other prayers for special intentions. These would unnecessarily lengthen the existing prayers. We are not to turn the praesidium meeting into a prayer meeting but rather maintain it as a meeting for apostolic business bounded by prayer. However, exceptions can be made for special prayer intentions which acknowledge the diverse needs and concerns of legionaries. This flexibility demonstrates an understanding that legionaries, from time to time, may wish to offer a special prayer. Accommodating these individual concerns fosters a sense of inclusion and support within the praesidium. Consequently, in rare cases, a brief additional prayer may be permitted; for example, a prayer for the repose of the soul of a recently deceased legionary.

Thirdly, members are encouraged to include special intentions for the Legion in their private prayers and devotions outside of meetings. This may include praying for councils, praesidia, the preparation and success of Legion events such as Acies and Congresses, and for particular legionaries, both living and deceased.

Considering that no section of the Handbook is ever read in isolation, but rather within the context of the entire Handbook, and recognizing that the devotional outlook of the Legion is reflected in its prayers (Handbook, page 17), we invite deeper reflection by posing the following question: Specifically, what principle of the Legion system informs and governs this section of the Handbook

regarding special intentions? We draw attention to the Legion's fundamental principle, which states that "members are not at liberty to vary or practice as they choose" (Handbook, page 126). This principle implies that no one may add to, subtract from, or modify the Legion prayers.

A formula prayer, by its very nature, is an intention. Therefore, the question sometimes arises: is it permitted to add the Fatima Prayer (O my Jesus, forgive us our sins...), which indeed is a formula prayer, to the Legion prayers at the end of each decade of the Rosary? The answer is a straightforward and emphatic no! It should not be prayed aloud or even silently intended; doing so would be adding an unauthorized prayer. Concilium Legionis Mariae, the highest council of the Legion of Mary, has ruled on this matter. Adhering to Our Lady of Fatima's request to recite this prayer is commendable when done separately from Legion meetings. However, it is reprehensible and seriously violates the prohibition outlined in the Handbook when done during meetings. The Handbook has been approved by the authority of the Catholic Church with the understanding that neither its spirit nor its letter should in any way be transgressed. Any additional prayers, such as the Fatima Prayer, that anyone wants to insert into the Legion prayers would need first the approval of Concilium. No such approval has ever been forthcoming. The Virgin Mary never requests that we disobey the Church's authority in lawful things. For any legionaries to knowingly persist in this practice is sheer disobedience! We are aware that in our councils, the overwhelming majority of legionaries are obedient to the Handbook in this regard. They do not add the Fatima Prayer or any other prayer. The Presidents of praesidia and, ultimately, councils must ensure that the Legion system is consistently adhered to in this matter. Whenever necessary, praesidia and legionaries should be corrected and instructed in accordance with the Handbook.

Overall, this section of the Handbook instructs legionaries to prioritize the Blessed Mother's intentions, avoid lengthy additions to the praesidium prayers, and, within reason, permit exceptions for special prayer intentions. It also encourages private devotions for legionaries to perform separately from meetings. ■