

*Without the recitation of the Legion prayers within the praesidium meeting, there is no real Legion meeting.*

The business of the presidium meeting, woven together with the prayers of the Legion of Mary, forms an integral and inseparable whole. This fusion constitutes “the unity of the meeting.” Under no circumstances should the prayers, in whole or in part, particularly the Rosary, be omitted from the meeting or recited separately elsewhere, as this would fundamentally alter the meeting's character and, consequently, the nature of the Legion's apostolate. Pious sentiments may lead some to propose that the Rosary would be best recited before the Blessed Sacrament, either exposed or reserved in the Tabernacle. However, such thoughts stem from an inadequate understanding of the Legion meeting and, consequently, the entire Legion system. Essentially, the Legion prayers sustain, inspire, and put their stamp on the meeting. Its proceedings are, as it were, gilded by praise, pleadings, and invocations. Vigilance is necessary to preserve the essence of the meeting.

The integration of the Legion prayers into the meeting imbues it with a prayerful character, intrinsic to its identity, such that our prayers through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary soar to heaven with the secure hope that our proceedings will receive a worthy reception and that God, through Mary's mediation, will grant members the graces necessary to conduct the meeting wisely and faithfully. Thus, our Legion prayers, perfumed and powered with Mary's supplications, rise like fragrant incense before the face of God.

For many Catholics today prayer and apostolic action are two distinct things living in different compartments of their life; they do not recognize nor experience the integral connection between the two. This disconnect is reminiscent of Martha, the active one, not understanding her sister Mary's prayerful devotion to the Lord Jesus. This dichotomy has never, and will never, characterize the Legion. Those who seek to belong to a prayer group will not find it in the Legion, nor will those who seek an apostolate without prayer—mere activism—find it in the Legion.

I have often explained to non-Legionaries, who typically have little to no knowledge of the Legion, that while prayer is integrated into the Legion meeting, it is not a prayer meeting. This should not be understood to imply that Legion prayers can be recited, in whole or in part, outside of the designated meeting place or time, as this would disconnect them from the apostolate's true nature. Moreover, the Legion is inherently not a prayer group. These points,

especially the former, should be explicitly emphasized during legionaries' probationary formation.

Ultimately, guard against any temptation to exclude any part of the Legion prayers, especially the Rosary, for without them there is no real Legion meeting. Altering the meeting by omitting the Rosary is met with the Handbook's declaration that "what breathing is to the human body, the Rosary is to Legion meetings" (*Handbook, page 121*). A body that cannot and does not breathe dies; similarly, a praesidium meeting without the recitation of the Rosary is as good as dead. Omitting the Legion prayers from the meeting, in whole or in part, would not only diminish the meeting but would altogether shatter it. The Legion's character hinges on authentic praesidium meetings, where business and prayer are harmoniously integrated—prayer framing the business and business filling the frame.

My allocutio may sound strong to some of you, but it neither adds nor subtracts anything from this passage of the Handbook. It is not offered as a corrective to any existing malpractices, but rather as an instruction to prevent you from falling into erroneous practices. I am grateful to God and Our Lady that our councils and praesidia uphold good and proper order in their Legion meetings.