

## **PRAESIDIUM REPORT TO COUNCIL: A PRAESIDIUM SELF-PORTRAIT**

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Each Council is responsible for the Legionary well-being of each of its Praesidia. The Council fulfills this responsibility in three ways. The Officers of the Praesidium, who are appointed by the Council, conduct the weekly meeting of the Praesidium. The Praesidium is required to present an Annual Report to the Council every year. And the Council makes an official Visitation of each Praesidium once a year. In these three ways the Council can effectively fulfill the governance of its Praesidia.

As a thumbnail description of these three ways of Council governing, one might describe the first as 'a hands-on, weekly' tutelage. The second way could be described as 'a Praesidium Self-Portrait.' The third could be described as a 'Council House-call' to the Praesidium.

The 'hands-on weekly' tutelage reaches full effectiveness when the Officers of the Praesidium attend the monthly Council meeting and are able to address current situations ' at Council level almost immediately as they arise. The Council 'House-call' to the Praesidium provides a Council eye and ear witness of the conduct of an actual meeting of the Praesidium. But since it occurs only once a year, it is a very limited view.

The Praesidium, then, presents its Self-Portrait to the Council once a year, and it should be the most reliable source of information about the status of the Praesidium. The Officers of the Praesidium, who are members of the Council, are the ones who are responsible for presenting that report. It is important, therefore, to make that report as accurate and complete as it can be. Above all, the report should reflect the actual tenor and tone of the Praesidium. The main purpose of the Report by the Praesidium is to indicate how faithful the Praesidium is to Legionary principles and practice, and to indicate the degree of participation in the Council of which the Praesidium must be a vital part and parcel.

Many times the Praesidium Reports seem to be concerned with supplying an extensive list of works performed by the Active Members of the Praesidium. Often, the works include everything the members do, whether assigned works or not. Too much attention is placed on activity. Too little attention is given to a description of the weekly meeting of the Praesidium, which every Legionary should know is of primary importance. Much too little is said about the meeting.

An adequate Praesidium Report should contain precise observations about four important areas of Praesidium Legion Life: the conduct of the weekly meeting, the performance of the weekly assignments, the members' participation in the four seasonal Legion functions itemized in the Handbook, and participation in other Council activities and projects.

The first concern of the Praesidium Report should be to describe the weekly Praesidium meeting. The important items to mention are the Offices which are filled or vacant, the number of Active Members and Auxiliary Members. There should be some statistic about attendance of Members at the Meeting and the report of the care of Auxiliaries. Mention should be made about on-going efforts to recruit new members. Some other details about the Meeting should include whether all the necessary items of the agenda are able to be given adequate attention within the hour and a half limit required by the Legion. Is the Spiritual Reading taken from the Handbook? Is there adequate discussion of the Handbook? Does every member participate in the discussion? Does every member give an adequate and audible report of the work assigned? Do both members of the team share the report of the work done? Is the 'secret bag' contribution taken up inconspicuously enough? Are the works clearly and definitely assigned? Is Legion confidentiality preserved?

A proper report about the meeting would indicate whether Lay Legionary Apostles are being formed at the Meeting. Many Legionary problems can be traced to inadequate formation in the Praesidium meeting.

The second major phase of the Praesidium Report deals with the Assigned Works. This report should concentrate on Assigned works only, not on any and all work which a Legionary may do throughout the course of a year. Many Praesidia expand their reports by indicating all other kinds of works which the Legionaries perform. And although those works might be laudable and beneficial, they do not necessarily develop Legionary Spirit-and-Scheme. Many times the works assigned are not compatible with the Legionary formation, nor are they performed with the necessary 'inspiration' which the Legion of Mary is meant to provide.

When it comes to reporting works done by a Praesidium, the main consideration should be whether the works are active, substantial, Legionary works. (The description of this requirement is found on Page 191 in the Handbook.) The third area of a Praesidium Report ought to indicate the members' participation in Legion Functions. The most important Legion Function is the Acies. The report should indicate how many Active and Auxiliary members of the Praesidium attended the Acies. The other functions, such as the Outdoor Function, the Praesidium Function, and the December Reunion, 'should be mentioned to reflect the Praesidium's participation in those traditional Legion Functions. All these Functions have special purposes and fulfill certain organizational needs. And the Praesidium, in providing its 'Self-Portrait' ought to take stock of its participation in these universally observed Functions.

The fourth area of concern should be the Praesidium's record of its participation in certain Council activities and projects, such as efforts of Extension, Recruitment Drives, Exploratio Dominicalis, and other apostolic projects which the Council may schedule. There should be mention of attendance at Congresses or Retreats.

The Council will get a much better picture of the Praesidium when it hears a Report which contains the kind of information mentioned above. An authentic Praesidium Self-Portrait indicates Legionary maturity. And that is what the Council really needs to hear and to see. Every Praesidium wants to show that it is active in doing good. But Legionaries should be aware that the most important news about a Legion Praesidium is that its meeting resembles that 'Mystical Nazareth Home' where Mary-like Lay Apostles are being formed, and that the works performed through, with, in, and for Mary are indeed the concerted effort of that mighty Legion whose objective is crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ.