

ASSIGNMENT OF WORK AT THE PRAESIDIUM MEETING

By Rev. Francis Lendacky

One of the least defined and described segments of the Weekly Meeting of the Praesidium is the Work Assignment. The recently revised edition of the Handbook of the Legion, on page 116, simply repeats that when all the business has been transacted, including the assignment of work to each member, and the marking of the attendance roll, the meeting ends with concluding prayers of the Legion and the priest's blessing.

It is possible that so mere a mention of the President's task of assigning the work to each member may shroud a very distinct ingredient of the meeting and may fail to emphasize an essential attitude of a Legionary's apostolate.

If an apostle is one who is sent, then it is most beneficial for that apostle to be aware of a definite assignment on which he is being sent. The President ought to assign the work in such definite appropriate apostolic fashion that each member would be impressed with the apostolic nature of the assignment. For there is no such thing as a self-appointed apostle. Jesus Himself often reminded us that He was sent by the Father! The work assigned to the Legionary reinforces the nature of our mission!

The order of the Legion Praesidium meeting logically determines that the time for the Work Assignment is after all the business has been transacted. Experience has shown, however, that the 'Work assignment' task comes at a time when it can easily be cheated of its importance and value.

Sometimes, the assignments are given hurriedly in order to hold to within the one and a half hour limitation of a Praesidium meeting. As a result, the assignments may be given without proper clarity or without definite purpose or goal to be achieved. They may be given mechanically or automatically. The assignments may be given so nonchalantly as to betray the apostolic intent which ought to be understood by the one who is being sent to do Mary's work for Her Divine Son!

At other times, the assignments are not accepted readily, but are resisted by complicating circumstances; such as, a member's unavailability during that week, or a member's unwillingness to work with a certain other member on a certain type of assignment. What could be most aggravating and ultimately, most disedifying, is the spirit-crushing adjustments attempted by members who wish to perform one certain work in preference to another.

From the President's point of view, the Assignment of Work to each member should be considered as a most crucial task at the meeting. The President ought to take every ounce of care to assign 'the work as a special Lay Legionary task. He

could indicate that simply by specifying a particular result expected from the work. A few other examples can be given: both members of the team sent to a Nursing Home could be told to visit a certain person first, or to start visitation on a different floor that particular week. If a certain feastday occurs during the week, then the members ought to be encouraged to research some interesting note to share with the patient. If assigned to do Parish Home-to-Home visitation, the members ought to be ready to publicize a certain parochial service or activity. If assigned to do Door-to-Door visitation in the parish territory, the members could be encouraged "to seek the lost," or "to spread the Gospel." The mention of an appropriate 'work of mercy' would oftentimes suffice.

Even though the member should recommend to the President some follow-up 'work arising from a previous assignment, the President should not simply let the member continue on his own initiative, but the President should deliberately endorse the work as assigned work. For the Work assignment should manifest the fact that the Legionary apostle is sent NOT to do his own work, but he is sent TO DO the work of Our Blessed Lady who always sought to do the will of God.

The President should always be anxious to apply the "Master-Apprentice" method whenever possible. His constant concern should be to acquaint every member with diversified apostolic experiences within the Legionary apostolate. The Master-Apprentice method is the Legionary way of implementing and refining the Lay Apostolic Vocation. That method is obviously exemplified when a probationary member is teamed up with a experienced member, but the Master-Apprentice method can be applied to experienced members also, when team members are interchanged periodically.

From the Member's point of view, the Work Assignment at the meeting specifies in the present the duty of apostleship which was imposed in the past at Christian Baptism, and it should be accepted with docility. Perhaps at no other moment in the Praesidium meeting could the virtue of courageous obedience be more severely tested. To follow the agenda of the meeting requires a certain degree of obedience. But the acceptance of the Work Assignment, especially when that assignment may not be pleasant, calls for a higher degree of courageous obedience. And the lay apostle should recognize in that docile acceptance that he submits to the Lord and His Blessed Mother and is fulfilling his Baptismal Promises. It is more meritorious to do an assigned work because of obedience than to do a difficult work of one's own choosing, even though one may be willing to suffer intimidation.

The 'work assignment' in the Legion weekly meeting brings to mind two major considerations in contemporary lay -Catholic Action. The assignment at the meeting provides the proper enunciation and demonstration of that indispensable collaboration between priest and lay person which is postulated in the Legion apostolate. The assignment at the Legion meeting further differentiates the Legion apostolate from the

so-called lay ministries. Whereas lay ministries may fall victim to self-satisfying ambitions, the Legionary assignments delineate Kingdom-spreading missions.

If perhaps one may be inclined to think that we are making too much of the "Work Assignment" of the Lay Legionary Apostle, then one should recall what happens shortly after the Assignment. The so-called Concluding Prayers of the Legion are recited--on bended knees. The Concluding Prayer includes a special profession of Faith and a fervent prayer for Faith. After the apostle is assigned, his most important mission is to share the message and the God of Christian Faith. The Concluding Prayer of the meeting is really a 'commissioning' prayer for the Legionary apostle. With the priest's Blessing, the Lay Legionary apostle goes on his way to perform his apostolic work--a work not of his own choice but a work specially assigned from the Praesidium Nazareth home.