

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEGION'S WEEKLY MEETING AND THE WEEKLY WORK ASSIGNMENT

By Rev. Francis Lendacky

The primary duty of an Active Member of the Legion of Mary is to attend the 'weekly meeting.' For an organization as active as the Legion is, one would suppose that the primary duty would be to perform some kind of work. And if one studies the format and scheme of the meeting, one will find that the word 'meeting' may be somewhat misleading. By any bonafide standard of spiritual guidance, the Praesidium meeting could easily qualify as a spiritual exercise.'

The meeting of the Legion of Mary places emphasis on Prayer... three different kinds at three different times. It spends adequate time on study and discussion of its Handbook. The meeting insists on proper and accurate reports of the various apostolic works which Legionaries are assigned to do during the week. The meeting does not critically scrutinize each and every action or competitively assess how much work each team has done, but it forms and informs the members-in a tone which suggests the affection and love among family members. The properly disciplined meeting of the Legion Praesidium is far from being a 'meeting.' It is a truly spiritual exercise--as it ought to be--in the mystical domicile of Nazareth.

When a Legionary perceives the meeting as a genuine spiritual exercise, the Legionary will approach the weekly meeting with a different attitude of heart and mind and soul. Instead of seeing the meeting as a burdensome duty each week, the Legionary may come to cherish the hour and a half in the presence of Our Lady, in the company of fellow members who are devoted to Our Mother Mary. Instead of arriving just about on time for the Opening Prayers, the Legionary will be ahead of time and will be composed inwardly in order to contribute fully to each and every item on the agenda of the meeting. Prior personal preparation for the meeting by each member is more important than arranging the Legion altar for the meeting.

If the most manifest disposition at the meeting must be Charity, then the most necessary foundation must be Faith. The main gift that has been given to all Christians is the gift of Faith. And the Legionary exercises Faith at the meeting and on assignment. The entire meeting focuses attention on different aspects of Faith: the mystery of it (while contemplating the Mysteries of the Rosary); the main occupations of Faith (growth in personal holiness and evangelization); the manifestations of Faith (observed in adequate, apostolic reporting); and the willingness to work for Faith (in the acceptance of the work obligation). The entire spiritual exercise in Faith concludes with the Prayer for Faith with which every Legionary, Active and Auxiliary, is familiar.

The spiritual exercise' of Faith around the altar of Our Lady at the Praesidium should be regarded by each Active Member as the all-important stop at the grace-filling station in order to perform properly the assigned mission of Faith to each and

every soul in the world-wide market place. The highly-energized Faith we receive at the Praesidium meeting is enough to take on works of more than average works of service. That is one reason why the Legion has never been afraid of undertaking challenges of high enterprise for God. The meeting, when properly perceived and participated in, is able to sustain even the most faint-hearted apostle.

With confidence bolstered by the spiritual exercise in Faith the Praesidium meeting, the Legionary will understand why the Legion is attracted to certain works, and even prefers heroic works.

The relationship between the Legionary's work and the meeting will make Legionaries aware that some sort of compatibility between the works of the Legion and the meeting itself is to be maintained. And this awareness will lead us to affirm that the work which is forged docilely in the spiritual exercise of the meeting is better than a work which resists the subtle discipline of the heart-warming flames of Nazareth's hearth. Many a time, the attempt to include all sorts of works into the scheme and spirit of the Legion has ended in some severe casualty. Legionaries may not be able to integrate their favorite, personal apostolic inclinations or other Church ministries with the Legion formation. Or the Legion may be contorted into something which can not carry on the vocation of Our Lady.

Legionaries will be well advised to consider the dual requirement of weekly meeting and weekly work assignment to be the most effective means of living faithfully the Third Standing Instruction of the Legion of Mary. To illustrate, we shall consider two important expressions in that Standing Instruction: "a spirit of Faith" and a "certain fashion."

"A spirit of Faith" will not be evident on assignment, if we do not enrich our Faith at the Legion weekly meeting. And we never will enrich that Faith which can conquer all, if we simply attend a meeting. How much more enriching the weekly meeting with Our Lady and our fellow Legionaries would be, if we looked upon the Praesidium meeting as a wellspring of Faith. It is Faith which gathers us together; it is Faith which welds us together; it is Faith which we desire to spread to the corners of the world. And the Legionary can foster that kind of Faith--the Faith for which he prays at the conclusion of the spiritual exercise of the Legion each week. Is it a futile phrase when we call upon Our Lady to fan our "Pillar of fire faith" to glow more fervently within ourselves, and to illuminate us to become bright and shining lamps to all around us? How many of us are aware of the power of, that Faith we have been given. Perhaps we have forfeited its power by trivial pursuits or buried it deeply within our timid hearts.

"The certain fashion" must be Marian, of course. Sometimes, it appears that the Marian fashion we imitate is as static as the statue on the Legion altar. We ought never to forget that the Immaculate Lady has always been indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Our knowledge of Her has never been presented to us without that especial union with the Holy Spirit. And the first vocation we have ever known Her to have is to be

the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Since the time of the Annunciation we have never known Her to be anything other than Mother. It is true that to the Eternal Father She was looked upon as the Highly-favored Daughter; to the Holy Spirit She was first His Inviolable Temple and then His Most Chaste Spouse; to the Eternal Son of the Father, She was ever Virgin-Mother (fashioned to His delight) first of the Redeemer, then of the Redeemed. But to the Legionary, truly devoted to Her, She must always be seen as Our Mother in Faith, and She must always be regarded as the pre-eminent Apostle of Faith.

The Third Standing Instruction is branded upon the heart of a Legionary who willingly is formed by the exercise of the meeting and willingly conforms his works to Mary's fashion. The Legionary's constant challenge is to reflect in his life that unique harmony of Mary's spirit and Service.