The Legion of Mary- Rochester Comitium

Duties of the Spiritual Director

As the Legion judges its success entirely according to the spiritual qualities developed in its members and brought to bear by them on their work, it follows that the Spiritual Director, on whom the duty primarily falls of inspiring the members with those qualities, is the very mainspring of the praesidium. He will attend the meetings and he will, together with the President and the other officers, take care that the rules are kept, and the Legion system carried out both in the spirit and the letter. He will guard against all abuses, and he shall uphold all due legionary authority.

If his praesidium is worthy of the name, he has within it the special zeal and possibilities of his parish. But **it depends on him for its work**, which should be of a worthy and difficult kind. **It depends on him for spurring on**, because interior reluctances and external barriers have to be broken down. **It looks to him to be the animating principle of its spirituality**. So much, in fact, depends on him that Pope Pius XI puts it thus: "My fate is in your hands." It would be a sorrow if even in a single case that sense of trust should be misplaced; if even one little band, wishful to do its best for God and Mary and souls, should be left straying, truly a flock without its shepherd! What would the chief shepherd say of such a one, to whom he also had looked to be "the soul of the association, the inspiration of all good undertakings, the source of zeal"? (Pope Pius XI)
The Spiritual Director will regard his praesidium as a novice-master would those placed under his care, and will seek incessantly to develop their spiritual outlook and to elicit in them acts and qualities proper to a legionary of Mary. It will be found that these spiritual qualities will rise to the heights to which they are summoned, so that the Spiritual Director need not fear to make his call one to supreme virtue, or to place before his members work requiring heroic qualities to perform. Even the impossible must surrender to grace; and grace is for the asking. But likewise he shall insist upon an unvarying fidelity in the minor details of their duty as the essential foundation for great achievement. Though character may be shown in the big moments, it is in the small moments that it is made.

He will see to it that his members do not approach their work in a spirit of self, and will thus ensure that they will return neither elated by success nor depressed by apparent failure, prepared, if bidden, to return a thousand times to the most disagreeable or most depressing duty. He will see that they supplement a fearless and thorough execution of their active work by prayer for it and by acts of self-sacrifice, and he will teach them that it is just at the time when all ordinary means have failed, when things are humanly speaking hopeless, that the Queen of the Legion, their Mother, can be turned to with most certain confidence, and will grant them the victory.

Essentially **it will be the duty of a Spiritual Director of the Legion of Mary to fill all his members with an enlightened and most intense love of the Mother of God**, and in particular for those privileges of hers which the Legion specially honors. Thus building patiently, fitting stone on stone, he can hope to erect in each member a fortress of the spirit which nothing will disintegrate.

As a member of the praesidium, the Spiritual Director will take part in its transaction of business and in its various discussions and undertakings, and will be "as necessity demands, teacher, counselor and guide" (Pope St. Pius X.) He should, however, be careful that he does not find himself assuming as well the duties of President. Should there be a tendency in this direction, it will not be for the good of the praesidium. If to his prestige as priest, and his infinitely wider knowledge of life, is added the taking and conducting of the business by him, the effect upon the meeting will be overwhelming. It will be found that the consideration of each case will take the form of a dialogue between the Spiritual Director and the legionary concerned, in which the President and the members at large will play no part, remaining silent from a feeling that their intervention would bear the complexion of an effort to interfere with the judgment of the Spiritual Director. With the discontinuance of its free and general discussion of cases, the meeting will have lost what is at once its chief element of attractiveness, its principal educative force, and its greatest source of health. Such a praesidium will do no work on the occasion of the absence of the Spiritual Director, and may collapse in the event of his departure.
"He will - as every member is required to do - take the liveliest interest in everything which is told at the meeting. But he will not seize on every word as an opportunity for injecting his own views. Of course he will interpose when his counsel or knowledge is definitely called for. But he should do this in a balanced way, not 'blacking-out' the President, not swamping the meeting; and on the other hand intervening enough to afford a model as to the extent and the manner in which the members should interest themselves in cases not their own." (Bishop Helmsing.)

In case a praesidium undertakes the work of study, the Spiritual Director will supervise the choice of books to be read. He will exercise a vigilant censorship on this work, and he shall allow no doctrines to be proposed to the members but such as are in full accord with the authentic principles of the Church.

Immediately after the recitation of the Catena, a short talk, preferably by way of commentary on the handbook (see section 11, *The Allocutio*, chapter 18, *Order of the Praesidium Meeting*) should be given by the Spiritual Director. In the event of his absence, this duty devolves upon the President. **Immediately after the conclusion of the final prayers of the meeting, he shall impart his blessing to the members**.

"Christ actually did appoint a Priesthood, which should not only represent him and stand for him, but should in a certain sense be Himself - that is to say, that he should exercise divine powers through its agency. Therefore devotion and reverence towards the priest is a direct homage to the Eternal Priesthood of which the human minister is a partaker." (Benson: Friendship of Christ)

"The priest must be that husbandman who, at every hour of the day, from dawn to dusk, goes out into the public places to call for laborers in the Lord's vineyard. Without that call of his, there is a great risk that the majority will remain standing there 'all the day idle.' (Mt 20: 6)" (Civardi)