**20 Suggestions for the Organization of a New Legion of Mary Praesidium**

1. After acquiring permission of the pastor to start, tell him we’ll do the organizing and

bring all the materials, etc. Tell him we need two things: people and works. Ask if he'll

personally invite 15-20 people to an information meeting and perhaps put a notice in the

bulletin and make an announcement at Mass. Works to suggest could be visiting a

nursing home, hospital or prison, new families, registered families to promote special

functions or devotions, families that don't come to Church regularly, shut-ins, the

bereaved, etc. The ideal work to suggest is door-to-door visitation to reach the

unchurched and alienated Catholics.

2. Determine a place to meet: parish meeting room, conference room, etc. Mention the

need for a “family setting” – long table with chairs -- not an auditorium setting or a lounge.

3. Set a date for the first meeting. Usually weekday evenings are best. Be sure Father

can be present and bring works to assign. He should be told about his function at the

meeting: leading the prayers, doing the reading, giving the allocutio, etc. at the first

meeting.

4. Run this information meeting as closely as possible to a regular meeting, with the

Rosary (explain the Legion way of saying it), Legion prayers, handbook reading and

discussion, allocutio etc. The organizers should give “living” reports of the work they do in

their own praesidia as examples for the guests. When it comes to something that you

wouldn't have at the first meeting (like minutes, treasurer's report, etc.) you could briefly

describe them. The secret bag can be mentioned, but we usually play down the need for

money at the organizational meeting. It is important not to explain too much at the first

meeting. It is not necessary to read the standing instructions at the first meeting. You

could read them at the third or fourth meeting (but always on the first meeting of each

month). However, to read and explain the Standing Instruction in a positive way with time

for questions or discussion before the end of the meeting could be very beneficial.

5. The best way to get members is to have the pastor, priest, deacon, etc., hand pick

them. People that they think would be good should be personally invited by the priests,

deacon, or seminarian. It should be mentioned that often the most unlikely people

become faithful legionaries and those with “leadership” qualities should not be primarily

sought for that reason alone. If the pastor is not inclined to handpick his members, a

recruiting drive can be suggested, when a short talk is given at the Masses and names

taken of those interested. But this is done usually after a praesidium is begun and

membership remains low. The pastor's personal interest is of primary importance and his

invitation usually results in a solid group to start with. The recruiting drive could be a last

resort.

6. The day and time of the first meeting should be put in the parish bulletin, along with a

short description of the Legion, and an invitation for parishioners to attend.

7. It would be good to have the parishioners who come to the first meeting take an

assignment. This will be a good incentive for them to come back next week to report.

Visiting a nursing home or shut-ins is a good start, but more challenging assignments can

be offered for those who want them.

8. If possible, the experienced organizers should take the new recruits on their first

assignment, to show how the Legion does its work. If not possible, make sure the new

members are assigned in pairs, since all Legion work is normally done in pairs. To

maintain order during the meeting, details as to the day and time of their assignment

should be decided after the meeting.

9. The deacon, seminarian, or religious sister could work with new legionaries the first

few weeks to train them. For example, they could take one legionary with them for a shutin

visit; work with another at the nursing home; or take another on door-to-door. And they

would also give a report on this work if done with a legionary and assigned by the

praesidium.

10. Door-to-door visitation is the Legion's most important work, so each praesidium

should try to start visiting door-to-door with at least one team (presupposing the pastor's

permission) as well as doing the other works. Some lay people are fearful of this work, so

we could start them on something easier, like religious education, nursing home, etc.

Experience has shown that gradually they'll get the courage to go door-to-door, do street

contact, visit a prison, or staff a bookbarrow.

11. After the third or fourth meeting, or after a nucleus of people has been regular in

attending, the praesidium should choose a title of Our Lady for their praesidium, like

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Our Lady of Fatima, etc., or some

title from the Litany. Make sure there is no other praesidium in your council that has the

same name.

12. Keep your eyes open for people who look like they would make good officers.

They should, if possible, be willing to give a little extra time to the Legion, be devoted to

Our Lady, be easy to relate to, and above all have common sense.

13. Officers are usually chosen by the organizers of the praesidium, after consultation

with the Spiritual Director. They are not elected by the praesidium, but are decided upon

by the Spiritual Director and the organizers (or Curia officers) and then asked if they would

like to take the office on a “temporary basis” until they make the Legion promise. Tell

them to read the section in the handbook about their particular office.

14. It is necessary to get the praesidium officially affiliated to the local governing legion

council. This is effected when the officers who are appointed attend the meetings of the

governing council, usually their local Curia or Comitium. The same reasons for excuse

from the praesidium meetings apply to the officer attending the council meeting.

15. The Legion rule is that officers attend their council meeting monthly. However,

circumstances like long distances have to be considered. If the praesidium is within an

hour of the Curia, Comitium or Senatus, it would be vital to have the praesidium officers

attend the Council meetings, because they are the Council.

16. The deacon, since he’s a cleric, or a religious sister is considered a Spiritual Director

of a praesidium, while a seminarian could be president or Tribune (lay Spiritual Director,

approved by the pastor to take the priest's place at the meeting). If there is no Spiritual

Director at the meeting, the president leads all the prayers, Rosary, spiritual reading, and

gives the allocutio in addition to conducting the meeting. (Note: the allocutio should be

delivered in the President’s own words, and should not be merely the reading of an article

or book.)

17. The president assigns the work and arranges the teams at the meetings. The work

should be given to him in advance by the Spiritual Director, who would have received

approval of the work from the pastor.

18. Three or four members are enough to start a praesidium, but a group of 8-15 is best,

with a mix of male and female of all ages, starting at 18 years of age for a senior

praesidium and 8 through 17 for younger groups.

19. The local Curia, Comitium or Senatus will supply you with Legion Handbooks,

Tessere, Vexillum, altar cloth and other supplies. The parish could supply the statue

(Miraculous Medal model, about 2 feet tall), candle holders, candles, vases and flowers,

other literature and medals to give out on assignments. In some places the higher council

also supplies these, and the secret bag collection is used to pay for them. Maria Legionis

subscription blanks should be available for all who attend these first meetings.

20. The name and phone number of the president of the higher council should be given

(as well as the organizer’s) to the Spiritual Director and the president so advice and help

will be available to the praesidium when the organizers have stopped attending the

meetings.