

Philadelphia Senatus Covid-19 Update to attached Councils and Praesidia June 1, 2020

Dear Legionaries of Mary of the Philadelphia Senatus:

We know that the various states, cities and counties are in different stages of re-opening from the Corona virus restrictions. There is not one directive we can give that will fit all situations. We offer the following Senatus directions to Legionaries in regard to resuming Legion activities:

1. Follow the health and safety directives given by your State, County, city and local governing bodies. In addition, the Legion is subject to ecclesiastical authority, so follow the directions from your Diocese and consult with your pastor or Spiritual Director. When in doubt, ask your governing Council.
2. Where in-person meetings are prohibited, virtual Praesidium meetings are suggested, if possible. See direction from Concilium below regarding format and restrictions.
3. Where your locale has opened to the point of permitting gatherings; meetings that are restricted to the permissible number of persons and that allow for social distancing along with facemasks and sanitizing are recommended. Follow public health and safety guidelines.
4. Members who are at high risk due to age (80% of Covid-19 deaths are with those over 65 years old), compromised immunity, or other serious medical conditions are advised to act responsibly and take extra precautions. Members who have a cold, fever or other transmittable acute illness are requested to remain at home. *No one, either member or officer, is required to participate in any in-person meetings or activities until an effective treatment or vaccine is available. Active participation in the Legion during these pandemic restrictions is on a strictly voluntary basis. Officers are requested to keep the above in mind when considering re-starting in-person meetings and work assignments.*
5. Any initial restart to the Legion work apostolate should be made with social distancing, face masks and sanitizing. See comments from Concilium below.
6. Councils are recommended, as a minimum, to continue their monthly officer meetings (virtually as necessary) in order to address any issues. See Concilium comment below. Annual reports from attached Praesidia and sub-councils might be submitted on their regular schedule.

Further to the above issues, below are some excerpts (emphasis added) from the 13 May 2020 letter of our Correspondent, Raymond Mulrooney, in response to Colleen Newcomb's report from Senatus in April.

"Many thanks for your officers' meeting review in April and the three council reports, quite remarkable under the circumstances.

I note the Senatus Officers did meet in April; and as recommended by Concilium, the meeting did not have any confidential reports to discuss. Fr. Mekennon's allocutio on the 5th Joyful Mystery was most beautiful and illuminating.

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Obviously over the past six weeks the position was very fluid, and the advice was to ‘pray and obey’ both Civic and Church authority during COVID 19 and that is still the only advice available.

As for council officers’ meetings in other states, they should continue to follow the local health authority’s advice and hold only virtual meetings until it is safe to do otherwise.

Praesidia in general are holding virtual meetings, mostly to recite the Legion Prayers, some read or discuss the Handbook, and have an Allocutio, but this is optional; but nothing confidential should be discussed until we can get back to normal.

*At that stage, an initial effort to restart the Legion apostolate, in making contact ‘at a distance’, perhaps the book barrow/stand/table in the outside world, could be used to highlight Catholic literature and the **Maria Legionis** on display a means of sharing the faith. Bulk-buying by councils of the magazine for this purpose would be so beneficial for all.”*

And in a comment to the Pittsburg Regia that has general application to other Councils:

“Has the Regia a website? Now, more than ever, we see what a lifeline the internet has been to each one of us and to our families; in keep in touch with each other, and for our sanity in our self-isolation!

After the lockdown is over, the Regia, and indeed all councils, should upgrade their websites and find internet-savvy legionaries to explore ways to reach younger smartphone users. Other movements are using attractive websites, with definite success. To survive, all the councils will need to find new ways of reaching out to the populace.”

And in closing, Raymond says:

“On the 28th of April was the feast of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. In an allocutio Fr. Bede McGregor said, “St. Louis Marie was to become and remain a seminal influence in the Universal Church and particularly in the Legion of Mary. In fact, it would be impossible to understand the heart of the Legion or the interior life of its founder Frank Duff without some basic knowledge of the teaching and inspiration of de Montfort.

In a talk to the Montfort Fathers in Bayshore, New York in 1958, Frank Duff said: ‘The Legion of Mary owes, you might say, everything to de Montfort’s True Devotion to Mary.’ And in the Handbook, he writes: It can be safely asserted that no Saint has played a greater part in the development of the Legion than he.’ The Handbook is full of his spirit. The prayers re-echo his very words. He is really the tutor of the Legion: thus, invocation is due to him by the Legion almost as a matter of moral obligation.’ (Handbook Ch. 24, section 3)

Pope Francis has asked us to make a special effort in May to pray the Rosary, knowing that by doing so we will be united with believers around the world asking for Mary’s intercession in stopping the coronavirus pandemic.

“Contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary, our mother, will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial,” the pope said in a letter addressed to all Catholics and released by the Vatican.

The month of May is traditionally devoted to Mary and many Catholics already are in the habit of praying the Rosary at home during the month, he noted. “The restrictions of the pandemic

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have made us come to appreciate all the more this 'family' aspect, also from a spiritual point of view..."

We appreciate that you are continuing with the Legion prayers and Rosary during this entire period of self-isolation. We hope that things will return to normal sooner than later. May the Holy Spirit on this Pentecost continue to inspire all Legionaries to be Truly Devoted to Jesus through Mary in the way of St. Louis De Montfort.

Yours in the Legion,

Tony Gilliam

Philadelphia Senatus President