

Report from the Curia - Keeping the members connected

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First impressions of a Legion of Mary council meeting can be awe inspiring, if not bewildering. When the officers of my Praesidium invited me to visit the Eastern Montgomery County Curia as a guest in 1981, I felt that I was floating on a great river of information in a very small canoe. As a Legionary becomes acquainted, though, with the usual agenda of the council meeting and the format of the various reports, it proves to be real spiritual re-creation.

As a beginner, a Legionary officer might view the Curia as "those people we report to once (or twice) a year". Much thought and preparation goes into the report that a Praesidium makes to the council that serves as its Curia. Communication with the Curia, though, is a two way street. How carefully do the officers of the average Praesidium report back from the Curia to their fellow Legionaries at the weekly meeting?

Giving a report from Curia is not the job of the Praesidium Secretary alone. All Praesidium officers have the duty of attending Curia (cf. Handbook, pages 212-220). All of them should consider bringing news of Curia decisions, recommendations, announcements, etc. to the Praesidium as one of the obligations of their office.

What to report?

How extensive the "Report from Curia" is going to be will depend on many factors: how easily the Praesidium meeting can keep to the one and a half hour limit, the level of experience of the non-officer members, the particular matters of interest dealt with at the most recent Curia meeting, etc. A basic checklist follows, arranged according to the kinds of business each Praesidium officer usually deals with.

Treasurer: Did the Curia have any unusual or noteworthy expenses? (A percentage of that money came from your Praesidium!) What supplies does the Curia sell (sacramentals, medals, leaflets, books) that could help Praesidium members prepare for and complete their assignments?

Secretary: What are the work methods of the Praesidium that gave its report to the Curia? Any remarkable results? What discussion followed? Was there a discussion about other Curia business? (Feedback on a Praesidium's own report to Curia is vitally important).

Vice-President: Were any vacancies mentioned or ratifications made of Curia or Praesidium officers? Did Curia announce Praesidium visitations or request help on council projects (for instance, a recruiting drive)?

President: What plans are being made for Legion functions? What Legion principles and rules were applied by Curia officers and members to topics that are of interest to the Praesidium? What decisions made by Curia or by higher councils affects our Praesidium? (Recent example: the revised Handbook!) Other items will suggest themselves, but the preceding is a recommended "minimum monthly requirement" for the Curia report back to the Praesidium.

How to give a report from Curia

A Praesidium Secretary would not think of giving an annual report to Curia off the top of her head. Yet we often hear Curia "reports" to Praesidia stammered by an officer who is trying to decipher hastily written notes.

Planning and preparation are required: not much, but some. The two way communication between the Praesidium and its governing council is at stake.

The first thing to keep clearly in mind is that the "Report from Curia" is not a fast forward version of the Curia meeting! The Praesidium does not have to approve a set of minutes for the Curia. So scale it down! Skip routine matters! Think: headlines and highlights!

Second: news from the Curia doesn't have to be reported all at once. Usually the Praesidium will meet four or five times before the next Curia meeting. Of course, important news and business that involves planning should be announced right away. But other items can be saved for later: for example they could live up a "slow" meeting that has few reports on assigned works.

Third: Praesidium officers should decide beforehand who will report on what. This can be done informally: during refreshments after the Curia meeting, on the ride home (if officers car-pool). Or as officers are setting up for the Praesidium meeting. If the "report from Curia" is not a team effort, it could give the impression of shoppers at a bargain basement sale.

The Handbook observes that the communication of spiritual energy depends, like electricity, on the making or breaking of a connection. Most Praesidia are in communication with their respective councils, but the contacts may be a bit "rusty" and a "poor connection" results. One way to increase the spiritual energy circulating in a Praesidium is to improve the reports from the weekly meeting.

Special cases

How does one "report" on the Allocutio given at the Curia meeting? One or two sentences, maximum, should be devoted to identifying the theme of the Allocutio and restating one key point from it. "But Fathers Semperfideles give such great Allocutios...." "And I am a stenographer..."). Well, praise the Lord and thank you Blessed Mother, but there is only one place for an Allocutio on the agenda of a Praesidium meeting. A wise President will store up those Curia Allocutios for a rainy day...

What if the "Curia" that governs my Praesidium is also a higher council, say a Senatus? (See paragraph 19 of chapter 28 of the Handbook). Officers of such a Praesidium, when they report back to their weekly meetings, should focus on the Curia level news: reports of the other attached Praesidia and Legion business and functions in the Curia area. Remember who your

listeners are! (If any of the foot-soldiers in the Praesidium really want to learn what is happening in far flung councils in other dioceses, they can always visit the Senatus meeting or, better yet, become officers!

Conclusion

I once heard a Council Spiritual Director say: members of the council are not just Praesidium members who happen to attend a monthly council meeting, but they are also appointed members of a Legion of Mary council who are expected to attend and govern a weekly Praesidium meeting! This perspective helps Legionaries to understand that there is a two-way street between the Praesidium and the Curia, and that responsibility to and responsibility from are both part of the system of government in the Legion of Mary. The Handbook cautions Legionaries that the minutes at a Praesidium meeting, by their quality and the manner of reading them, can set the tone, for better or for worse, of what follows p. 108). The "Report from Curia" holds a position that has equal if not greater strategic importance for the well-being of a Praesidium.