

Legion of Mary

The Legion of Mary has, as a fundamental component of its mission, the formation of its members, and in particular its officers, so that together we may understand, live, and share with all we meet the teachings of the Catholic Faith.

LEGION ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS (Handbook Chapter 13)

INTRODUCTION - *Every Council in the Legion of Mary is charged with the responsibility of upholding the integrity of the Legion spirit, its rules and practices. (Chapter 28, Government of the Legion). As in any system of rules and regulations, there will be always be some form of confusion or even ambiguity in their correct interpretation, and thus one of the main duties of council board of officers is formulating and disseminating the proper and correct intent of each rule and regulation, more importantly enforcing these rules in the spirit of the Legion of Mary founded on obedience and faithfulness of members with Mary as the model of the virtue of obedience.*

In the Legion system, discussions of these rules and regulations and other important matters are carried out in healthy and sometimes animated discussions at the monthly Council meetings. The HB in fact encourages as this type of discussions as a matter of a healthy discourse and exchange of ideas. It encourages further active participation from as many members as possible – however, at the end, a final interpretation of these rules is set forth officially by a higher Council, and if necessary, by the next higher Council or the Concilium (if necessary).

OBJECTIVE - The purpose of this document is to further clarify and expound on the basic conditions stated in the Legion Handbook as to the membership requirements of those desiring to be an active member of the Legion of Mary. These requirements can be found on Chapter 13 of the Legion of Mary Handbook.

As we all know, the Legion of Mary Handbook states that the “object of the Legion of Mary is the glory of God through the holiness of its members

developed by prayer and active co-operation, under ecclesiastical guidance, in Mary's and the Church's work of crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ." (HB p. 11). Holiness for a Legion of member can be achieved through prayer (living out of a Sacramental life) and apostolic action (commitment to evangelization and active search for souls). This means of holiness is the fundamental belief of the Catholic Church that salvation can be found in faith and works.

As you will read from Chapter 13, there are 17 sections in this chapter, however for the purpose of this document we shall focus only on sections 1-9 only. These are as follows:

CHAPTER 13 - SECTION 1: The Legion of Mary is open to all Catholics who:

- a. faithfully practice their religion;
- b. are animated by the desire to fulfill their role in the Church's apostolate through membership of the Legion
- c. are prepared to fulfill each and every duty which active membership of the Legion involves.

Written in different times and in a much simpler environment, this basic requirement covers the crucial statement of one's Catholic beliefs without the necessity of having to expound it any further in the Handbook. It was understood what "faithfully practice their religion" meant and implied.

On the cusp of the centenary of the founding of the Legion of Mary, and in a world that has seen many technological and scientific advancements, dynamic changes in the basic structure of society that have impacted education, family life and core moral values, this one sentence requirement pertaining to the Catholicity of the Legion members, need to be presented to all Catholics desiring membership to the Legion in a more detailed and practical method.

Let us then answer this fundamental question - **what does "faithfully practice their religion" mean and require?**

Faithful practice of our religion is to live and affirm what our Catholic Faith teaches based on Christian doctrines found in Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition and are part of the Deposit of Faith safely guarded by the Church Magisterium. A Legion of Mary member seeking admission to its rank must therefore be a Catholic who is faithful to the dogmatic and doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church as defined by its Magisterium (Ordinary and Extraordinary) in union with the Pope and all its Bishop and are found in its Catechism and writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

While there are numerous and equally important Church dogmas and doctrines outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, following are some of the fundamental doctrine and moral teachings that have become “hot-button” issues over the past decade that are worth reviewing and that every Legionary and Legionary candidate must believe, affirm, assent, promote and practice to be a faithful and true Catholic. The choice and description of the following church dogmas and doctrines are drawn from Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone’s “Statement on Church Teachings” which he prepared for the formation of Catholic High School teachers in the Archdiocese of San Francisco:

1. THE FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS THE ONE, HOLY AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH (Catechism of the Catholic Church, hereafter CCC paragraphs 748 – 962). *How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Father. Re-formulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body: Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence, they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it (CCC 846)*

2. THE AUTHORITY OF THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH AND THE

POPE - ... *“that the Roman Pontiff... enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office when as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful... he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith and morals (CCC 891).*

3. THE DOCTRINE ON REAL PRESENCE - i.e., Jesus Christ is present Body, Soul and Divinity under the form of bread and wine.

“The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change, the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.” (CCC 1376)

4. THE DOCTRINE ON WORTHY RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION -

“Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone who is aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance. (CCC 1415).

5. THE DOCTRINE ON THE SACRAMENT PENANCE -

“Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary means by which a member of the faithful conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and the Church.” (Code of Canon Law 960)

6. THE DOCTRINE ON SUNDAY OBLIGATION (AND HOLY DAYS OF

OBLIGATION) - *“On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass” (CCC 2280) ... “Those who deliberately fail this obligation commit a grave sin.” (CCC 2281). They*

therefore must avail themselves of the sacrament of penance before presenting themselves for Holy Communion.

7. THE DOCTRINE ON THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT AND ON THE VOCATION TO CHASTITY (CCC 2337- 2365) - *“Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.” (CCC 2337) ... “All the baptized are called to chastity. All Christ’s faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life.” (CCC 2348).*

Particularly, the vocation to chastity means chaste living according to one’s state of life and necessarily requires abstinence from all sexual intimacy outside of marriage even if by itself this is insufficient to achieve the virtue of chastity in all its fulness. Marriage and the intimacy between man and woman in sexual union can become a sign and pledge of spiritual communion.

“Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is not something simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.” (CCC 2361).

Offenses or sins against the vocation to chastity include (CCC 2351 - 2359): lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, rape and homosexual acts. (Church teaches the doctrine about homosexual acts being contrary to the natural law (CCC 2357) and believe all that the Church states about the distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual acts and that homosexual persons do not choose their condition, and that they must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity, likewise, that every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard must be avoided.)

As fecundity is a gift of marriage, the Church teaches that any form of contraception contrary to this end is intrinsically evil. *Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality.*¹⁵⁸ *These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom. In contrast, "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil. (CCC 2370)*

8. THE DOCTRINE ON THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE – (CCC 1601 –

1653; Code of Canon Law 1055, 1056 and 1057). *"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."* **(CCC 1601).** The Church teaches that marriage is an institution, s a covenant and between two baptized persons (as a sacrament) – that it is partnership of the whole life between a man and a woman of permanent and exclusive fidelity ordered to the procreation and education of offspring and the mutual good of the spouses (CCC 1601, Canon 1055, 1056, 1057).

Thus, the Sacrament of Marriage is a holy consent between man and woman towards their conjugal love for each other, expressed through a mutual support and in cooperation with God's plan in bringing forth children to this world. *"God who created man out of love also calls him to love the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love.⁹⁰ Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: "And God*

blessed them, and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.'” (CCC 1604)

9. THE DOCTRINE ON ARTIFICIAL REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY (CCC

2376) - The Church teaches of the grave evil of artificial reproductive technology and those techniques that entail the disassociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than a couple (donation of sperm and ovum, surrogate uterus) are gravely immoral,” that these techniques infringe on the “child’s right to be born of a father and a mother known to him and abound to each other in marriage. They betray the spouses’ right to become a father and a mother only through each other. “(CCC 2376).

10. THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH ON FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP particularly on the “five non-negotiable issues” as explained in the Faithful Citizenship Guide by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and further explained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and that to be a true Catholic, one cannot support anyone who supports these intrinsic acts of evil:

- *Abortion - CCC 2258: Human life is sacred* because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being."
- *Euthanasia - CCC 2277: “Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable.*
- *Embryonic Stem Cell Research* (Statement by USCCB) - “... the Church supports stem cell research, while opposing any research that exploits or destroys human embryos... Because

the Church opposes deliberately destroying innocent human life at any stage, for research or for other purpose it opposes embryonic research for any purpose as currently conducted.

Human Cloning – (The Gospel of Life – 1995 Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II) – The various techniques of artificial reproduction which would seem to be at the service of life and which are frequently used with this intention, actually open the door to new threats against life. Apart from the fact that they are morally unacceptable, since they separate procreation from the fully human context of conjugal act, these techniques have a high rate of failure. Human cloning “seeks to give rise to a new human being without connection to the act of reciprocal self-giving between the spouses and more radically, without link to sexuality. This leads to manipulation and abuses gravely injurious to human dignity.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitaries Personae*, n. 28).

- **Homosexual “Marriage” – CCC 2357** – Being itself on Sacred Scripture which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.” They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.”

CHAPTER 13 – Section 2: “Persons who wish to join the Legion must apply for membership.” – *This is an important section of this chapter on membership that we might have overlooked over the years or perhaps not have placed so much emphasis on, primarily because of our eagerness to recruit new members to the Legion that this second requirement is not fully employed. Yes, we must expand the membership base of the Legion of Mary (as the HB states), but one desiring to join its rank **MUST APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP.***

Thus, implied in this rule is the fact that not all may be accepted to the ranks of the Legion. A candidate may have certain reservations or opposition to certain Catholic

doctrines (such as the aforementioned in Section 1) or may have impediments that may at the time of his or her application to the membership need to be resolved - such as his or her marital status, membership or affiliation to any civic, religious, political organizations or even businesses that are openly opposed to the Catholic Church or any of its doctrines. As an act of charity and love for a candidate, the Legion seeks resolution of these impediments before welcoming anyone to its ranks.

Though there is no application process specified in the Handbook, the SF Senatus recommends that the candidate must at least express his or her willingness to follow the spirit, rules of the Legion of Mary and to observe the requirements of what it means to be a "Catholic who faithfully practice its religion" (as outlined in this document).

CHAPTER 13 - Section 3 - Candidates under 18 years of age can only be received in junior praesidia. (See Chapter 36).

CHAPTER 13 - Section 4 - No one shall be admitted as a candidate for membership of the Legion until the President of the praesidium, to which admission is sought, is after careful enquiry satisfied that the person seeking admission fulfills the conditions required.

The HB has always been emphatic on the importance of the roles of the Praesidium president, and here, he or she plays a very important role once again – the admission of a new member into the ranks of the Legion. As the process of admission is delicate, we advise that the president consult with the other praesidium officers and even the Spiritual Director before making a decision. Again, the Legion invites everyone to its membership, but NOT EVERYONE is fitted to the Legion of Mary as there are rules and regulations that must be observed in obedience. In addition to the four basic duties of the Legionary (Standing Instructions), the president must ensure that the candidate is a practicing and faithful Catholic as we have earlier defined.

CHAPTER 13 - Section 5 - A satisfactory probation of at least three months is required before the candidate can be enrolled in the ranks of the legionaries, but from the first the candidate can participate fully in the works of the Legion. *The HB explicitly uses the word "satisfactory" to again emphasize that candidates to membership must fulfill certain conditions (for example, a candidate who over the three months missed many weekly meetings due to work conflict or family issues, cannot yet be admitted to the Legion of Mary as*

one requirement is attendance at the weekly meeting). In this case, such probationary period may be extended further.

CHAPTER 13 – Section 6 – A copy of the Tessera shall be given to every candidate. – *Every president or vice president of the Praesidium must endeavor to explain the meaning and contents of the Tessera particularly on the Magnificat and the meaning of the words contained in the Concluding Prayers. It is not enough to hand a candidate a Tessera without explaining the significance of the prayers relating to the Legion apostolate, our deep commitment to discipline and works of evangelization. For example, the Concluding Prayers speak about the virtue of faith in God and what it entails (doctrine of the Church on salvation is touched here as faith and works): “a faith firm and immovable as a rock, through which we shall rest tranquil and steadfast amidst the*

CHAPTER 13 – Section 7 – Formal admission consists essentially in the Legionary Promise, and the entry of the name of the candidate on the membership roll of the Praesidium. – *Effort should be made by the president of the Praesidium to prepare the candidate towards the period when the candidate’s Legionary Promise is close by. A week of prayer consisting of a Holy Hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament, a novena to the Holy Spirit and other spiritual exercises are encouraged as part of the preparation process towards the solemn occasion of the Legionary Promise. Also, as the words contained in the Legionary Promise are very deep, profound and inspired by the Holy Spirit, there should be some form of reflection or explanation during one of the weekly meetings as the occasion nears. Perhaps, this may be a subject of the Allocutio or Spiritual Reading.*

CHAPTER 13 – Section 8 - Once the candidate is deemed qualified, there should be no delay in taking the Promise. Two or more candidates may be received simultaneously. But this is not desirable. The greater the number of those received at the one time, the less solemn the ceremony becomes for each of them. – *The vice president of the Praesidium is responsible in keeping track of the candidate’s first meeting date and the date when the probationary period ends. The HB again, uses the words “deemed qualified” to remind us that a candidate, to enter the ranks of the Legion are able to fulfill the requirements for membership. The Promise is a very solemn occasion as this is a prayer of petition addressed to the Holy Spirit, asking for Divine Assistance in the works for the salvation of souls in close union with Mary, his Spouse. As you can also see, the HB*

recommends that the Legion Promise be done one candidate at a time to keep it solemn and very special day for candidates.

CHAPTER 13 - Section 9 - The ceremony of reception may constitute an ordeal for especially sensitive persons. But such are really favored inasmuch as the ceremony possesses for them a particular solemnity and seriousness which will have its effect upon their subsequent membership.

During the ceremony, a candidate can be overwhelmed with emotions and nervousness as to the 'greatness of the occasion' -thus, the candidate's fellow members present ought to remain in silent prayer during the ceremony interceding for the success of the candidate's vocation to this apostolic ministry.

CONCLUSION - Similar to other civic, business, and religious organizations, requirements to the Legion of Mary membership have been defined and outlined in this Chapter of the Handbook to protect its integrity and effective operations. As faithful members of the Holy Catholic Church called to work by our baptism and confirmation in the Church's mission for the salvation of souls, the Legion of Mary sees to it that its members (who are evangelizers and missionaries of the Church in their own right) are fit to perform this very arduous challenge of battle against evil, where Satan and his cohorts abound in lies, half-truths and many other forms of satanic baits to lead one to damnation. To win souls for Christ, the soldier of Mary must be grounded in prayer, discipline, knowledge of truth and wisdom and above all a willingness to sacrifice time and effort for the sake of a soul. Thus, these rules have been written towards that end.