

“Why All these Rules!?” -- by Rev. Frank Giuffre, Spiritual Director, Philadelphia Senatus

If we could play that game show “Family Feud” and ask anyone to name the top difficulty many people have with the Legion of Mary the likely number one answer would be this one: “too many rules!” I know that because I've heard it from our membership, priests, and from our prospects who sometimes fire back statements like these to invitations to join the ranks of Our Lady: *“The Legion is overly rigid for my tastes.” or “It's too structured for me,,” or “We could have more members if we could bend the rules a little bit” or “Don't you think all those regulations are for another era?”*

Hearing all these kinds of comments I just wonder whether a Legion liberation movement to get rid of Legion structure, to make Legion standards optional, or to modify the legion system altogether, is the wave of the future.

But before we act too hastily we might just want to pick up the handbook read carefully the section “the legion system invariable” (pp126-128 cf p68 #2) and think matters through thoroughly. Ultimately “all those rules” that some complain about have a purpose, and it is not to cause stress, but the foster success in working with and for souls – utilizing a method that is not drawn out of thin air but that has been tried and proven effective for decades everywhere. There is wisdom in the legion details; there is wisdom in “all those rules.”

“All those rules” firstly are like so many ingredients in a family recipe that has been handed down for generations. To tamper with it by substitution, omission, or experimentation will only result in a tasteless dish or a total disaster. “All those rules” unify Legion members in various places throughout the world as a single-family army, fighting a single battle for a common cause – to further the reign of Christ – rather than an eclectic band of Guerrilla Fighters warring by whim and fancy. “All those rules” assure that when the name “Legion of Mary” is placed like a label upon a group that the product in the box is truly the Army of Our Lady representing the vision of the Servant of God, Frank Duff, and not some poor generic imitation of the real thing.

“All those rules” protect members from a spirit of subjectivity and independence that would justify plucking and choosing certain threads of Legion standards to pull out of the cloth of the Legion system, all the while fostering a habit which would eventually make the whole Legion fabric unravel. “All those rules” encourage virtues so critical for success in Legion life – such as obedience, humility, loyalty and charity. “All those rules” fashion within us the proper balance of prayers and work so essential, not only for a healthy Legion life, but also for a happy Christian life. “All those rules” ultimately train one in the exercises of Christian perfection, insisting that members learn and master the only type of love Jesus in heaven and Jesus in the world truly longs for: The love of His Mother Mary active in us.

I read once about a man who tried to start an organization of anarchists, but the whole effort fell apart because no one would follow the rules! That's the same fate awaits us if we approach “all the Legion rules” in that same spirit, if we compromise on the legion standard, if we modify the legion system, if we substitute personal preferences for Legion practices, and if we depart from the legions discipline in a false spirit of independence. The results of every surgery on the legion body will lead according to the handbook not to creating a monster but of a “corpse.” It will lead to the death of the Legion. Let us give not the questioning reluctance Eve, but the unselfish *Fiat* of Mary to “all those rules” knowing that doing so will be the best thing we can do for the health of Our Lady's mystical body!