



# The Spirit of the Cenacle

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*The Spirit of the Cenacle* is the official Newsletter of the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate. It is published three times during the year in conjunction with the liturgical seasons of Advent, Lent/Easter, and Ordinary Time. The deadline for the next issue is March 1, 2008. Send materials to Smittie Bolner, 460 Bancroft Way, Baton Rouge, LA 70808-4805. E-mail: sbolner@cox.net.



## From the General Custodian

May the grace and peace of the Holy Spirit be with us forever!

“This cry should constantly be in the heart of the Cenacle: Jesus, King of the world and center of all hearts! We adore Thee, we Praise Thee, we bless Thee, we love Thee; hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done.” Fr. Judge, 1926

How many times in our prayers we ask that His will be done and not ours? To live in His will and only for Him, that’s our daily challenge.

Many years ago, I read Fr. Judge’s invitation to Bethlehem.” First, in our own heart, to have a Bethlehem for Him...a Bethlehem in which He is to be mystically born, a Bethlehem that will make acts of reparation for the ingratitude, inhumanity and irreverence of the first Bethlehem.” (1926)

To have a Bethlehem in our heart is to be the keepers of a big treasure, the Sacred Family, to be the custodians of the mystery of a God who chose as His salvation plan, to be born in a family. Let’s take time to look closely at Joseph and Mary in the little manger of Bethlehem. Let’s find the Josephs and Marys around us. It is our missionary call to find, identify, talk to them and bring them to Jesus.

The Advent season, beginning after the feast of Christ the King, should lead us to “the missionary thought, the missionary idea, the missionary work.” (Rule of life #4) What a great opportunity to share the gift of God’s Love! What a blessing to share with our families, our neighbors, and our communities the true meaning of Christmas!

How many couples and families can we lead into the arms of Jesus by taking them to Bethlehem? How many children and youth will feel in their hearts an ardent desire to know and discover the true love of God because you and I have told them how much God loves them? How many of us will use this time to make a real effort to live our call to develop apostles in the providence of our daily life?

I ask Christ the King during this Advent season to keep us faithful to our baptismal call renewed by our Cenacle consecration to live with zeal and in communion during this time of preparation for Christmas. May Christmas be an opportunity to enter into the Bethlehem of our hearts. May our hearts move us to live in Trinitarian communion with our neighbors.

From this small island of Puerto Rico, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy Epiphany in the Lord!

In love and service,

Alma Robles, MCA, General Custodian

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL SPIRITUAL GUIDE

My first thought is of gratitude to the Triune God and to the General Custodian of the MCA, Alma Perfecto and her General Council, for the privilege of calling me forth to serve once again, as your International Spiritual Guide (ISG). And yes, to Fr. John Edmunds and his Council, for accepting the recommendation and allowing me the blessing to walk with all of you for the next four years.

I met personally with Alma and reflected with her at length, on my responsibilities and duties as ISG. She graciously prepared a whole manual for me, with the MCA's proposed Constitution and Rule of Life. We decided on the need of a monthly telephone conversation and a possible gathering of the Regional Spiritual Guides in the Spring. We are presently on the planning stages for that gathering.

Providentially, the focus of the MCA's thrust for the present Leadership is that of the empowering of the Laity, "That every catholic be an apostle", and this according to the decisions made last Summer at the General Assembly. We want to concentrate our energies and efforts on being faithful to one of Fr. Judge's deepest desires. It is not about recruiting members for the MCA, it is about being a power for good, allowing the Spirit to work through us in calling others to the fidelity of their baptismal vocation. Yes, this entails a rededication of our own consecration and faithfulness to our vocation. My pledge is to accompany you in striving for these goals which necessarily lead us into truly being men and women of the Spirit. I promise you my love and my prayers.

Do please, pray for me also.

Fr. Domingo Rodriguez, S.T.

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## MCA General Council Meeting Report

September 19 - 26 2007

Costa Rica

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Attending: Alma Robles, MCA, General Custodian; General Council: Miguel Juarez, MCA, Assistant General Custodian; Diane and George Zion, MCA, Incarnation Region; Martin Zabala, MCA, (Regional Assistant Custodian) Holy Spirit Region; Sylvia Ramos, MCA, (Regional Assistant Custodian) Trinity Region; Ivette Gutierrez, MCA, San Juan Bautista Region; Ana Barquero, MCA, Our Lady of the Angels Region; Alma Rosa Hernández, MCA, Our Lady of Guadalupe Region.

International Spiritual Guide: Fr. John Seymour, ST

Regional Spiritual Guides: Angelica Otero, MCA ( representing Fr. Guy Wilson, ST), Trinity Region;

Thema Rivera, MCA ( representing Luz de la Torre, MCA) Holy Spirit Region; Eugenia Mora,

MCA, Our lady of the Angels Region; Sr. Margarita Rivera, MSBT, San Juan Bautista Region; Fr.

Ramón Riding, ST, Our Lady of Guadalupe Region.

Absent: Sr. Debbie Wilson, MSBT, Incarnation Region

Ana Flecha, MCA, General Secretary

The MCA General Council met on September 19 – 26, 2007, at the ST seminary in San José, Santo Domingo, Costa Rica. It was a blessing for all to have the experience and opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist and to share the prayers, the table, and the presence of our seminarians. We are thankful to Fr. Odel Medina, ST; Fr. Edgar Solano, ST; Fr. Kevin Nugent, ST; and Magda Zamora, MCA, for their hospitality and for allowing us to share, what seemed to us, an expression of "Pure Life"!

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During the week we talked about and reflected on the issues presented in our last Leadership Assembly, April 2007: Identity, Leadership, Formation, and MCA Goal.

We shared our regional reports, took counsel on some points related to the Rule of Life, and listed the petitions and suggestions from the regions in regard to our transition in the MCA as a Council.

We confirmed our new International Spiritual Guide, Fr. Domingo Rodriguez, ST.

The report of the General Treasurer, Pat Regan, MCA, was presented to the General Council. The Council approved the MCA budget for the current year.

The General Council approved the revised version of the Rule of Life which now goes to the general membership for a vote of Yes or No. The deadline for the vote from the regions is December 22, 2007. The 2008 year will involve re-orientation and formation by the membership on the Rule of Life and the Norms and Policies.

The Formation Committee was restructured with three members from the MCA: Ivette Gutierrez, Angélica Otero, and Blanca McGuthrie. Two members from the religious branch, Fr. John Seymour, ST, and Sr. Rose Morales, MSBT, will serve as consultants. The General Council provided counsel to the Committee for its initial charge. The task of the Committee is to revise current formation practices and create guidelines based on our reality and looking forward to a unity in our diversity.

As a General Council we must be able to provide clarity in our role as a Council; this is our challenge as lay leaders. We are invited to be attentive to our personal spiritual growth as members of the MCA as well as to the spiritual growth of the MCA as a whole. We must be able to develop apostles. To reach this goal, it is necessary to examine our needs in the spiritual, human, and social area. We will work out action plans which we receive from Fr John Seymour, ST ( The current International Spiritual Guide) for a workshop based on Leadership Spirituality.

As a General Council we need to increase the membership of the MCA and to develop leaders from among the members. This brings new challenges and needs. We must be clear in our identity and be able to focus on the future as Missionary Cenacle Apostolate. We are concerned about the children and young people whom we have identified as “the abandoned” for our work together with the Missionary Cenacle Family. If we look for the signs of the time, children and youth are the poor and abandoned of the church.

MCA General Council meeting will be in Puerto Rico, October 15 –22, 2008.

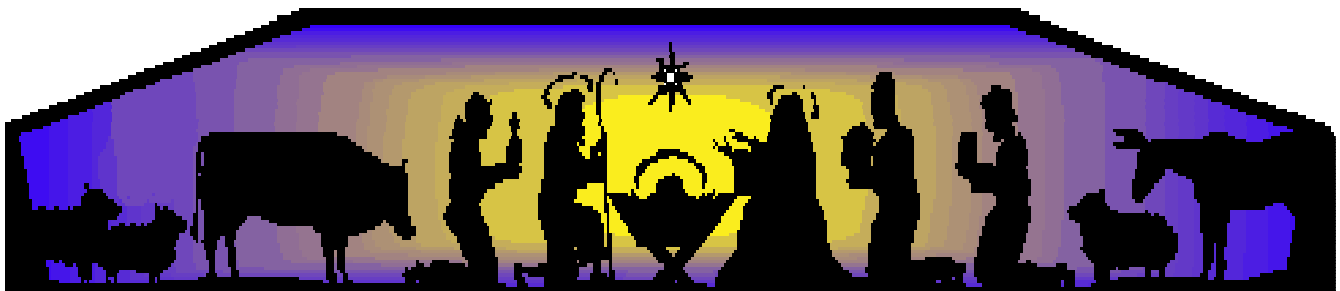
MCA General Council will meet in Incarnation Region in the Centennial 2009.

The Centennial Celebration in 2009 will give us the opportunity to come together as a Family.

As the end of the meeting, we lit a candle and committed ourselves to pray for each other. We remember Fr Judge’s counsel: “Do remember that as you are, so others will be.”

In love and service;

Alma Robles, MCA, General Custodian



## Doing Good: The Missionary as Prophet

Saint Peter, in his first epistle, tells the newly baptized: “You are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own to proclaim the glorious works’ of the One who called you from darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).”

In 1988, Pope John Paul II wrote an apostolic exhortation entitled “*Christifidelis Laici*,” or “The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful.” An apostolic exhortation is a letter from the Pope to the Church encouraging its people to take some particular action. In chapter 14 of this letter, John Paul quotes the passage from the first epistle of Peter and reminds us that “the lay faithful participate ... in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King.” He goes on: “Through their participation in the *prophetic mission* of Christ, the lay faithful are given the ability and the responsibility to accept the Gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed.” And he adds: “They are also called to allow the newness and the power of the Gospel to shine out everyday in their family and social life.”

Missionaries must be prophets. All four Evangelists – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – stress that the mission of the disciples is to cooperate in the mission of Christ. It is said that missionaries are on the “cutting edge” of society – in places and with people who for whatever reason do not know God or are not experiencing the love of God. Certainly, we think of foreign missionaries this way. The men and women who leave their homes to serve in another country and culture are clearly following Jesus’ mandate in Mt 28:19: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.” But for most of us, our call to mission is much less dramatic. Most of us will be called to live out our missionary vocation closer to home, in more ordinary circumstances. Even in the ordinariness, though, we too are called to be on the “cutting edge.” To live on that edge is prophetic.

To better understand how we are called to be prophetic – and how that relates to our being called to mission – let us look at Isaiah, the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., during a critical moment of Israel’s history. The reflection I’m offering is adapted from the work of Fr. Michael Crosby, a Franciscan Capuchin Friar who is a popular author and speaker. He uses Isaiah to reflect on the prophetic call of religious – priests, brothers and sisters – but since the laity also share the prophetic mission of Jesus it speaks to us, too.

Let us consider Isaiah 6:1-10. What does this passage teach us about being prophetic?

In the first line, we learn that Isaiah’s call came “in the year King Uzziah died.” The prophetic call comes at a specific point in history. So in terms of living out our Cenacle motto, “Be Good, Do Good, Be a Power for Good,” the first thing we can say is that we need to analyze what is going on in our own day and time as we think about where and how to do good and be a power for good. Father Judge spoke of needs that “cry for attention.” What are those needs today? Not necessarily the huge global needs, but the needs you come across in the providence of your daily life. What response is God asking of you?

In verse 1, Isaiah goes on to tell us: “I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne.” For the prophet, the starting point must be a personal encounter with the divine. When we accept God’s unconditional love, we enter into a personal relationship with the divine. It is only out of our relationship with God that doing good makes sense. We want to do good because we know at the deepest core of our being that we are good because “the love of God has been poured into our hearts! (Romans 5:5)”

In verse 3, the Seraphim cry out: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!” Because of the encounter with the divine, the prophet becomes a person of prayer who in praise and thanksgiving refers everything back to God. Paul Tillich, the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lutheran theologian, said that holiness is “pointing beyond oneself” to God. In prayer we can discern what God is asking us to do of all the many things we could be doing.

At the sound of that cry (Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!), the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke. Then Isaiah said: “Woe is me, for I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” As a result of his or her encounter with God, the prophet is filled with a sense of personal and communal sin. We know we are unworthy. But we don’t wait to do good until we get our act together. We can’t let our limitations define us. We don’t wait for society to figure out how its policies are creating problems. We face our limitations and confess our sinfulness, and learn to rely on God’s ability to make up for what is lacking.

In the next verses, one of the seraphim flies to Isaiah, touching his mouth with an ember he had taken from

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the altar and says: “See, now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.” The prophet is one empowered to bring not himself or herself, but the truth of God. It’s not about me, but God who uses me to do good. Don’t wait until you are Mother Teresa to do good. God can “purge” us if we trust in the divine plan.

Finally, Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” And Isaiah replies, “Here I am, Lord, send me!” The prophet – the missionary – is commissioned to bring the encounter with God into society, into the world. It is the willingness to do what God wants that has to dominate our own desire to do good.

But as the final verses of the passage make clear, the world is not always eager to hear the prophetic message. So don’t “do good” with the expectation that everyone will applaud or appreciate your efforts, or thank you for what you are doing. Remember, doing good doesn’t always make you feel good!

Pat Regan, MCA  
Divine Providence Cenacle (Maryland)

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### **Summary: The Missionary as Prophet**

**(A reflection on Isaiah 6:1-10)**

Isaiah 6:1-10 demonstrates how being prophetic is related to the call to mission, and provides us with the following steps that might be helpful as we try to answer that call.

1. Identify the needs that “cry for attention” – what response is God asking of you?
2. A personal encounter with the divine is a necessity – your relationship with God makes sense of your doing good
3. Offer praise and thanksgiving to God – in prayer you can discern what God wants you to do
4. Recognize your sinfulness and the sinfulness of the world – but don’t let your limitations keep you from acting
5. Believe that God can use you to do good even in your sinfulness
6. Let your willingness to do what God wants dominate your own desire to do good
7. Don’t expect appreciation and gratitude, but do good for the sake of building God’s kingdom

### Stewardship: A Commitment of Time, Talent and Treasure

Being in the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate requires a serious commitment – a commitment to our Rule of Life and Constitution, to Cenacle spirituality and to being apostles in the providence of our daily lives. It also calls for a commitment to the practice of stewardship. Stewardship is defined as the return to God for the gifts we have been given. It involves the giving of our time, talent and treasure. Stewardship as a model for the MCA makes sense at this juncture in our history. In faith, we believe that in our members we possess all the necessary gifts to fulfill our mission. We are faith-filled men and women who have committed our lives to the MCA and to the Missionary Cenacle Family. Practicing stewardship of “time, talent and treasure” gives each of us the forum for expressing our commitment in varied ways.

If you are not practicing stewardship of treasure yet, please consider what your contribution can be. Everyone is capable of making a contribution. The size of the gift is not as important as the fact that everyone participates. One way you can contribute more than you might otherwise be able is to make a monthly commitment of an amount that is comfortable for you. Over the course of a year, modest monthly contributions amount to a total gift that would be more than you could make at one time.

If you are already financially supporting the MCA, thank you! Please continue your support in the coming year. The list of persons responsible for collecting contributions in each region is listed below.

Father Judge reminded us that we are responsible for the future of the Cenacle. Let each of us make a commitment today to share our time, talent and treasure for the good of all.

Prayers in the Trinity,  
Pat Regan, MCA Treasurer

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