

Lesson #17

Fire in Our Hearts

The Grace I am seeking . . .

To be able to catch and spread the fire of God's love to the world.

Before each prayer session:

O Holy Spirit, fill me with Yourself; fill me with love. Help me to feel loved by the Father and by Jesus. Help me to feel loved by my Associates. Set me on fire with love. Teach me how to love the Father and Jesus. Teach me to love my Associates and my neighbors. As you taught the first Apostles at Pentecost to communicate the love of God to all persons, teach me to be the apostle I have been called to be. Let me bring the message of the Father's love and Jesus' love to all, but especially to those who really do not know You, who do not feel loved. Help me, O Holy Spirit of love, to be an apostle of love. Amen.

After each prayer session:

Jesus, spark me with your Holy Spirit and grant that I may never merit the condemnation of the lukewarm, whom You have declared You will vomit from Your mouth. Fire me with a passion for life, and a passion for loving You, my brothers and sisters, and all of creation. Holy Spirit, completely fill me as You filled my brother Jesus. Produce in me the same mind that was in Jesus so that I, like Him, will be consumed with a passion for the will of His Father and my Father. Amen.

Missionary Cenacle

Practice and Devotion

Father Judge was, above all, a missionary, an apostle of Jesus Christ. To keep alive the fiery burning of love in his own heart and in the Missionary Cenacle Family, he clearly saw that prayerful union with the heart of the Triune God was the key. The issue was how to live an intensely personal, intimate life of union with God and, simultaneously, live fully committed apostolic lives in service to a suffering world. He called the solution to this dilemma “**prayer of the heart**,” which we briefly examined in a previous lesson..

Father Judge never abandoned the normal spiritual practices of the spiritual life. However, he saw as the purpose of all these spiritual practices – in the words of an ancient Desert Father – “to *become* fire!” **Prayer of the Heart** involves

- the **awareness** that "we are *in* [God] as the sponge is in the sea" or "as the bird is in the air Wherever we are there is God;"¹
- the **ardent desire** to “not to wish to be anything but His. To do His will, to do nothing else but His will, to please Him ever;”²
- the **simple recognition** that there is no need to "struggle with language" but simply to "converse with Him as friend to friend;"³
- the daily, **frequent repetition of the name of Jesus** to nourish this desire and support this growing awareness and recognition.

The **prayer of the heart** is the way of the mature and seasoned missionary. One continues to be attentive to the normal, daily practices of the spiritual life. Yet in the midst of the most demanding tasks, **living peacefully in the presence of God** becomes ever more possible in the midst of the most demanding tasks. No matter what challenge may come, one’s heart remains "set towards God"⁴ Little by little, Jesus becomes "the sweetness of our mouths, the music of our ears, the love of our hearts, the light of our minds, the strength of our wills, the joy of our hearts."⁵ The missionary becomes “fire”, a dynamic, transforming “power for good”!

¹MF-13568 (Conference, undated).

²MF-13568 (Conference, undated).

³MF-6592 (Letter to Sr. Emmanuel Hendricks, M.S.B.T., 12/29/28).

⁴MF-13568 (Conference, undated).

⁵MF-1346 (Letter to Brothers, 12/31/28).

Introduction

We end where we began: with **fire**. Our first lesson was *Fire on the Earth*. We end this series of reflections and prayer by, once again, reflecting on and praying with the image of fire: *Fire in our Hearts!* The progression is a natural one and a powerful one if we understand its full implications.

Jesus came to bring “fire to the earth” as Father Judge reminds us in the very beginning of our *Rule of Life*. We have spent the last months praying with and reflecting upon various themes and dimensions of that fire and what ignites that fire within us and keeps it burning. In a sense, this is exactly what the missionary vocation is all about: “catching fire” from the Divine Fire in the very heart of Jesus Himself. But it cannot end there. To be truly missionary we must now take that Divine Fire, that “evangelical burning” and help it to “sweep over the whole world.” It cannot, it must not be contained once it has been enkindled and is burning in our hearts through the outpouring gift of the Holy Spirit.

And so we will look also this month on the theme of **fire** dimensions of what it means to be a **prophet**, one called by God through Baptism to speak and act on behalf of God. God’s fiery Word and power dwells in our hearts. We have invited that Word to become ever more intimately a part of our thinking, our living, our breathing. The amazing thing about the Word of God is that it is always effective: it never, ever fails. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us:

For, as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth, fertilising it and making it germinate to provide seed for the sower and food to eat, so it is with the word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled or before having carried out my good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do. (Isaiah 55:10-11)

God’s Word and Spirit, acting within us and through us as missionaries, are meant to reach out and transform hearts, and societies, and cultures . . . to revolutionize history itself! This is our call. This is the gift we must share. As our *Rule of Life* #12 reminds us: “The uncompromising message of the Gospels calls us to exercise our prophetic call as *witnesses of the truth*.” Missionaries on fire with God’s Passion, God’s Love, God’s Word: with this “power for good” unleashed, our gracious God will make “the whole of creation new” (*Revelation 21:5*).

Process for Daily Prayer

▮ Read each passage once slowly, then reread it. Underline or mark any phrases or ideas that strike you.

▮ Think about what you've read. What attracts, challenges, excites, or upsets you? Perhaps the questions below can help you in your reflection.

▮ Talk to God about it. Whatever is on your heart -- concerns, anger, hopes, dreams, joy, thanksgiving -- open it up to God.

▮ Rest a while and let God speak to you in the quiet.

WEEK I

Weekend Reflection: **“Fire,” the Word of God and the Missionary Cenacle**

[From a Commentary on the Missionary Cenacle Rule of Life]

Scripturally, “fire” is a very powerful symbol as well, charged with a variety of meanings. God reaffirms the Covenant with Abraham, giving him the Promised land in the midst of a darkness illumined by “a smoking furnace and a firebrand” (*Gen 15:17*). God appears to Moses “in the shape of a flame of fire,” “the bush blazing” (*Ex 3:2*) and makes known to him the sacred Name. Moses continues to hear “the voice of the living God speaking from the heart of the fire” (*Dt 4:33*) and his face shines dazzlingly with the effects of that divine communion (*Ex 34:29-30*). In response to this divine election, a perpetual fire burns in the sanctuary of the Temple: “The fire that consumes the holocaust on the altar must not be allowed to go out An undying fire is always to burn on the altar; it must not go out” (*Lev 6:5-6*).

The classical prophet of Israel, Elijah, arises amidst the people “like a fire, his word flaring like a torch” (*Ecclesiasticus 48:1*). For the prophet Jeremiah, the Word of Yahweh “seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones” (*Jer 20:9*; also *Jer 23:29*) despite the insult and derision he bore because of it. Yahweh allows the beloved to be tested and strengthened with persecution and humiliation as “gold is tested in the fire” (*Ecclesiasticus 2:4*; see also *Dn 3*). The power of such proven love, however, is invincible; no power or force can defeat the person of tested fidelity: “For love is strong as Death. Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown” (*Song 8:6*).

Jesus will baptize His chosen ones in this dynamic force of love, the Holy Spirit and fire (*Mt 3:11f.*). He pours forth His life so as “to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!” (*Lk 12:49*). The Pentecost burning is a manifestation of this outpouring gift upon the first apostles and the whole Church (*Acts 2:1-13*). This fire enlivens, strengthens, tests, and purifies those whose hearts are open to receive it (see *1 Pt 1:7*; *1 Pt 4:12-17*; *1 Co 3:15*). The hearts of those who listen to the Word of the Risen Lord “burn” within them (*Lk 24:32*). This is the apostolic fire, the prophetic “charity at white heat”, the zeal which is to consume and characterize the apostle and missionary. It is the Fire of God, the Holy Spirit. It is the heart of the Missionary Cenacle vocation.

The Missionary Cenacle Vocation: A Total Gift of Self

The Old Testament had many types of sacrifice: the “peace offering” (a type of sacred meal), the “sin offering,” the “cereal offering” and others. However, the most prevalent was the “holocaust” in which the animal being offered as a victim was entirely consumed by fire on the altar of sacrifice: nothing was to remain. First, however, the person offering the sacrifice was to “lay his hands on the victim’s head” to show his oneness with the offering (*Lev 1:4*). In this way not only the animal being offered but the life of the individual making the offering were presented to Yahweh. Then, after slaying the animal, the priest was “to burn all of it on the altar. This holocaust will be a burnt offering and the fragrance of it will appease Yahweh” (*Lev 1:9*). The total nature of the gift was most characteristic of the holocaust. The fire ever burning on the altar of the sanctuary in Jerusalem was to be a constant reminder to the People of the totality of their commitment to the one and only God (*Lev 6:5-6*).

In the New Testament, all of this rich, sensual imagery gives way to the reality of the direct encounter of woman and man with the living God. It is no longer a “blazing fire, or a gloom turning to total darkness, or a storm; or trumpeting thunder or the great voice speaking” (*Heb 12:18-19*) which we discover. Rather, we have drawn near

to “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” “to Jesus, the mediator who brings a new covenant and a blood for purification which pleads more insistently than Abel’s” (*Heb 12:22,24*).

For Father Judge, there were no “half-measures” in our relationship to God. Although he always urged infinite compassion and patience with poor men and women seeking to find their way back to God, nonetheless God was not to be played with. He understood completely the notion of a “jealous God” (*Dt 4:24*) who brooked no rivals for our affection, devotion, and love. “Our God is a consuming fire” (*Hebrews 12:29*). Like any true Lover, God would never be satisfied with anything less than the full devotion of our heart. The missionary vocation was a call to become a complete gift, a total burnt offering on the altar of Love for the sake of the Beloved. This fire of love consumes the victim, but his or her life thus becomes a fragrant offering to the Divine Heart. Nothing is held back from the Beloved; no sacrifice is too great. Such utter submission is not to be feared, however: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine” (*Isaiah 43:1*).

Only in the full and total gift of oneself to Divine Love -- hopes, dreams, expectations, fears, concerns, anxieties -- will true Life be discovered: “For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it” (*Mk 8:35*; see also *Mt 16:25*; *Lk 9:24*; *Jn 12:25*). This is the Life and the Call of the missionary. Like the Master on Calvary, their lives become an offering, a “victim” totally consumed by the fire of Love, a “sweet fragrance -- the sacrifice that God accepts and finds pleasing” (*Phil 4:18*).

What is the intensity of my love for God? What is the intensity of my love for others, especially people who are unattractive or difficult to get along with? What am I willing to do for the love of God? Concretely, how am I living out my service to God and others? Are there things or people or comforts that I cling to? Who are they? What are they? Do I put conditions on my love for God? What are those conditions? If I had to take my “spiritual temperature” right now, what would it be? Why?

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK I

Monday: “Spiritual progress cannot be measured”

From Father Judge:

“[In this matter of seeking perfection] some timid and restless souls become quickly discouraged at the labor involved. It is true that for our self-reformation or to advance progressively in virtue, labor, hard labor, even painful labor, is necessary. These faltering ones would justify a lack of response to grace by saying, "I do not see any improvement" or "I am just as imperfect as ever." Do you know God does not permit us to see our advance? It is well for us that we cannot trace it. Spiritual progress has no physical measure, therefore it cannot be taped or handled, weighed or measured." (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 50)

From the Word of God:

“Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him.²Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:³How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.⁴Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance. ⁵Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill.⁷Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.⁸Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.⁹Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God.¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.¹¹“Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account.¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.” (*Matthew 5:1-12*)

During this last month of our reflection and prayer, we are going to be reading consecutively from the Gospel of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount. These few chapters of the Gospel give us a concise but powerful synopsis of the teaching of Jesus. They seem to be an excellent way, in conjunction with various reflections from Father Judge, to pray for and seek with all our hearts that “fire in our hearts” which can and will spread over the whole earth! The missionary’s call is to be a “person of the Beatitudes”. Which of the above Beatitudes do you most identify with or feel the need to allow to develop more fully in your life? Open your mind and heart to this Divine Gift!

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Tried to do as well as we could”

From Father Judge:

“We should be content with this sole satisfaction that by God's grace, we have tried to do as well as we could. It is of far more value to us that we humble ourselves and express our sorrow to God because of our lapses, than that we know at every instant what our spiritual status may be. To be wondering and speculating as to our spiritual progress may become a very dangerous pursuit. I fear that in this the evil spirit bothers and tempts many souls.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p.50)

From the Word of God:

¹³You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet.¹⁴You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden.¹⁵No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house.¹⁶In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.” (*Matthew 5:13-16*)

God doesn't “measure” our progress in growth in holiness as we might sometimes want to do. Our “measuring” either makes us proud because of “what I've done” or discourages us because of “how I've messed up so badly.” Instead, God calls us to simply “do as well as we could.” Humbly, simply we admit when we have failed before God and confidently call on the Divine Mercy and share that Divine Mercy and compassion with those we meet on the journey. This is the essence of the missionary call in the providence of our everyday life. It is also, ultimately, what gives joy and peace, light and life to the earth. Thank God for the precious grace of God's Divine Mercy in your life and in the life of the world.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “In the Cenacle at large”

From Father Judge:

“There is a sign, however, that we may safely study and joyfully hope it may apply to us. It is any pronounced virtue or perfection made manifest either in the Cenacle at large or that Cenacle in which we labor. For example, let us suppose that the virtue of Charity is intensely active in a certain Cenacle. The warmth of this charity is reflected back on the members of that particular Cenacle, since the virtue of the Cenacle, after all, is but the virtue of its members. Not long ago we suffered a great financial need. Praise be to God for all the blessings this brought upon us! The Cenacles concerned, Sisters and Brothers, exhibited a most prayerful and edifying spirit. The embarrassment was extraordinary; the prayerful spirit just as extraordinary.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 50)

From the Word of God:

“Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them.¹⁸In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved.¹⁹Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.” (*Matthew 5:17-19*)

In the Missionary Cenacle we have the blessing of mutual love and support. When one person is flagging in his or her devotion or particularly in need, the others can be there to supply for their lack in that moment. Together we can be all that God has called us to be in the Church and the world. Together we can assist one another in living out the full and often exacting demands of the Gospel message. What is the particular virtue(s) or strength(s) that you see in your local Missionary Cenacle? How would you describe it? Give thanks to the Triune God for this manifestation of God’s gracious kindness among you and through you for many, many others.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “Like an intensely blazing fire”

From Father Judge:

"What, then, does [such] a heavenly manifestation of virtue mean? It means that religion, faith, hope and charity, humility and other virtues in the individual hearts of such Cenacles are very much exalted. Yet this truth comes to these favored ones in such an impersonal way that they can safely think about it. It is for all the world like an intensely blazing fire. No particular coal can claim the credit for the heat and light, yet every particular coal is illumined. In fact no coal can be in such an intense glow without the fire and light of the other coals being communicated to it." (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 50)

From the Word of God:

²⁰For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven.²¹You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court.²²But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother “Fool” will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who calls him “Traitor” will answer for it in hell fire.²³So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.²⁵Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.²⁶In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny” (*Matthew 5:20-26*)

The standard that Jesus holds out before us is a demanding one. It far surpasses the demands that previously had been placed by God on the Chosen People through the Covenant at Sinai. It speaks of not only our external actions but also, and even more importantly perhaps, our internal dispositions. It is simply not enough not to “kill.” A true following of the Gospel of Jesus will require the disciple to become an active agent of reconciliation and peace-making between peoples. But the joy is that a life so lived will produce that “intensely blazing fire” that brings warmth and light to the world! May it be our grace as missionaries to live this Gospel live with passion and intensity.

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “In the furnace of Divine Love”

From Father Judge:

“There is in that fiery furnace a dross called slag. It is a thief among coals. It is a counterfeit; it steals from the real coal and does nothing itself. Taken away, instantly it becomes a cold, dark, useless mass. So likewise in the Cenacle, in the midst of ardent love, each soul may entertain the fear that it is the slag in the furnace of Divine Love.

“If such souls would only jump to their feet, plunge ahead again in the way of God, shake off this melancholy, resolutely turn their faces to the heights from which they came, throw off foolish fears and temptations, clamber again on high, they will reach heights of sanctity that seemed inaccessible. ‘Now is the time’ (Mt. 25:35-36).”
(*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 50)

From the Word of God:

²⁷“You have heard how it was said, You shall not commit adultery. ²⁸But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand should be your downfall, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body go to hell. ³¹“It has also been said, Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. ³²But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of an illicit marriage, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 5:27-32)

Mediocrity has nothing to do with the living of the Gospel or the Missionary Cenacle vocation. In some ways, Father Judge saw such “half-heartedness” as the most threatening danger to the life of the Missionary Cenacle. Faced with temptation, Father Judge, like Jesus in today’s Gospel reading, recommends vigorous action! “Plunge ahead . . . shake off melancholy . . . resolutely turn [your] face to the heights . . . throw off foolish fears . . . clamber again on high!” Ask the Holy Spirit for the vital gift of Fortitude which makes such resolute action possible.

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK II

Weekend Reflection: **The Missionary Cenacle Vocation - Prophetic Passion**

[From a Commentary on the Missionary Cenacle Rule of Life]

Prophets are not fortune-tellers or some type of divinely sanctioned astrologers. Instead a prophet is a person who “feels fiercely.”⁶ And what does the prophet “feel”? What is at the heart of her or his sensibility? “Fellowship with the feelings of God” -- but not just any feelings. Rather the prophet experiences a profound “*sympathy with the divine pathos*”: prophets are taken up into the pity and compassion that most intensely consume God’s heart. The prophet hears God’s voice, feels one with the pain and sorrow of the divine heart, and tries to communicate the depths of that passion to all.⁷

Prophets are keenly aware of two things: how awesome is God’s hope for the world and for each human being in the world and how far we are from the realization of that divine dream for all humankind. The pain of this awareness burns in the prophet’s heart and, at times, moves the prophet to speak and act in ways that cause others to react with anger and resentment. Prophets are not easy people to live with since they are intensely more conscious of what remains to be done, of what is not right than being content with what is. Prophets do not act out of anger -- although their words may be angry. They act out of intense love for those whom they see being denied their rightful place at the banquet table of the King. They speak harsh words at times to shake us from our complacency and to make us think of who we really are and what we are called to become. As Rabbi Abraham Heschel writes:

*God has thrust a burden upon [the prophet’s] soul, and he is bowed and stunned at man’s fierce greed. Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world.*⁸

Jesus is the prophet *par excellence*, the one who understood more than anyone the most profound compassion that lies at the heart of God. As Jesus looked on the poor, the broken, the lonely, the abandoned, His heart was moved with immeasurable sorrow. The Greek word for compassion used most commonly in the New Testament is *splagchnoisomai*; “it means to let one’s innards embrace the feeling or situation of another.”⁹ Confronted with the reality of human pain and anguish, Jesus responded with this heart-felt oneness with the suffering sister or brother:

Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness. And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt

⁶ Two excellent books on the nature of prophecy in the Scriptures are Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Fortress Press, 1978) and Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). The Biblical basis for most of the reflections in this part of the commentary can be found in these two works. See Heschel, *Prophets* v. 1, p. 5.

⁷ Heschel, *Prophets* v. 1, p. 26.

⁸ Heschel, *Prophets*, v. 1, p. 5.

⁹ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, p. 86.

9:35-36; see also Mk 6:34).

Despite personal grief over the loss of His cousin John, the plight of the poor and sick took priority over His personal need:

When Jesus received this news [of John the Baptist's beheading], he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the people heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick (Mt 14:13-14).

Faced with the hunger of and possible danger to the masses of people who had followed Him, Jesus was not content with “well-there’s-nothing-we-can-do” attitude. His solidarity with their dilemma forced Him to look for solutions:

And now once again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. So he called his disciples to him and said to them, ‘I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. If I send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way; some have come a great distance (Mk 8:1-4).

The prophetic heart – the apostolic heart – is always the engaged, the committed heart. By very definition, the genuine prophet personally, passionately, – at times – painfully embraces the world with all its joys, pains, sorrows, invincible hopes and fractured dreams.

Read one or more of these passages of Scripture: Jer 20:7-13; 1 Kg 19:1-8; Amos 6:1-7; Amos 8:4-8. As an apostles or missionary, how much can you identify with this notion of “prophetic call”? Have you or do you presently experience your own missionary vocation as a “prophetic call”? Do you feel that “divine passion” within your own spirit? What ignites it? What are you willing to sacrifice to fulfill this apostolic, missionary call? How passionate are you about your call?

Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK II

Monday: “Overcome evil by good”

From Father Judge:

“Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good!” (Rom 12:21) Evil is an ominous word. It hangs over humanity as a horrid pall. Fear and calamity are its attendants. Evil is hated and shunned and associated with wicked spirits. The dread of evil to come is a fruitful source of superstition and black arts. Men safeguard themselves from its encroachments in every possible way. Peace has no greater menace for where evil is enthroned, peace flies the land. Where evil is, there is no joy, there is no prosperity.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 59)

From the Word of God:

“³⁸You have heard how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. ³⁹But I say this to you: offer no resistance to the wicked. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well;⁴⁰ if someone wishes to go to law with you to get your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.⁴¹ And if anyone requires you to go one mile, go two miles with him.⁴² Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.” (*Matthew 5:38-42*)

Missionary life, lived passionately, necessarily puts us into confrontation with evil. Like Jesus, we must be willing to confront evil wherever it presents itself and enter into the passionate struggle against evil. The question is how to “do battle” as a follower of Jesus. As you confront evil in your missionary life and in the world, how do you deal with it? What is your response? What does Jesus tell us about a Gospel way of responding to evil?

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Transfixed the Son of God to the Cross”

From Father Judge:

“Affliction and ruin are [evil’s] two companions. Evil has let loose the floodgates of humanity’s tears. Enmities, and rapine, hate and murder, every untamed passion of the heart, are its children. It blights and corrodes, dissolves society, makes the gentle fiendish. It transfixed the Son of God to the Cross..” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 59)

From the Word of God:

“⁴³You have heard how it was said, You will love your neighbour and hate your enemy.⁴⁴But I say this to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you;⁴⁵so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike.⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much?⁴⁷And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional?⁴⁸Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (*Matthew 5:43-48*)

“Fire”and passion can be both immense powers for good ... but they also have the power to destroy. Confronting the power of evil in the world in the name of Jesus can often create in us intense feelings of sorrow, anger, resentment, bitterness, jealousy, even rage. It is important, vital, to be passionate about challenging and resisting unjust situations and unjust structures which are an affront to human dignity. Nonetheless, even our challenging and resisting – as the Gospel above indicates – must be done in love or, instead of overcoming evil with good, the good we attempt to do is overcome by the evil. In the end, when this happens, the missionary – instead of creating a new reality – becomes just one more angry, resentful, disgruntled person. Have you seen this in your own experience? Pray to the Holy Spirit to always “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “The children of sorrow”

From Father Judge:

“Much have we to deplore in this pleasure-rioting, charity-chilled age of today with its unholy hours and works and scandalizing of the innocent. Moral evil abounds. Then, too, (there is physical evil)-the earthquake, the volcano, the tempest, the plague, war, disease. (These combined with) man's inhumanity to man, and human perversity are ever pouring more and more gall and bitterness into the chalice of our generation. Truly we are the children of sorrow.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 59)

From the Word of God:

““Be careful not to parade your uprightness in public to attract attention; otherwise you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven.²So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win human admiration. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.³But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing;⁴your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.” (*Matthew 6:1-4*)

As we enter into the passionate struggle with God against the forces and powers of evil in its many forms, we may receive some notice, some “notoriety.” We can easily begin to feel somewhat “important,” a “player.” Or we may feel the opposite: resentment because no one seems to notice or care about all we are doing! In either case, whether buoyed up by a sense of self-importance or downcast because of peoples’ lack of response or gratitude for our efforts, we’re in trouble! Jesus’ way is simple, hidden: to become unnoticed, unknown is a positive thing, a “Kingdom value”! All is in God’s loving, caring Hands. God is the principal and only Creator, Doer. We cooperate with God according to our particular gifts and where we are in a given moment in history and the circumstances of our lives. That is all that matters. Ask the Holy Spirit for this Spirit of indifference relative to the opinions of others. Therein lies true peace and freedom. There in is true Gospel-power!

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “He counts every tear drop”

From Father Judge:

“We have a High Priest, Jesus, but He is "not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities.” (Heb. 4:15) His gaze sweeps every nook and corner of the universe. He counts every tear drop. He registers every groan of suffering, every heartbreak does He notice and all these He makes His own. His adorable Sacred Heart gathers them all in and beats in infinite sympathy with us poor earth-pilgrims..” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 59)

From the Word of God:

“⁵And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.⁶But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you..” (*Matthew 6:5-6*)

Father Judge reminded us that “our prayer should not be narrow, personal prayer; it should reach the throne of God only after having touched the farthest bounds of God’s creation and mourned in every human misery and rejoiced in God’s goodness.” No human suffering, no sinful, sorrowful situation should be outside our care and love. Prayer for the brothers and sisters in their suffering – wherever they are – “grows”the human heart. Our love and concern move beyond the narrow and the personal and become ever more universal – like the heart of Jesus the great High Priest! Make a list of the sufferings and pain of others that you would like to bring this day before the Mercy Seat of God on behalf of the whole world.

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “Humanity’s wounded heart”

From Father Judge:

“He is our Elder brother, our Man of Sorrows who has suffered with every suffering child of Adam. He cherished each and every one with divine solicitude. Ingrates would we be if we did not thank and love Him (especially) for that ineffable prayer of compassion for us to His heavenly Father: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." (Jn. 17:15) (And) to pour balm into humanity's wounded heart, He shows us poor, weak mortals our only refuge. To save us from the deluge of misery, He teaches and urges us to pray: "Our Father, deliver us from evil." (Mt. 6:13)" (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 59)

From the Word of God:

“⁷In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard.⁸Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.⁹So you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy,¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.¹¹Give us today our daily bread.¹²And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.¹³And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One. ¹⁴Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours;¹⁵but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.” (*Matthew 6:7-15*)

In the midst of sorrow – our own personal sorrow or the sorrow of the apostolic heart as it confronts the evil of the world – it is prayer, confident prayer that is our one hope and strength and consolation. We, as missionaries, are not the “savior”. There is only one Savior: Jesus the Christ, our “Elder Brother, the Man of Sorrows.” He - and He alone - is capable of totally sharing with us the sorrows we confront and carry. United to His divine Heart of Compassion and confidently calling on “our Father” – Abba! – we can continue confidently forward in our apostolic lives and mission. It is the Father, in God’s loving kindness and mercy, who will be the One who will truly “deliver us from evil”! Let this be your consolation in the fray.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK III

Weekend Reflection:

The Prophetic Heart, the Compassionate Heart

[From a Commentary on the Missionary Cenacle Rule of Life]

Jewish law considered leprosy and death such dread realities that all who came into contact with them were to be considered “unclean,” “impure.” Jesus, defying the prohibitions, not only heals the leper and brings the widow’s son back to life. He reaches out and touches the leper, He puts His hand on the pallet bearing the body of the dead man. He heals human sickness and overcomes the power of death not from a distance but by entering fully into these loathsome realities. Prophets not only spoke God’s Word from the heart of compassion but acted in ways that made clear the living presence of that tender mercy:

A leper came to him and pleaded on his knees: ‘If you want to,’ he said, ‘you can cure me.’ Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. ‘Of course I want to!’ he said. ‘Be cured’ (Mk 1:40-41)

When [Jesus] was near the gate of the town it happened that a dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her. ‘Do not cry,’ he said. Then he went up and put his hand on the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, ‘Young man, I tell you to get up’ (Lk 7:12-15).

By Jesus’ willingness to forget Himself, to seek solutions to the human dilemma, to enter deeply into the depths of human devastation, He helped to bring about a *new reality*. This is a further dimension of the prophetic task. Prophets help to make things new, different, closer to God’s dream and plan for the world both by their words as well as by their actions. The sick were healed; the dejected were given hope and instruction; the hungry were fed; the outcast leper was reunited to society; the dead man and his widowed mother were given a new beginning and saved from despair.

All this is possible only if there is compassion, a willingness to enter into the sorrow, the pain, the agony of another. Jesus shows us that this is God’s way of bringing newness to all of humankind, the coming of the divine Reign. All this, however, requires passion -- “fire”! The prophet feels, lives, experiences life intensely -- at times, painfully -- but it is because the prophet’s heart is in tune with the heart of God. Comfort is far from the prophet’s mind. Jesus, speaking of the greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist, challenges His listeners:

‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Oh no, those who go in for fine clothes and live luxuriously are to be found at court! Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet (Lk 7:25-26)

The missionary must be willing to enter into the sorrow and pain of God as God beholds the world. For it is only in this way that the missionary can be a man or a woman of the Beatitudes:

Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted. Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied (Mt 5:5-6).

The person willing to enter into the fiery heart of God will know grief, will know incompleteness but also has the promise of truly abundant life, comfort, consolation. This sister or brother, one day, with all the broken, little, lonely, and seemingly hopeless ones will find complete satisfaction and joy. This is the life of the missionary; this is the life of the prophet. This is at the heart of the Missionary Cenacle vocation: “*He came to cast a fire on the earth, and he willed that it would be enkindled* (Lk 12:49). The Holy Spirit has enkindled this fire in our hearts” (*Rule of Life #1*).

First, read one or more of these passages of Scripture Mt 9:35-37; Mk 1:40-45; Lk 7:11-17; Lk 12:1-12; Lk 6:20-26; 2 Cor 11:21-29. How do you feel when you are confronted with injustice against yourself or others? What is your response? How do you react before human misery -- sickness, pain, sorrow, violence? Do you flee? Stay and fight? Feel paralyzed and do nothing? Are you basically indifferent? Be as honest with yourself and before God as possible. This will give you a good sense or measure of how genuinely real or intense is the “burning” in your apostolic heart.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK III

Monday: “A fire on the earth”

From Father Judge:

“Our Lord on many occasions betrayed what was in His Divine Heart, what was in His adorable mind. He informs us that He came to cast a fire on the earth and He willed that it should be enkindled. He had very much at heart the creating of a spirit, a missionary spirit, an evangelical burning that would sweep over this world. He put no limitation on His message; His message was for all peoples, for all times and for all places.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 182)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁶When you are fasting, do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they go about looking unsightly to let people know they are fasting. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.¹⁷But when you fast, put scent on your head and wash your face,¹⁸so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.” (*Matthew 6:16-18*)

As we move toward the end of our series of reflection and prayer on the Missionary Cenacle way of life, we go back – once again – to the basics. During these last two weeks, we will finish praying through the Sermon on the Mount, a compelling synopsis of the Gospel way. We will return also to Father Judge’s famous conference to the Cenacle Family in 1924 on “The Cenacle Spirit.” This is a very appropriate juxtaposition of readings since, as Father Judge reminds us in various places and ways, “the Cenacle Spirit” is the “Gospel spirit”! May this be ever more fully our grace: to live out this Missionary Cenacle vocation in such a way that the glory and the gracious goodness of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is reflected in and through our lives for others.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “His own blessed and adorable spirit”

From Father Judge:

“To safeguard that message, to insure its delivery, our Lord taught and enfibred into the hearts of His followers His own blessed adorable spirit. He protected that spirit with evangelical virtues. He made much of sacrifice. He declared that one condition of discipleship was the taking up of the cross. He promised the most extraordinary recompense to those who exhausted themselves for His sake. He reversed all the maxims of human wisdom when He said, “He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it.” (Mt. 10:39); meaning that He would pour life and health and spirit and vigor into those who would forget themselves for His sake, into those who would become indifferent to the pangs of hunger, into those who would become unmindful of disease; whereas He would take life from those who considered ease, comfort and extension of life at the expense of His interests.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 182)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁹Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal.²⁰But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal.²¹For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too.” (*Matthew 6:19-21*)

Where is your “treasure”? Is it in “ease, comfort,” health, beauty, appearance, material possessions, honor? Or is your “treasure” to be found in “forgetting” yourself, your personal desires and interests, a willingness to “exhaust” yourself “for His sake”? The one way, paradoxically, brings nothing but emptiness, alienation, a sense of ennui, boredom and meaninglessness. The Gospel way, on the contrary, promises “life and health and spirit and vigor” to the individual willing to trustingly embrace it. Where is your treasure? Where is truly your heart?

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Hundredfolds of reward”

From Father Judge:

“He promised hundredfolds of reward to those who would work and labor and toil in His name; in fact, our Lord encouraged his followers, and those who would follow His followers, by promising them that they “shall shine as stars for all eternity,”(cf. Dan. 12:3) that they would be beacons in every conceivable way. The best thing in His giving He promised to those who would teach in His Holy Name. He just heaped curse upon curse upon those who would scandalize a child, and blessing upon blessing upon those who would edify a child.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 182)

From the Word of God:

“²²The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is clear, your whole body will be filled with light.²³But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkened, what darkness that will be!” (*Matthew 6:22-23*)

It's important to recall what awaits those who are faithful to this missionary, apostolic call. What the world promises is often present, immediate, the reward obvious. The way of the Gospel is more subtle. At times, like Jesus on the cross, the Gospel seems to not be effective. Its followers often tend not to be the richest, most powerful, most respected or influential. But, by keeping one's mind and heart focused on Jesus, we come – gratefully – to a peace and joy that the world cannot give. This peace and joy is what we desire to share with others trapped in the “darkness” of a time-bound, material-bound world. This peace and joy finds its fulfillment and completion in the fullness of Life in the Kingdom of heaven. There, in the pure Light of God's Glory, the “true secrets of hearts” will be revealed and the Truth of the Gospel will be stunningly brilliant.

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “The Cenacle spirit ...the Catholic spirit”

From Father Judge:

“We are the inheritors of all those promises. What organization seems to bid fair to take them more than yourselves, the Cenacle. There is a Cenacle spirit, (but) the Cenacle spirit is only the Catholic spirit. There is no progress in Church affairs, it matters not how generous the people may be, how great basilicas architects may plan or how much they may dream of beautifying the houses of God: bishops may publish pastorals, synods may meet, but if there be not a Catholic spirit, it will be of no use. The Catholic spirit is the fire the Lord came to cast upon the earth. It is the burning of the Sacred Heart. It is zeal. Zeal is the white heat of charity.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 182)

From the Word of God:

“²⁴No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.” (*Matthew 6:24*)

The “Catholic spirit” was, for Father Judge, not a “party” or a factional spirit. The Catholic spirit signified the very “breathing of the Holy Ghost.” The Catholic spirit was the spirit nourished daily on the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, frequently crying out confidently in need and gratitude to the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Spirit was the spirit that moved in the heart of the person who read frequently and meditated on the Word of God, who sincerely repented of his/her sins and, in humility of heart, attempted to serve the Lord with all the energy and love available to her or him. In brief, the Catholic spirit was the Spirit of God made real and present and available to us through the ministry of the Church. How regularly are you nourishing and feeding your own spirit so that, in turn, you might personally know Jesus and bring His Good News to others?

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “Fire...upon the earth”

From Father Judge:

“The Missionary Cenacle has a mission, and there are many sides to that mission, but what more beautiful side is there than this, that you, by zealous practices, by living up to the conditions of the Missionary Cenacle, are going to do your share to conserve the fire Jesus came to cast upon earth, that you will be that light that is to be placed on the mountain, that you will be the good odor of Christ, that you will be the salt of the earth. If you keep alive your Cenacle traditions and if you zealously put into practice the lessons you are taught, I can assure you, you will be in a particular way dear to the Sacred Heart of our dear Lord, and He will look upon you as a most devoted friend..” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 183)

From the Word of God:

“²⁵That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and what you are to wear. Surely life is more than food, and the body more than clothing!²⁶Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are?²⁷Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your span of life?²⁸And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin;²⁹yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these.³⁰Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you who have so little faith?³¹So do not worry; do not say, “What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What are we to wear?”³²It is the gentiles who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all.³³Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God’s saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well.³⁴So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.’” (*Matthew 6:25-34*)

These are two very provocative and vital readings from both the Gospel and Father Judge. Read them over again carefully. Reflect on their meaning for you personally. As you read them, what do you believe that God may be calling you to do or correct in your own personal life so that this “fire “might burn ever more brightly through you for others.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK IV

Weekend Reflection:

“What is the Cenacle Spirit?”

[From Father Judge, a Conference to the Missionary Cenacle Family, Pentecost, May 31, 1924]

“The Spirit of God wants to use you; you are His instruments. You are tools with which He is going to chisel out salvation for many souls. You are to work upon the lives of others. That you may cooperate with the designs of the Holy Spirit there must be that intense charity in your own hearts. It must be there. There is no reason why it should not be there. “Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you.”(Mt. 7:7) There is nothing heaven is more anxious to bestow than a zealous charity, a Cenacle spirit

All through the Gospels we find our Lord using souls as His instruments for good. The great Mystery of the Incarnation, at the beginning of His life in this world, bears witness to the fact that the human agent may participate in divine work. It is His will, understand, that this fire should scatter, that it should scatter through you and you may thank God for this grace, for your selection. It should give you, certainly, a holy joy and tremendous pleasure to think that you have been so chosen by the Almighty, that his Holy Spirit is to burn in you for others, and to be communicated through you to others.

How is this to be done? You are to inspire others to this Cenacle spirit. There is no problem about the extension of the Missionary Cenacle. The only problem is to keep in your heart the Cenacle spirit. The program and methods of the Missionary Cenacle are all worked out; you have your rules (you have) those different works, the preventive work, reclamation work, and so on. The great problem is this: being right with the Cenacle spirit.

What is the Cenacle spirit? What is our Lord's spirit? What is the apostolic spirit? What is the missionary spirit? What is this faith that works by charity? That is the Cenacle spirit. It is no spirit invented in modern times. It is no spirit produced by new methods of efficiency. It is a gospel spirit. It is charity, charity aflame. It is the breathing of the Holy Spirit. It is the sweet odor of Jesus Christ. This is your vacation: first of all you are called to reservoir that spirit in your own lives, that your own heart may be aflame with it; and secondly, you are to spread it; that is your mission.

The Cenacle Spirit came from the Holy Spirit. Isn't that a beautiful thing! When with purity of intention, with no other purpose than the thought of God, zeal for religion and its interests, love of the Church and a wish to do something for souls when, I say, we are so actuated, when the personal, as far as we can do so, is eliminated, when we place ourselves in the presence of God and invoke the Holy Spirit, and when all this happens as now during Pentecost week, on the eve of Trinity Sunday, I like to believe that it is God blessing us. I see in this the hand-writing of God on the wall in our favor. I see in this the loveliness of God in grouping us together, that He wants to bless us, that He wants to use us.

It is the loveliest of Pentecostal exercises. The liturgy of the Church is replete with prayer to the Holy Spirit and here is a body that for years and years has had a special devotion to the Holy Spirit, that is committed to spread devotion to the Holy Spirit, that is known to the Church as the Missionary Cenacle. We have reason, then, to believe that the Holy Spirit wants to bless us. This blessing is going to be ours if we will have this zeal toward the Cenacle spirit.” *[MF 8477-8479]*

As we enter this last week of our series of prayer and reflection on the Missionary Cenacle charism and your own call, it is important to go back to the beginning. The key question is and remains: what is the Cenacle spirit and to what degree is that Cenacle spirit present within me? Perhaps Father Judge states it no more clearly and concisely than here in the above reading. As you reread the above

selection, think carefully about all that it says. If you feel so moved, implore the Holy Spirit to pour ever more fully into your own heart that grace and gift of Divine Love that we call the Missionary Cenacle Spirit. Ask yourself candidly if this is a spirit that appeals to you, with which you can identify? Have you found this spirit alive in others in your Missionary Cenacle Family? Are you willing and ready to commit your life and your energies, your love and your faith , to live out this charism to the best of your ability in the providence of your own daily life?

Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK IV

Monday: “A glorious distinction for us”

From Father Judge:

“Isn't this a glorious distinction for us? Isn't it a matter of extraordinary consolation to think that we can enter into the very plan of the Son of God? The Catholic spirit is beautiful! What a dreary world this would be without a Catholic spirit; and again, what would become of the sanctuary, of the cloister, of Catholic life, if the Catholic spirit did not flourish. Its absence, its lack, is the beginning of the dread decay of good works, it is the dissolving of Catholicity in this place, in that place, or in some other place. I know of no kind of edification that is more needed, or more useful, or more Christlike than the conservation and dissemination of the Catholic spirit.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 183)”

From the Word of God:

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged;² because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the standard you use will be the standard used for you.³ Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own?⁴ And how dare you say to your brother, “Let me take that splinter out of your eye,” when, look, there is a great log in your own?⁵ Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye. ⁶“Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces.” (*Matthew 7:1-6*)

For Father Judge, the “Catholic spirit” is a precious, holy spirit. It is the very essence of beauty and joy and truth and love and hope. Father Judge was keenly aware of the human foibles of the Church. However, that never diverted him from seeing, understanding, and being filled with gratitude for the gracious Glory that he saw hidden in the “earthenware vessels” that we are. He wished his Cenacle missionaries to be soaked in that “Catholic spirit”, the holy Spirit of God, a spirit of genuine love and care for the sisters and brothers. Ask the Holy Spirit, once again, to be filled with this “Catholic”, this “Cenacle spirit”. It is an immeasurable treasure and gift for yourself and for the world.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Charity in good works”

From Father Judge:

“Understand, I am speaking of the Cenacle spirit, for when I speak of the Cenacle spirit I speak of the Catholic spirit. If you have been trained for any purpose or made at all useful, it is that you might show forth that Christlike spirit, charity in good works. St. Paul puts it this way: “faith that worketh by charity.”(Gal. 5:6) This is a faith that is restless until it finds expression in good works; and if you have that spirit you are going to communicate it. Why? Because the Holy Spirit wants it communicated: it is His flame, the Pentecostal burning.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 183)

From the Word of God:

“⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.⁸Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened.⁹Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread?¹⁰Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish?¹¹If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (*Matthew 7:7-11*)

The Cenacle spirit necessarily – if it is real – must give birth to good works, works of love on behalf of the sister and brother in their need. This is an absolute essential of the Cenacle spirit. Without an active practiced of charity, that is love put into action, there is no Cenacle spirit. The Cenacle is not a study group or a prayer group or a faith-sharing group. All these things are wonderful; and certainly study, prayer, and faith-sharing are essential in the Missionary Cenacle as well. But the essence of the Cenacle – its characteristic mark – is its action. Not in a negative sense, but very really the Cenacle missionaries must be activists in the most profound understanding of that term: “charity in good works.” As the Gospel reading reminds us, there is no gift the Father in heaven more wishes to readily bestow upon us if we but ask!

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Take your temperature”

From Father Judge:

“I wish that during this (meditation) you would, as it were, take your own temperature. How is that fire within me? Is it at white heat, is it intense, or is it a dull glow; or is it next to being extinguished? When the smith plunges the metal into the fire, if his fire be at its proper temperature, there is a fusion; but he might plunge that iron many times into the fire and it would be futile unless the fire was at white heat..” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 183)

From the Word of God:

“¹²So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets. ¹³Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and spacious, and many take it; ¹⁴but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (*Matthew 7:12-14*)

Father Judge clearly invites us to “take your own temperature.” Reread this passage. Think about it carefully. Review the course of these past months as you have reflected and prayed through this material. Do you notice any changes in your life? What are they? Spiritually, if you had to “take your temperature” right now, how would you honestly evaluate the condition of your heart and your life? Cold? Indifferent? Lukewarm? Warm? Passionate? Fiery? Where are you in your journey? As you attempt to make this evaluation of your life’s condition in this moment, keep in mind the idea often presented to us by Father Judge: “A safe and rather accurate measure of your love for God is your love for your neighbor.” This is the basic message of today’s Gospel reading as well.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “A profound devotion”

From Father Judge:

“First of all [we are pledged to] a profound devotion to the Holy Trinity and an ardent zeal that the Holy Spirit may become more known and loved. [Then,] devotion to all the mysteries of our Lord, especially the Incarnation, for from out of this flow all the other mysteries, the privileges and beatitudes of the Blessed Virgin and man's salvation; devotion to the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph,... and the Apostles in an especial manner. The virtues of the Missionary Cenacle should be: simplicity, prudence, sacrifice, humility, amiability or charity, patience and self-denial.... Our work is, before all, the spiritual works of mercy, and then the corporal. Our work and prayer is offered for the greater glory of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity; for the reunion of Christianity.... Our success and strength is found in Holy Communion and prayer to the Holy Spirit, realizing that, as St. John records, ‘Without me you can do nothing.’ (Jn. 15:5)” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 336)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁵Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?¹⁷ In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. ¹⁸A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. ²⁰I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits” (*Matthew 7:15-20*)

The above reading from Father Judge comes from a letter conference he wrote in 1912 to the early Cenacle members. This letter occurs before the foundation of the religious branches of the Missionary Cenacle Family, and so it is entirely directed to lay missionaries. And yet, as we can see from a study of our Rule of Life and Constitutions both of the lay and the religious branches, it succinctly summarizes the essence of our lives together as missionaries. Re-read this description of the Missionary Cenacle way of life as Father Judge presents it. Does this reflect your own life and experience? As the Gospel reading today reminds us, our lives – if they are real in Christ – must bear “good fruit”. Do you see the “good fruits” of your life in your Missionary Cenacle vocation as it develops? What are some of those “good fruits” that are apparent as you lead your life as a missionary?

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “They are missionaries”

From Father Judge:

Members of the Missionary Cenacle Family “shall... realize that they are missionaries, that their Jesus is the naked Christ on the Cross and their portion is any abandoned part of His vineyard. To adore Him, therefore, in His desolation and sorrows, they shall gladly give themselves to those conditions where human comfort is lacking and where there is a great spiritual poverty. They shall be taught to realize what is their privilege and grace in being called to do that which was the commission of the Apostles, to teach and baptize all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 336)

From the Word of God:

“²¹It is not anyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.²²When the day comes many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?”²³Then I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you; away from me, all evil doers! ²⁴Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock.²⁵Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock.²⁶But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand.²⁷Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!” (*Matthew 7:21-27*)

And so we end where we began: missionary. This is the very heart of what it means to live the life of the Missionary Cenacle. Our “Jesus is the naked Christ on the cross” and our “portion is the any abandoned part of His vineyard.” Our call is to “gladly give [ourselves] to those conditions where human comfort is lacking”and “there is great spiritual poverty.” Finally, it is our immense “privilege and grace”as Cenacle missionaries to hear and respond to the sacred mandate of Jesus: “to teach and to baptize all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”! Is this your vocation? Does your heart thrill with living your life in this way? Do you understand and accept joyfully, wholeheartedly this divine call? There is no greater grace!

Write down your reflections briefly here: