

Lesson #15

The Cross

The Grace I am seeking . . .

To love the Naked, Abandoned Christ of Calvary

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

For Father Judge, the Missionary Cenacle vocation is all about *the Cross* precisely because the Cross bespeaks, more than anything, *self-sacrificing love*. It is the ultimate sign of “agape”: the perfect gift of God’s self-giving in overflowing generosity and graciousness to all creation.. And so, for Father Judge, one of the principal ways to strengthen and persevere in our missionary vocation was a concentration on the Cross.

Some of the *practices* and *devotions* that Father Judge recommended to keep this centrality of the Cross before us included:

- cherishing in our “prayer and labor the agonizing Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary”: not running from the Cross in our prayer and thought but keeping the crucified image of Jesus constantly and lovingly before one’s mind and heart;
- striving “to develop a spirit that is derived from the Cross” and that somehow reflects the harsh yet love-soaked realities of Jesus’ passion: actively seeking to give of one’s self uncomplainingly, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, free “of every species of self-interest”¹;
- praying with and contemplating Jesus on the Cross, especially taking a few extra minutes on Fridays to read a section of the Passion and to adore the abandoned Jesus, uniting our prayers to His in the Garden of Gethsemane;
- teaching the Sign of the Cross to others, especially children, and using the Sign of the Cross frequently, for example, when setting out or returning from a journey, when passing in front of a Church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved;
- tracing a small Cross on all our correspondence and papers to remind us that all that we do, we do with the purpose of exalting the Cross of Jesus;
- placing a crucifix in our homes and offices when possible or a cross in front of a newly opened Missionary Cenacle.

All of these practices express a desire to become one with the mission and life of the Crucified One. Choose at least one or two of these practices and make them a part of your daily life so that His life might be “made manifest” ever more fully in you and through you for many others (see 2 *Corinthians 4:11*)!

¹*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 102 (MF 14295).

Introduction

To be a member of the Missionary Cenacle means to be one specially chosen by God. The glorious destiny of those who selflessly embrace this vocation is to be transformed into the very Image of Jesus. But, for the missionary, this "image" cannot be that of the triumphant, resurrected Christ. No, it is instead "the Image of the thorn-crowned Christ," "the Image of Him whose sacred blood was almost churned into a bloody froth for our sins -- hung upon the Cross." Those who truly wish to follow the Lord Jesus in a life of selfless dedication and self-sacrifice are "made to conform, to suffer; their glory is to be tried Oh, that peculiar divine glory. The Image of the suffering Jesus! To be made like that. That is the highest rank of a Christian.."²

That is what Father Judge wished for each and every Cenacle missionary: conformity to the suffering Jesus. "Our King is the 'Man of Sorrow' It is our glory to suffer with Him."³ The Jesus of Father Judge was almost invariably the "thorn-crowned Jesus," "the naked and desolate Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary."⁴ He urged the Missionary Servant seminarians as they engaged in their studies to remember that no matter whatever else they might learn, "this thought must never leave them, that the Book of Books and the True Fountain of Wisdom is their Crucifix; therefore, they shall have it ever before them."⁵

Father Judge's primary spiritual image of Jesus was that of a suffering Jesus. As you continue this journey leading you ever more deeply into the mystery of the Missionary Cenacle vocation, keep before you the Crucifix.. Meditate carefully upon the Cross, see the savage wounds, the bloodied head, the ravaged heart of blessed Jesus. Why? .

How blessed is the person who can read in [the crucifix] the lessons of Our Lord's love. Let it speak to you! Speak to it! Seek council from it! Place your worries and frets in the Sacred Intellect of Jesus! Place what you love and what is clear to you in His Sacred Heart. Place what you are working hard for in His Sacred Hands, in the wounds thereof, place what you have striven for, your many messages and apostolic visits for good, place there in the wounds of His Sacred Feet⁶

²MF 8368 (Sermon, 8/8/15).

³MF 3317-3319 (Letter to Associates on death of Miss Sarah Henley, 6/1/13).

⁴*Original Constitutions, Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity* I:6.

⁵MF 12161-12164 (Rule for House of Studies, September 1926).

⁶MF 13446 (Letter, 9/14/14)

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: **The Cross is Christ's Glory and Triumph**

*[From a Discourse by St. Andrew of Crete, bishop,
found in the Office of Readings for September 14, the Triumph of the Holy Cross]*

“The cross. . . drove away darkness and brought in the light. . . . We are lifted up with the crucified Christ, leaving behind us earth and sin so that we may gain the things above. So great and outstanding a spossession is the cross that he who wins it has won a treasure. Right could I call this treasure the fairest of all fair things and the costliest, in fact as well as in name, for on it and through it and for its sake the riches of salvation that had been lost were restored to us.

“Had there been no cross, Christ could not have been crucified. Had there been no cross, life itself could not have been nailed to the tree. And if life had not been nailed to it, there would be no streams of immortality pouring from Christ's side, blood and water for the world's cleansing. The legal bond of our sin would not be canceled, we should not have obtained our freedom, we should not have enjoyed the fruit of the tree of life and the gates of paradise would not stand open. Hand there been no cross, death would not have been trodden underfoot, nor hell despoiled.

“Therefore, the cross is something wonderfully great and honorable. It is great because through the cross the many noble acts of Christ found their consummation – very many indeed, for both his miracles and his sufferings were fully rewarded with victory. The cross is honorable because it is both the sing of God's suffering and the trophy of his victory. It stands for his suffering because on it he freely suffered unto death. But it is also his trophy because it was the means by which the devil was wounded and death conquered; the barred gates of hell were smashed, and the cross became the one common salvation of the whole world.

“The cross is called Christ's glory; it is saluted as his triumph. We recognize it as the cup he longed to drink and the climax of the sufferings he endured for our sake. As to the cross being Christ's glory, listen to his words: ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and in him God is glorified, and God will glorify him at once.’ And again: ‘Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven: I have glorified it and will glorify it again.’ Here he speaks of the glory that would accrue to him through the cross. And if you would understand that the cross is Christ's triumph, hear what he himself also said: ‘When I am lifted up, then I will draw all people to myself.’ Now you can see that the cross is Christ's glory and triumph.”

And Mary's sharing in that Passion and Glory of Jesus

[From a sermon of St. Bernard, abbot]

“Truly, O blessed Mother, a sword has pierced your heart. For only by passing through your heart could the sword enter the flesh of your Son. Indeed, after your Jesus – who belongs to everyone, but is especially yours – gave up his life, the cruel spear, which was not withheld from his lifeless body, tore open his side. Clearly it did not touch his soul and could not harm him, but it did pierce your heart. For surely his soul was no longer there, but yours could not be torn away. Thus the violence of sorrow has cut through your heart, and we rightly call you more than martyr, since the effect of compassion in you has gone beyond the endurance of physical suffering. . . .

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“Do not be surprised, brothers [and sisters], that Mary is said to be a martyr in spirit. . . . One of the greatest crimes of the Gentiles was that they were without love. That was far from the heart of Mary; let it be far from her servants. . . . Perhaps someone will say: ‘Had she not known before that he would die?’ Undoubtedly. ‘Did she not expect him to rise again at once?’ Surely. ‘And still she grieved over her crucified Son?’ Intensely. Who are you and what is the source of your wisdom that you are more surprised at the compassion of Mary than at the passion of Mary’s Son? For if he could die in body, could she not die with him in spirit? He died in body through a love greater than anyone had known. She died in spirit through a love unlike any other than his.”

Think about what you have read. Is there anything particularly that strikes or moves you? Anything that you don’t understand? Anything that you disagree with or are troubled by? Take a few moments and glance at the cross, at a crucifix. Just quietly profess your faith in the God who has loved us so much as to give his very life for us on the cross and, through the body of the Church, continues to suffer out of love. Let your heart be stirred. Consider his wounds. See the sorrow and the pain of His Mother Mary. Walk with her along the way of the Cross. He and she are there out of love for you. Tell them of your gratitude and love.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK I

Monday: “Busy exalting the Cross of Jesus”

From Father Judge:

"Do realize what your (daily) labors and vigilance mean? What is the effect of fidelity to your duty and the sacrifices you must develop? What is the effect of being faithful to your ministrations from morning until night in season and out of season, through the year? The effect has been that you are busy exalting the Cross of Jesus Christ and doing this as successfully as St. Helena did, in the hearts and minds of the children committed to your care and brought under the influence of our missions." (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 51)

From the Word of God:

"Before God and before Christ Jesus who is to be judge of the living and the dead, I charge you, in the name of his appearing and of his kingdom:²proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, give encouragement — but do all with patience and with care to instruct.³The time is sure to come when people will not accept sound teaching, but their ears will be itching for anything new and they will collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes;⁴and then they will shut their ears to the truth and will turn to myths.⁵But you must keep steady all the time; put up with suffering; do the work of preaching the gospel; fulfil the service asked of you." (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

As you faithfully go about your missionary duties and tasks, are you aware that you are “busy exalting the Cross of Jesus”? Our duties are not just the “things we do”but are an active prayer of adoration to the God who has given everything for us. As you contemplate the cross of Jesus, ask Him for the grace to be faithful to your service as He was so intensely and fully faithful to His.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Love is the mainspring of effort”

From Father Judge:

“Love is the main spring of effort. Love the cross more. You have affections. Shower these upon your crucifix. Make much of your cross. Let it be the inspiration of your desires. Yes, it will even please God if you encourage yourself to often think that the triumph of that Cross is to be your triumph. Love the Cross of Jesus Christ, for of all signs, it is the surest pledge of our predestination to glory; in fact I think it can be safely said that that person who shows a devotion to the Cross, who works for it, who loves it to sacrifice-cannot be lost.”
(*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p.51)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁴But as for me, it is out of the question that I should boast at all, except of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.¹⁵It is not being circumcised or uncircumcised that matters; but what matters is a new creation.” (*Matthew 7:7-11*)

Spend some moments just looking at, contemplating the cross of Jesus. He is there out of love for you. Through this cross, salvation, grace, mercy, life, salvation, hope have come to the whole universe for all times and peoples. Reflect on this awesome mystery. Reverence your cross in some way. As Father Judge suggests, “shower [your affections] upon your crucifix.” An awesome love of Jesus, crucified out of love for me and for all, can be a tremendous spur to action and love for the sisters and brothers.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Devotion to the Cross of Christ”

From Father Judge:

“Jesus said that He will be the advocate of a certain class; that He is going to take under His care the salvation of some favorite friends of His: “Every one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven.” (Mt. 10:32) The highest form of confession is devotion to the Cross of Christ.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 51)

From the Word of God:

³²“So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven.³³But the one who disowns me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.” (*Luke 2:25-28*)

How can and do you publicly express your devotion to the Cross of Christ? Do you make the sign of the Cross in public? When? In what circumstances? Do you have a cross or a crucifix in your home or at your place of business or school? Do you wear a cross around your neck or on your clothing in some obvious place? Are there other ways that you feel you could even more clearly “declare yourself” for Jesus in the presence of others? What are those ways? What would keep you from making such a profession or declaration in the presence of others?

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “Great will be your reward”

From Father Judge:

"You have been making that confession. Realize the grace and privilege that is yours. What a misfortune it would be if you did not sufficiently appreciate it. Great privileges, great (advantages), beget corresponding duties, great will be your reward if you are faithful to your duties. No equation of the schools, no expression of rhetoric can adequately express what your reward will be. Our Lord leaves this to the balances of heaven. " (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 51)

From the Word of God:

"¹¹But, as someone dedicated to God. . . you must aim to be upright and religious, filled with faith and love, perseverance and gentleness.¹²Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made your noble profession of faith before many witnesses.¹³Now, before God, the source of all life, and before Jesus Christ, who witnessed to his noble profession of faith before Pontius Pilate, I charge you¹⁴to do all that you have been told, with no faults or failures, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁵who at the due time will be revealed by God, the blessed and only Ruler of all, the King of kings and the Lord of lords,¹⁶who alone is immortal, whose home is in inaccessible light, whom no human being has seen or is able to see: to him be honour and everlasting power. Amen." (*1 Timothy 6:11-16*)

As you go about your missionary life, there is nothing wrong with thinking about the “reward” or the fullness of divine life, love, and happiness that will be yours because of God’s grace and your fidelity to that grace. The recognition of this precious gift that awaits us can be a tremendous spur to devotion and zeal especially when we are very conscious of the difficulties and the trials of a particular mission or work. Take a few minutes to think about your own death and what awaits you after death if you remain faithful to this precious missionary vocation that is yours: to exalt the Cross of Jesus in so many ways!

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “Exalt the Cross of Christ”

From Father Judge:

“May you be spurred on to exalt the Cross of Christ and as a spur to this, I place before you the souls of the thousands of children who will owe their salvation to your zeal and charity. Do not fail them. Do not fail your own soul. Do not fail the Church. Do not fail the Cross of Christ. Exalt the Cross of Christ and the Cross of Christ will exalt you.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 51)

From the Word of God:

“⁶As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to depart.⁷I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith;⁸all there is to come for me now is the crown of uprightness which the Lord, the upright judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his appearing.” (*Luke 2:36-38*)

Father Judge was clear that, in God’s Providence, the missionaries were to be the instruments by which God would concretely and practically bring God’s healing presence, love, and salvation to “thousands”and thousands of people. Each person brought to this experience of God’s love, renewed in their lives, enlightened and strengthened for the journey was an “exaltation” of the Cross of Christ. How faithful do you feel you have been to this awesome missionary gift and task confided to your care? Or do you feel that, in some way, your have “failed”the Church, “failed”the Cross of Christ? Open your heart to Jesus and speak to Him about whatever you find most deeply there.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK II

Weekend Reflection: **“The power of Christ’s blood”**

[From the Catecheses of St. John Chrysostom, bishop found in the Office of Readings for Good Friday]

“If we wish to understand the power of Christ’s blood, we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. ‘Sacrifice a lamb without blemish,’ commanded Moses, ‘and sprinkle its blood on your doors.’ If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational beast could possibly save men endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power lies not in the blood itself, but in the fact that it is a sign of the Lord’s blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors he did not dare to enter, so how much less will the devil approach now when he sees, not that figurative blood on the doors, but the true blood on the lips of believers, the doors of the temple of Christ.

“If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master’s side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance and immediately there poured out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of baptism and the blood, of the holy eucharist. The soldier pierced the Lord’s side, he breached the wall of the sacred temple, and I have found the treasure and made it my own. So also with the lamb: the Jews sacrificed the victim and I have been saved by it.

“‘There flowed from his side water and blood.’ Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized baptism and the holy eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, ‘the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit,’ and from the holy eucharist. Since the symbols of baptism and the eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: ‘Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh!’ As God then took a rib from Adam’s side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and the water after his own death.

“Do you understand, then, how Christ has united his bride to himself and what food he gives us all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life.”

The Mystery of the Precious Blood

[From “The Precious Blood” by Father Faber⁷]

“But we need not go to Jerusalem, we need not have lived eighteen hundred years ago, to find the Precious Blood and worship it. . . . We actually worship it every day in the chalice at Mass. When the chalice is uplifted over the altar, the Blood of Jesus is there, whole and entire, glorified and full of the pulses of his true human life It is the Blood of God which is there, the very living Blood whose first fountains were in the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

⁷This selection is taken from Frederick W. Faber, *The Precious Blood* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1978). According to many of the pioneer Sisters, the works of Father Faber – written in the late nineteenth century – were favorite spiritual reading of Father Judge.

[When you receive the Eucharist], . . . the Blood of Jesus is throbbing there in all its abounding life of glory. It sheathes in the sacramental mystery that exceeding radiance which is lighting all heaven at that moment with a magnificence of splendor which exceeds the glowing of a million suns. You do not feel the strong pulses of his immortal life. If you did, you could hardly live yourself. . . . But in [the Eucharist] is the whole of the Precious Blood, the Blood of Gethsemane, Jerusalem, and Calvary, the Blood of the Passion, of the Resurrection, and of the Ascension, the Blood shed and reassumed. As Mary bore that Precious Blood within herself of old, so do you bear it now. It is in his Heart and veins, within the temples of his Body, as it was when he lay those nine months in her ever blessed womb . . . The whole of the Precious Blood is in the Chalice and in the Host. It is not part: it is the whole”

Reflect on the mystery of Jesus on the Cross, especially the sacred wound in His side created by the soldier's lance. From that open side, according to the Gospel of John, flowed "blood and water." From the very earliest days of the Christian faith, this passage has inspired profound meditation and reflection. Look at the open wound. See the blood and water flowing forth: blood and water that bring new life to the world and from which the Church itself is continually born and made new. Speak to God about this mystery of the Precious Blood. It courses from the very heart of God, through the Eucharist and reaches out and embraces all the earth if we are open to what God desires to do!

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK II

Monday: “Catch the Precious Blood in your hearts”

From Father Judge:

“It is your ineffable grace daily in Holy Communion to catch the Precious Blood in your hearts and offer it up to His eternal Father and bring it to His sorrowful Mother, Mary. What a grace and privilege you have to gather up adoringly the drops of Sacred Blood lest they be profaned and give them to her! It was her mournful grace and duty to grieve over her adorable Son, the Divine Victim of our sinful folly. She it was who would wipe away the soil of wicked insults from the Sacred Face. What else are you working for or in training for but to help our Blessed Mother of Sorrows to clean and image the likeness of God in men's souls?” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 63)

From the Word of God:

“²⁵Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.²⁶Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, ‘Woman, this is your son.’²⁷Then to the disciple he said, ‘This is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.” (*John 19:25-27*)

Through the awesome mystery of the Incarnation, God's life courses through every human heart. Every human tear, every human sorrow and pain, every untimely or violent death, every instance of abuse is a direct attack upon the glory and gracious kindness of God. The missionary's work is, first, to recognize this immense divine-human truth and, then, to honor this truth by “catching the Precious Blood”, seemingly shed so senselessly. Mary is the Mother of Jesus and so, in a very real way, is the Mother of all Humanity. By honoring and reverencing the Divine Presence in every human heart damaged by sin, we are consoling Mary from whom this Precious Life first came forth in Christ. Let us ask for the grace to work with Mary as she sorrowfully labors to “clean and image the likeness of God in men's souls.”

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Devotion to the Precious Blood”

From Father Judge:

“Behold His Mother! Behold your Mother at the foot of the Cross! See our dear Immaculate Mother Mary! See that Immaculate Heart which, like her Divine Son's, is overflowing with love for men; see how it is breaking as she stands and watches his Precious Blood all flow out! How grateful she will be, and how pleased with you, for your devotion to the Precious Blood. See how great [St. John] and Mary Magdalene became! What a place in the affection of the world they have won and how good God is to you to give you the grace to take your place with them!” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 63)

From the Word of God:

“³¹It was the Day of Preparation, and to avoid the bodies’ remaining on the cross during the Sabbath—since that Sabbath was a day of special solemnity—the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away.³²Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other.³³When they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs³⁴one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.” (*John 19:31-34*)

Father Judge invites us as missionaries to “take our place at the foot of the Cross”. Jesus continues to be crucified today in our suffering sisters and brothers throughout the world and in the violation of creation and the environment. All creation is once again crucified. Our role, like that of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalen, and John the apostle, is to be take note of this suffering, to be present to it, to do all that we can to comfort and console our agonized Jesus in our day and time. Ask the Holy Spirit for the immense grace to be another Mary Magdalen, another John at the foot of our modern day Golgothas.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Bring souls ... to the Precious Blood”

From Father Judge:

“Your life work is to save souls, to bring poor sin-stained men and women to the Precious Blood. If the Precious Blood has friends on earth today, are you not numbered amongst them? Behold your dignity, and treasure your grace! O how many will be washed in that sacred cleansing through you! How many, but for you, would never be cleansed! How wonderful it all is that God will use you to bring souls to the Precious Blood! How dear you must be to Jesus, when He gives you a grace of this nature!” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 63)

From the Word of God:

“²²God’s saving justice given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.²³No distinction is made: all have sinned and lack God’s glory,²⁴ and all are justified by the free gift of his grace through being set free in Christ Jesus.²⁵God appointed him as a sacrifice for reconciliation, through faith, by the shedding of his blood, and so showed his justness; first for the past, when sins went unpunished because he held his hand,²⁶ and now again for the present age, to show how he is just and justifies everyone who has faith in Jesus.” (*Romans 3:22-26*)

Father Judge puts it quite clearly: “your life work is to save souls, to bring poor sin-stained men and women to the Precious Blood.” Jesus shed His blood freely and fully so that every human person could know the fullness of God’s healing, mercy, forgiveness and kindness. As a missionary, your “life work” is to reach out to those sisters and brothers who do not experience mercy or joy in their lives, who walk in immense suffering or quiet desperation, not even knowing what they seek. Your task is to bring them to this spring of life-giving healing, bathed in the Blood of Jesus flowing mercifully from His wounded and glorified Body. Thank God for this grace and gift. Pledge to do all that you can to fulfill this mission confided to your care by God.

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “See him bleeding from every wound”

From Father Judge:

“Take your stand at the foot of the Cross. Hear our divine Lord cry 'I thirst.' 'I thirst for souls.' (Jn.19:29) See the cruelty of it all: see Him bleeding from every wound. Open your hearts that His Precious Blood may fall therein, catching every drop that like the Little Flower of Jesus you may shed it upon the souls of men.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 63)

From the Word of God:

“¹²All you who pass this way, look and see: is any sorrow like the sorrow inflicted on me, with which Yahweh struck me on the day of his burning anger? ¹³He sent fire from on high deep into my bones; he stretched a net for my feet, he pulled me back; he left me shattered, sick all day long” (*Lamentations 1:12-13*)

Contemplate the sufferings and agony of Jesus on the Cross. Allow the Precious Blood flowing from that broken, wounded Body to pour forth in your own heart. The immensity of the Love contained in that human-divine Life will envelop completely your small heart and expand it to embrace all humanity in love and service. Jesus’ life and love within you, given through the gift of His own Precious Blood, will be the gift you share with the sisters and brothers God brings into your path as you go about your missionary life. This is how St. Therese of Lisieux, the “Little Flower” and the Patroness of Missionaries, saw her role or vocation: adoring, gathering up and then sharing that divine life and love poured forth in Jesus’ Precious Blood.

✍ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “Thirst! Thirst! Thirst!”

From Father Judge:

“Thirst! thirst! thirst! my dear children, for souls. Forget all things! endure all things! suffer all things! sacrifice all things! so that you can satisfy our agonized dying Saviour, our dear Jesus, bleeding, bleeding out His last life-drop for souls.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 63)

From the Word of God:

“²⁸ After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” ²⁹ There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit..” (*John 19:28-30*)

Jesus’ last cry from the Cross, according to John, was “I thirst!” The great mystics through the ages, and most recently Mother Teresa of Calcutta, have understood this not to be merely or even principally physical thirst. Rather it was a cry from the heart, expressing his thirst or all-encompassing desire that not one soul, not one human heart be deprived of or lost to the experience of the Trinity’s divine love. Not to know this divine love is the greatest of all human tragedies. The missionary must be willing to “forget . . . endure . . . suffer . . . sacrifice” everything to assure that not one human heart be lost to this divine embrace of Love. Ask the Holy Spirit for this singular love of God.

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK III

Weekend Reflection:

Courage and the Cross

[From various historical sources]

The Alabama missions were desolate places in the early twentieth century. The territory covered eight counties, 5300 square miles, with only 120 Catholics of whom only twenty were practicing. Many priests and people familiar with the area were advising the Vincentians to withdraw from the work. Father Molyneaux, the pastor, was quite sick in a New Orleans, Louisiana, hospital and, in fact, died by the end of 1915. His instructions to Father Judge, who visited him there, were simply "do something to help the people," "start something." Upon Father Molyneaux's death, Father Judge was appointed the new pastor of the Vincentian Alabama missions – the third in five years!

The beginnings were extremely trying for Father Judge. He opened his heart to a close priest friend, writing that "I never can describe the depression I felt the first month, the whole experience was so new to me and everything looked so disconsolate." Nonetheless,

I prayed and thought and prayed and kept on studying and praying and the thought grew on me that there was only one thing I could do that had been untried and that was to see if we could solve our difficulties through lay action.⁸

He became ever more convinced that "God has sent me here to prepare the way for this great work" of lay missionary action. He had "few consolations" in the Alabama missions and had experienced "fierce opposition" from the local people.⁹ All this simply convinced him that the only genuinely effective way of accomplishing the missionary work there was through the presence of "some of our dear apostles."¹⁰ All obstacles to this were removed when Bishop Allen formally approved the Cenacle lay missionary movement in Alabama on the evening of September 14, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

He also was personally struggling with concern over his two beloved sisters in Boston, Winnie and Melize, who had been quite ill. The sacrifice of leaving them in the North in such serious condition was a great trial but a necessary one for the sake of the "Kingdom of God." He thought that "going so far from them would kill them, but I did what I thought God wishes me to do; I am leaving them to His love and power."¹¹ In fact, his fears were realized and, within one week in late October, he lost both these beloved sisters and his aunt, Sister Mary of the Incarnation, to death.

The first associates arrived in Columbus, Georgia, on January 1, 1916. Ella Lonergan and Mary Howard came first, followed by Amy Croke a few days later. Their beginnings were inauspicious. Their early efforts in Opelika to form a school met with failure. They braved verbal and even extreme threats of physical abuse. They endured "street demonstrations to attract crowds and incite tumult to destroy them" and "three attempts to provoke

⁸MF 9801 (Letter to Fr. Joseph McKey, C.M., 6/15/25).

⁹For example, under the influence of Thomas E. Watson, the U.S. senator from Georgia, the "Veazy Bill" was passed by the Georgia State Legislature in 1915. Directly aimed at the Catholic Church, it authorized grand juries to "visit, inspect, and carefully inquire into every orphanage, sanitarium, sanatorium, hospital, asylum, House of Good Shepherd [Sisters], convent, monastery, house of correction, reformatory, penitentiary, school, and college, for the purpose of ascertaining what persons are confined within said institutions and by what authority such persons are held within the same." Beginning in 1910, Watson in speaking and writing vehemently attacked the Catholic Church and the African-Americans as the cause of the economic and political woes of the Southern poor.

¹⁰MF 12069-12073 (Letter to Grace Fitzgerald, 9/25/15).

¹¹MF 12071 (Letter to Grace Fitzgerald, 9/25/15).

the populace to tar and feather them."¹² The tremendous courage and spirit of sacrifice and faith of these rather cultured women in these taxing circumstances was extraordinary.

Undaunted by the failure of the school in Opelika, the lay missionaries shifted their apostolic attention to Phenix City in summer 1916. There they conducted a very successful summer school session with twenty-five students in attendance. On September 11 they opened St. Patrick's School in a rented house with just under fifty students, Catholic and non-Catholic. At the same time they also opened a small clinic for the poor people of the area. However, due to lack of necessary equipment and no money for emergency medical supplies, they had to abandon this effort in October 1916.

The success of the efforts in Phenix City, however, were not without extreme opposition from some segments of the town's populace. Every Wednesday evening in August 1916, during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in St. Patrick's Church, a man by the name of Jeff Marchant and his "Guardians of Liberty" organized very loud and strident demonstrations -- complete with a band -- outside the church building. The noise was so deafening that the Cenacle associates and others in the church had to strain to hear Father Judge's booming preaching voice. The gatherings became progressively more violent, and the ladies had to be escorted back to their homes. Finally, one evening Mr. Marchant and the crowd began screaming insults against Mary, the mother of Jesus. Father Judge knelt before the altar and prayed aloud that Jesus would do something to defend His mother's honor. Before the prayer was finished, the shouting had died off, and the demonstrations outside the church completely ceased although there were, through the years, violent periodic outbreaks of anti-Catholic prejudice.

Read over and reflect on the experience of these early Cenacle missionaries, both Father Judge and the first "Catholic ladies" who accompanied him. Their example of valor and courage when faced with the cross of extreme opposition, hostility, and bigotry is a challenging one. Yet it is, in fact, part of our glorious heritage as members of the Missionary Cenacle. What are the trials and difficulties you face in being a missionary in your daily life, in the place where God has placed you? How do you deal with these difficulties? For they are – in fact – "the Cross" God is asking you to share in on behalf of the salvation of the world. How generous are you in "taking up this Cross daily" and following Him? Do you quickly give up and withdraw in the face of challenges and adversity? Or do you remain strong and resolute, constantly seeking new creative missionary approaches? Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of ever increasing Fortitude – or Courage – in living out your missionary vocation.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

¹²MF 4948-4950 (Newspaper article by Thomas Judge, C.M. in *The Catholic Convert*, September 1918).

WEEK III

Monday: “That battle going on”

From Father Judge:

“Sometimes, you know, we feel that battle going on, that struggle within us between our higher and lower nature between the spirit and the flesh. Sometimes we feel there is no grace at all within us. There are moments when pride arises in magnificent revolt, when our outraged feelings become dominant. There are moments of this kind. We are in temptation; we are being proved at that moment. These moments show us the necessity of always watching and praying; these moments prove to us the existence of grace within us, for if we did not have that grace, it would not be so difficult to do the wrong thing. If we had gotten used to doing the wrong thing, conscience would have been dead.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 200)

From the Word of God:

“²⁸Yahweh, you yourself are my lamp, my God lights up my darkness;²⁹ with you I storm the rampart, with my God I can scale any wall.³⁰ This God, his way is blameless; the word of Yahweh is refined in the furnace, for he alone is the shield of all who take refuge in him.³¹ For who is God but Yahweh, who is a rock but our God?³² This God who girds me with strength, who makes my way free from blame,³³ who makes me as swift as a deer and sets me firmly on the heights,³⁴ who trains my hands for battle, my arms to bend a bow of bronze.³⁵ You give me your invincible shield (your right hand upholds me) you never cease to listen to me,³⁶ you give me the strides of a giant, give me ankles that never weaken..” (*Psalms 18:28-36*)

Probably the most daunting battles we face are the interior ones: the battle between the good and evil, the “spirit” and the “flesh” within our very selves. Father Judge reminds us to be always ready and prepared for these interior struggles. “Watching” and “praying” keep us alert to the presence of this true spiritual combat. With the help of God -- as the Psalm reminds us -- truly “we can scale any wall”! What are the particular interior “battles” or struggles you are fighting right now? Do you call often on the power of God to sustain you in these struggles? Have you experienced God winning the victory within you? In what way? Be specific and concrete.

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Take courage . . . be glad!”

From Father Judge:

“But that struggle you feel at times, that mutiny-take courage, my dear children, be glad. These are only God's graces. Now, tempted you are going to be. You must not hope to escape. One will be tempted against this virtue, another against that and as long as you live that is going to be. One day you will be on the heights, the next day you will be in the depths of misery. The angels will lift you up, the devils will dump you down. One day you will be in sunshine, the next day in the darkness. One day you will be so close to God you will wonder you cannot be in His embrace. Again, you will imagine you are so outcast as to almost despair that God can forgive you. That is all temptation.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 200)

From the Word of God:

“¹To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live there;²it is he who laid its foundations on the seas, on the flowing waters fixed it firm.³Who shall go up to the mountain of Yahweh? Who shall take a stand in his holy place?⁴The clean of hands and pure of heart, whose heart is not set on vanities, who does not swear an oath in order to deceive.⁵Such a one will receive blessing from Yahweh, saving justice from the God of his salvation.⁶Such is the people that seeks him, that seeks your presence, God of Jacob.Pause⁷Gates, lift high your heads, raise high the ancient gateways, and the king of glory shall enter!⁸Who is he, this king of glory? It is Yahweh, strong and valiant, Yahweh valiant in battle.⁹Gates, lift high your heads, raise high the ancient gateways, and the king of glory shall enter!¹⁰Who is he, this king of glory? Yahweh Sabaoth, he is the king of glory.” (*Psalms 24*)

How do you deal with temptation? How do you respond or react? Do you find yourself easily becoming discouraged? Do you recognize in temptation the Cross that Jesus is inviting you to bear with Him? As you confront temptation, do you naturally turn to prayer? How do you pray in these moments? Or do you try to “handle the situation”with your own power and “wisdom”? Living with temptation is a necessary part of the Christian and missionary journey. The best response to temptation is joyful confidence that God Himself , “strong and valiant”, is doing battle for you. “Take courage . . . Be glad!”

▮ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Be steady and calm”

From Father Judge:

“In the midst of . . . gloom and upset and struggling, and battling and ferment, your will should be steady and calm, with just this determination: God, I want you, and only you. I want your love, nothing else. If it pleases you that I should go through this, I am satisfied. Do not abandon me, I ask no consolations. I ask no comforts no signs no soothings; just to be faithful. All I wish, O God, is that your grace in me will not become void. Pity me.”
(*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 200)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁰You, though, have followed my teaching, my way of life, my aims, my faith, my patience and my love, my perseverance¹¹ and the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in places like Antioch, Iconium and Lystra—all the persecutions I have endured; and the Lord has rescued me from every one of them.¹² But anybody who tries to live in devotion to Christ is certain to be persecuted;¹³ while these wicked impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others, and themselves deceived.¹⁴ You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true; remember who your teachers were,¹⁵ and how, ever since you were a child, you have known the holy scriptures — from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people’s lives and teaching them to be upright.¹⁷ This is how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work.” (2 Timothy 3:10-17)

Paul points out to us what to do “in the midst of gloom and upset and struggling” that Father Judge describes. First, think about other missionaries who have gone before us and left an incredible example of perseverance, love, and patient faithfulness. Follow their example. Second, go to the Scriptures. Read your Bible daily. Let God’s holy Word strengthen and instruct you as you seek to live out your missionary vocation day by day. One of the most outstanding characteristics of Father Judge’s life and spirituality was his intense reading of and frequent reference to the Word of God! Let that become your practice also as you recall the “cloud of witnesses”, missionaries, who have gone before you in loving service to the Triune God.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “Like a rock”

From Father Judge:

“[We should be] just like a rock in the midst of an angry sea. The waves beat against it and over it but the rock is there, and when the excited waters have subsided and the calm comes, the rock is still there. And so it should be with our will. No matter how our mind does seem to be divided, no matter how distracted we are, no matter whether we be in the clouds or hidden in the shadows of darkness, this we should know that we love God and we want Him. If you feel that, you are as that rock in the midst of the waters.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 200)

From the Word of God:

“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 7:24-27*)

Sometimes in the midst of trial and difficulty, all we can do is “hang on”. Actually, both Jesus and Father Judge recommend this strategy! When things get very difficult, don’t try to “reason” your way out of the cross or rebel against it. Instead just, in your own will, resolve to “love God” and desire God. Listen to the words of Jesus, follow His example even if it seems absurd or impossible to do in the moment. Just put one foot in front of the other, and keep on walking. If you do, then you too will be like that “rock in the midst of the waters.” At the end of the storm -- which will definitely come -- your “house” will still be standing strong.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “Be calm, be easy”

From Father Judge:

“Just be calm, be easy. When God sees fit, He will speak to the demon. Keep up your spiritual practices. Trust in God, and remember the strength that comes from humiliations These will leave you strengthened and refreshed.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 200)

From the Word of God:

“Then he got into the boat followed by his disciples.²⁴Suddenly a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was asleep.²⁵So they went to him and woke him saying, ‘Save us, Lord, we are lost!’²⁶And he said to them, ‘Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?’ And then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.²⁷They were astounded and said, ‘Whatever kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?’” (*Matthew 8:23-27*)

The best thing to do in the midst of spiritual combat or trial is to “keep up your spiritual practices.” Do not become desperate or attempt to make any significant changes in your life. You are in the midst of the storm. This is no time to try and change course. Just “hang on”confidently, recalling always that Jesus is in the boat with you. There, truly, is nothing to fear or become anxious about. Ask the Holy Spirit daily for this type of Courage or Fortitude so that, when the trials do come, you will be confident and unafraid.

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK IV

Weekend Reflection:

“The Compassion of Mary”

*[From Frederick Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*¹³]*

“Our Lady not only cooperated with Jesus in the same sense as the saints . . . but also cooperated more intimately with Him in ways the saints could not share. . . . [Her compassion] was actually contemporaneous with the Passion, and took place in the presence of the Passion. Indeed, it is remarkable that all our Lady’s dolours . . . came from the presence of Jesus. They were the very contact of His Heart with hers. The actual presence of our Lady’s Compassion at the time and place of the Passion gives it a union therewith which no other sorrow for our Lord can share. It was part of the living mystery itself. It was not the gradual result of long meditation. It was not a sorrow felt in the calm seclusion of the undistracted cloister, or a pious emotion roused by the marvelous ceremonial of a believing Church. It did not come from literature, or ritual, or history, or private revelation, or mysticism, or art, or poetry, but from the sights and sounds of the very Passion, in which it was immersed, and of which it formed an integral portion. It was part of our Blessed Mother’s life. It was a series of events which happened to herself, outward sorrows of her own making these inward wounds. She had distinct rights, by which she was entitled to share in the Passion. . . . It was already hers as a mother. She suffered it in all the rawness and dishonor of its existing reality. She was in the crowd; she was jostled in it, and derided by it; she was distracted by the tumult; her inward tranquility was assailed by the agitation and horror of senses. All this is true of her Compassion, and of hers only.

“Moreover, her Compassion was part of the Passion in the sense of having actually increased the Passion. With Judas, and Annas, and Caiaphas, with Pilate and Herod, with the Roman soldiers and the Jewish rabble, we must reckon Mary among those who wrung our Savior’s Heart with sorrow. Except the dereliction of His Father, we may well suppose that there was no pain in all His Passion equal to that which the vision of His Mother’s broken heart supplied. Thus her Compassion was an integral part of His sufferings. . . . Intensely as He loved each soul of man, and therefore loved all souls collectively with an amount of burning desire which bewilders our conjectures, the single soul of His Mother was with Him an object of amazing love far beyond what He felt for all other creatures together. To see her, therefore, tempest-tossed on a dark ocean of unutterable woe, was, of itself, a fearful torture to Him; but that woe was caused by Himself; it was being poured out of His souls into hers each separate moment, at each separate shame, pain, outrage, and indignity. It was He who was stretching her on the rack, – He who was turning the instruments of her torture perpetually beyond the limits of human endurance, – He who was thickening the inconsolable darkness about her. It was He who was doing all this. Without Him she would have had no dolours. It was her embrace of Him that was her agony. He was a fiery, sharp-edged cross to the heart He loved best of all. Then all the incalculable bitterness that He had poured out of Himself into her, He took back into Himself without taking it away from her. It re-entered His Sacred Heart as another separate Passion, another great creation of sorrow by itself, and overwhelmed Him with a very deluge of tempestuous grief. Thus her Compassion came out of the Passion, and went into it again, so that there was . . . an identity between the two . . . Her Compassion was the Passion taking a particular form. Her words to St. Bridget¹⁴ express this: ‘The sorrow of Christ was my sorrow, because His Heart was my heart. For, as Adam and Eve sold the world for one apple, my Son and I redeemed the world with one heart. . . .’

¹³Frederick W. Faber, D.D., *The Foot of the Cross* (Rockford, IL: Tan Publishers, 1978), 381-384. Originally published in 1857. The works of Father Faber were extremely popular in the early twentieth century and were used regularly by Father Judge for his own personal spiritual reading and meditation.

¹⁴St. Bridget of Sweden (1302-73), a mystic, widow, mother of eight children and foundress of a religious community. She worked for the reform of the Church during a very critical period. Her *Revelations* record her visions, spiritual experiences, and life.

“As the Passion was the sacrifice which Christ made upon the Cross, so the Compassion was the sacrifice of Mary beneath the Cross. It was her offering to the Eternal Father. It was an offering made by a sinless creature for the sins of her fellow-creatures. Their gain was her loss. The lightening of their hearts was the burdening of hers. Her darkness was their light. Their peace was her agony. Her Son was their victim. Their life was her tremendous martyrdom. Her offering rose to heaven together with the offering of Jesus. They were as two grains of incense on the burning coals of one thurible. . . . During those hours of the Passion, each oblation was a double one; the offering of Jesus and the offering of Mary were tied in one The world was redeemed by the Passion of our Lord. But there never was, in the ordinance of God, such a thing as a Passion of Jesus disjoined from the Compassion of Mary.”

This particular meditation points out the specific and special role of Mary as cooperating in the salvific work of Jesus in His Passion and Death. Mary entered fully into the sufferings of her son; their two hearts beat as one. Several questions suggest themselves. Following the example of Mary and calling on her intercession, does my heart beat in unison with the suffering heart of Jesus today? Do I suffer with (the meaning of the word “com-passion”) those who are suffering and in sorrow and pain? Is it necessary, at times, to take risks and do things that seem to be the will of God, even if these things cause pain and suffering to the people we love and who love us? The lives of Jesus and Mary seem to suggest this as do the lives of many of the saints who have preceded us on this missionary journey

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK IV

Monday: “That safe and excellent way”

From Father Judge:

“Meditation on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Fountain-Head from which came and continually flows every good to us, is that safe excellent way through which all Christians should ordinarily walk in the practice of virtue and perfection.’ To those who would learn to meditate this is the advice of St. Theresa[of Avila]: ‘Represent to your imagination our Redeemer present to you, near you, in a sensible form. Look at Him devoutly in that state or condition wherein He really was in the mystery of His holy life and Passion on which you desire to meditate. Listen to Him attentively, for Jesus speaks lovingly to the heart of those who wish to converse with Him. He will inspire you with the words and sentiments which He desires from your heart’ (*Way of Perfection* C. 14, 161).” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 309)”

From the Word of God:

“After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, suddenly some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east²asking, ‘Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.’³When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem.⁴He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born.⁵They told him, ‘At Bethlehem in Judaea, for this is what the prophet wrote:⁶And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the leaders of Judah, for from you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.’⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared⁸and sent them on to Bethlehem with the words, ‘Go and find out all about the child, and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.’⁹Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And suddenly the star they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was.¹⁰The sight of the star filled them with delight,¹¹and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.¹²But they were given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.” (*Matthew 2:1-12*)

From the very beginning, Jesus’ life was overshadowed by the cross. Rejection, opposition, persecution were to be his lot. Mary, His Mother, shared intimately and personally in all these sufferings. This is the nature of love itself: to “compassionate” the sufferings of the Beloved. Jesus continues to suffer today in the abuse and neglect of children over the whole world. How is your heart touched or moved by this continuing “passion” of Our Lord? What can or would you like to do about it?

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Suffered for you!”

From Father Judge:

“‘Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.’ These words, my dear children are from St. Peter’s Epistle (1 Pet. 2:21) and they are really very inspiring and tremendously consoling. He tells us that Christ suffered for us. Is that not thrilling? Christ: think Who Christ is, the Son of God, the Son of Mary, the central figure of humanity-suffered; suffered for you! Is it not personal, is it not overwhelmingly direct? O how that should sink in, and how responsive we should be to that message! Now St. Peter was not content with saying that ‘he suffered,’ but he says, ‘he suffered for us.’” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 123)

From the Word of God:

“²¹This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow in his steps.²²He had done nothing wrong, and had spoken no deceit. ²³He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was suffering he made no threats but put his trust in the upright judge.²⁴He was bearing our sins in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our sins and live for uprightness; through his bruises you have been healed.²⁵You had gone astray like sheep but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.” (*1 Peter 2:21-28*)

Father Judge wishes us to become very personal when considering the mystery of the Cross. Jesus is on the cross for me, not simply for humanity “in general”. It is an excellent practice to spend time just simply sitting in front of the cross, gazing on it. As you do, remember that Jesus is there for you, personally, by name. As Peter the apostle – who personally experienced the mystery of this divine forgiveness, kindness, and mercy – “Christ suffered for you!”

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “He left you an example”

From Father Judge:

“St. Peter says more; he says, ‘He left you an example.’ Now this example of the Blessed Lord understand, was written in His Blood, and the effect of that example is this, the logic is this-that you walk in His footsteps. O, if people would take (that example) incorporate it into their lives, overnight this world would become a paradise. If anything be wrong, if there is confusion in society, if the social balance is all astray, it is because men either do not know or they forget that Jesus suffered, and He suffered for them. And because they do not know it, because they do not think of it, they care not for any lesson that He gave and they have no heart to follow in His footsteps. O, Jesus is our Teacher and His word to us if we would be His disciples.(is this): ‘Take up your cross daily and follow Me.’”(cf. Lk. 9:23).” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 123)

From the Word of God:

⁵⁷As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’⁵⁸Jesus answered, ‘Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.’⁵⁹Another to whom he said, ‘Follow me,’ replied, ‘Let me go and bury my father first.’⁶⁰But he answered, ‘Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.’⁶¹Another said, ‘I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good-bye to my people at home.’⁶²Jesus said to him, ‘Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’ (*Luke 9:57-62*)

Jesus left us an example to follow. He shows the way to a full and abundant life through total gift of self on behalf of others. This self-gift, like His, will require tremendous sacrifices, leaving behind of personal likes and dislikes, a willingness to go to and do whatever is required for the sister or brother in need. Strangely enough, it is this total self-giving that will restore balance and harmony and peace to a broken and unharmonious world. The Holy Spirit alone can give you this desire for and willingness to follow the self-sacrificing example of Jesus. Ask for this grace very specifically.

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “How can we follow Him?”

From Father Judge:

“How can we follow Him? Is it to such suffering and death (as His)? He compassionates our weakness; we never could follow Him that way. How are we to follow Him, then, if not in that bloody way? You know He is a teacher; you know His lessons and precepts. His school is the Church. How thankful we should be that we have Him for a model today when there are so many contradictory systems, when there are so many strident, clamorous teachers, when there are so many guides who say this is the way.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 123)

From the Word of God:

“I want you to be quite uncompromising in teaching all this, so that those who now believe in God may keep their minds constantly occupied in doing good works. All this is good, and useful for everybody.⁹ But avoid foolish speculations, and those genealogies, and the quibbles and disputes about the Law—they are useless and futile.¹⁰ If someone disputes what you teach, then after a first and a second warning, have no more to do with him:¹¹ you will know that anyone of that sort is warped and is self-condemned as a sinner.” (*Titus 3:8-11*)

We may never have to follow Jesus, literally, in the way of physical death and martyrdom. As Father Judge says, Jesus recognizes our “weakness” and does not – generally – call us to this ultimate sacrifice of our lives. However, our following of the Crucified Jesus occurs every day as we respond generously and uncomplainingly to the people, circumstances, and events that come our way. We also “follow Him” by our willingness to identify with and make our own the sufferings and needs of others who suffer from injustice and oppression. In this way, we are truly “following Him”!

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “We naturally like the easier way”

From Father Judge:

“We have Jesus, but His way is not pleasing to many. It speaks of detachment, and it speaks even of an angry violence to one's disorderly nature. It speaks of retrenchment. The Lord's teaching is not at all in harmony with the excesses and principles of our pleasure-loving age, and here is the difficulty. We naturally like the easier way, we like to follow the lines of least resistance. Penance is a hard word and charity at times is so exacting. O, not so much the love of God because God is so benevolent, infinitely admirable, loving and easy to love. He told us to love our neighbor, and sometimes our neighbor (seems to us) very unlovely. Fraternal charity is hard at times, yet we must love our neighbor as ourselves.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 123)

From the Word of God:

¹⁰And in fact there are many people who are insubordinate, who talk nonsense and try to make others believe it, particularly among those of the circumcision.¹¹They must be silenced: people of this kind upset whole families, by teaching things that they ought not to, and doing it for the sake of sordid gain. . . . So be severe in correcting them, and make them sound in the faith¹⁴so that they stop taking notice of ... myths and the orders of people who turn away from the truth.¹⁵To those who are pure themselves, everything is pure; but to those who have been corrupted and lack faith, nothing can be pure—the corruption is both in their minds and in their consciences.¹⁶They claim to know God but by their works they deny him; they are outrageously rebellious and quite untrustworthy for any good work..” (*Titus 1:10-11,13-16*)

The way of Jesus is the way of the Cross. There is no other, and every genuine apostle must walk their own personal “way of the Cross” in union with Jesus. Yet, throughout Christian history, there have always been so-called “teachers”, people who claim that they have an “easier” way. This alternate “way”, presented as the authentic message of Jesus, offers “success” instead of apparent failure, “fame” instead of insults, or “fortune” instead of poverty and need. Plead with the Holy Spirit to be your one and only Teacher, to instruct you in the “way” of the “naked, abandoned Jesus of Calvary”. Seek to become more like Crucified Jesus in His poverty and abandonment. This is the apostle’s true glory.

Write down your reflections briefly here: