

Lesson #16

The Christian Community

The Grace I am seeking . . .

To develop an understanding of community

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 frequently urged his followers to practice the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. The “works of mercy” were the natural consequence of an ever expanding consciousness of oneself as a member of the worldwide community of humanity. The missionary is called by God to be the “universal sister or brother” whose love extends beyond national, economic, social, cultural or religious boundaries. “Magnanimity”-- “great-heartedness”-- ought to characterize her or his life. In a very real sense, the missionary’s true community is the whole world or, even, the entire universe.

This invitation to an ever growing “world-consciousness,” however, is not some vague feeling. To be real, for Father Judge, it must have very concrete and real implications. He warned the early Cenacle members that

If there be anguish in this world, and we are indifferent to it, we are not right with God. If our neighbor be in need, this cannot be an impersonal matter to us . . . Our Lord is dreadfully personal in this matter of our exercising ourselves in corporal and spiritual works of mercy, saying that what we do to the least of His little ones, we do unto Him. (MF 14113-14)

Although certainly not limited to just these, according to Catholic tradition the “corporal and spiritual works of mercy” include the following:

Spiritual Works of Mercy	Corporal Works of Mercy
Admonish the sinner	Feed the hungry
Instruct the ignorant	Give drink to the thirsty
Counsel the doubtful	Clothed the naked
Comfort the sorrowful	Visit the imprisoned
Bear wrongs patiently	Shelter the homeless
Forgive all injuries	Visit the sick
Pray for the living and the dead	Bury the dead

Look at your life and ask yourself two simple questions: how wide does my love and concern extend? How practically am I expressing my love in responding to the real needs of the sisters and brothers who are poorest and most abandoned? The above list provides a good starting point for this type of self-examination.

Introduction

“Communio” is a Latin word from which we get our English word “communion.” When Catholics hear this word, they usually think of receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord. Although this is one of the meanings, it is not the only one. “Communio” also contains the roots of words like “community,” “communication.” It basically means “one with.”

“Communio” is a complex and key word in Christian tradition.. It signifies, beyond the Eucharist, “the unifying bond between the Lord and His disciples, between Jesus Christ and the baptized. It is a living and life-giving communion through which Christians no longer belong to themselves but are the Lord’s very own.” From this “communion” with Jesus there “immediately flows the communion which they experience with one another: all are branches of a single vine, namely Jesus” (John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* #1).

The core of the Mystery, revealed in Jesus, is that all men and women together with the whole created universe have poured forth from the communio, the unity in the heart of God. Their ultimate goal and final peace is to return in harmony and joy to the unity of that same divine heart (see *Ephesians 1/7-10*). Humanity

Tcame forth from the Community of the Trinity,

Tis made to live in community, and

Tis destined to be restored to the fullness of Community with God and all creation in the heavenly banquet at the end of time.

This “communion” of all humanity and all creation is what Jesus came to announce and accomplish by His life, suffering, and death. This is the “Kingdom” or the “Reign of God.” This truly is a “mystery” not in the sense that it cannot be understood or spoken about or its multifaceted reality explored. Rather it is a mystery in the sense that it is a truth so profound, so full that it continually must be “unfolded,” revealed, made known . . . and even with all that reflection and prayer and study for all the ages, the fullness of what this mystery of “communion” contains can never be exhausted!

The Church is the Servant of this awesome Mystery of Communion and Community. The Church is a “sacrament -- a sign and instrument . . . of communion with God and of unity among all men and women” (*Lumen Gentium* #1). The Spirit empowers the missionaries of the Church to be instruments of this communion. Every time people at odds are reconciled, the communion grows. Every time those who feel marginalized or unaccepted in society feel welcome at the table, the communion expands. Every time women and men of every different race, language, and way of life come together in community, God’s Reign becomes ever more fully a reality. The Cenacle missionary is directly a servant of this Mystery, a servant of the God Who is Community and Family!

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 initial budding forth of that Kingdom”**

[From Vatican II, Lumen Gentium: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church¹]

5. The mystery of the holy Church is manifest in its very foundation. The Lord Jesus set it on its course by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Kingdom of God, which, for centuries, had been promised in the Scriptures: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand"(18). In the word, in the works, and in the presence of Christ, this kingdom was clearly open to the view of men. The Word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field;(19) those who hear the Word with faith and become part of the little flock of Christ,(20) have received the Kingdom itself. Then, by its own power the seed sprouts and grows until harvest time.(21) The Miracles of Jesus also confirm that the Kingdom has already arrived on earth: "If I cast out devils by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you".(22) Before all things, however, the Kingdom is clearly visible in the very Person of Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, who came "to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many:"(23)

When Jesus, who had suffered the death of the cross for mankind, had risen, He appeared as the one constituted as Lord, Christ and eternal Priest,(24) and He poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father.(25) From this source the Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom and, with all its strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with its King.

6. In the old Testament the revelation of the Kingdom is often conveyed by means of metaphors. In the same way the inner nature of the Church is now made known to us in different images taken either from tending sheep or cultivating the land, from building or even from family life and betrothals, the images receive preparatory shaping in the books of the Prophets.

The Church is a sheepfold whose one and indispensable door is Christ.(26) It is a flock of which God Himself foretold He would be the shepherd,(27) and whose sheep, although ruled by human shepherds; are nevertheless continuously led and nourished by Christ Himself, the Good Shepherd and the Prince of the shepherds,(28) who gave His life for the sheep.(29)

The Church is a piece of land to be cultivated, the village of God.(30) On that land the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the Prophets and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been brought about and will be brought about.(31) That land, like a choice vineyard, has been planted by the heavenly Husbandman.(32) The true vine is Christ who gives life and the power to bear abundant fruit to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ without whom we can do nothing.(33)

Often the Church has also been called the building of God.(34) The Lord Himself compared Himself to the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made into the cornerstone.(35) On this foundation the Church is

¹The numbers in parenthesis in this text refer to the footnotes in the original document. These footnotes are not given here but the references can be found by going to the full text of *Lumen Gentium*.

built by the apostles,(36) and from it the Church receives durability and consolidation. This edifice has many names to describe it: the house of God (37) in which dwells His family; the household of God in the Spirit;(38) the dwelling place of God among men;(39) and, especially, the holy temple. This Temple, symbolized in places of worship built out of stone, is praised by the Holy Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. As living stones we here on earth are built into it.(40) John contemplates this holy city coming down from heaven at the renewal of the world as a bride made ready and adorned for her husband.(41)

The Church, further, "that Jerusalem which is above" is also called "our mother".(42) It is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb,(43) whom Christ "loved and for whom He delivered Himself up that He might sanctify her",(44) whom He unites to Himself by an unbreakable covenant, and whom He unceasingly "nourishes and cherishes",(45) and whom, once purified, He willed to be cleansed and joined to Himself, subject to Him in love and fidelity,(46) and whom, finally, He filled with heavenly gifts for all eternity, in order that we may know the love of God and of Christ for us, a love which surpasses all knowledge.(47) The Church, while on earth it journeys in a foreign land away from the Lord,(48) is like an exile. It seeks and experiences those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right-hand of God, where the life of the Church is hidden with Christ in God until it appears in glory with its Spouse.(49)

Lumen Gentium clearly states that the Church is not the Kingdom of God but is, in fact, “the initial budding forth of that Kingdom.” The Church, together with and in the name of all creation, “strains toward the completed Kingdom.” The Church is also “our mother,” “the Jerusalem from above,” the holy “Temple of God”! Every time we draw closer to the heart of God who is Love, we experience and promote the coming of the Kingdom of God. Every time, under the influence and by the power of grace, we reach out in Love to a sister or brother in need, we understand more clearly what is the Kingdom of God. Every time we work to create community among people, to be “peacemakers”, to work for justice for those on the margins of society, the Kingdom is present ever more fully. Are you a person who encourages community, who lives in community with others? Or do you tend to be an individualist who can “go it alone”without anyone’s assistance? Do you live in community? Who makes up the community or communities to which you belong? Are you able to see and experience there the Reign or Kingdom of God?

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK I

Monday: “Be compassionate”

From Father Judge:

“Our Blessed Lord came not only to redeem us but to teach us, and if there be one lesson (of His) that should be ever recurringly insisted upon it is to be compassionate toward our neighbor. There is a warning in this lesson for those who lack Compassion: "Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee? (Mt. 18:33)" (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 76)

From the Word of God:

²³And so the kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants.²⁴When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand The servant threw himself down at his master's feet, with the words, "Be patient with me and I will pay the whole sum."²⁷And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt.²⁸Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow-servant who owed him one hundred denarii...²⁹His fellow-servant fell at his feet and appealed to him, saying, "Be patient with me and I will pay you."³⁰But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt....³²Then the master sent for the man and said to him, "You wicked servant, I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me."³³Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow-servant just as I had pity on you?"³⁴And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.³⁵And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart."³⁵ (*Matthew 18:23-35*)

Compassion is the heart of the message of Jesus. It is also the basis of all community. We all are human. We all sin. We all are “debtors” before God. The mystery of the Kingdom is that God has infinite compassion on us, no matter what the offense. The only requirement or invitation is that we, on our part, have compassion and mercy on others who have offended us in some fashion. How is your compassion towards others? Try to think of specific people and situations that you find challenging.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “A right intention”

From Father Judge:

“It is very necessary not only for us to do good works but to do them with a right intention. No matter how good the work may be in itself, no matter what solace it may bring my neighbor, unless our intention be supernatural, greater good is not done, greater honor and glory are not given to God. In these good works we would have no supernatural merit.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p.76)

From the Word of God:

¹⁹We have then, brothers, complete confidence through the blood of Jesus in entering the sanctuary,²⁰by a new way which he has opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, that is to say, his flesh.²¹And we have the high priest over all the sanctuary of God. ²²So as we go in, let us be sincere in heart and filled with faith, our hearts sprinkled and free from any trace of bad conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.²³Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is trustworthy.²⁴Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works.²⁵Do not absent yourself from your own assemblies, as some do, but encourage each other; the more so as you see the Day drawing near.” (*Hebrews 10:19-25*)

Ultimately, it is the strength of our relationship to Jesus in faith and hope and love that will assure our ability to enter into and form genuine community. The Spirit will inspire within us an authentic concern for others in the community. The Spirit will stir our hearts to be able to respond to the various needs and demands of community life with action motivated by love. Key to the process of building community is being there. As the Scriptures remind us, “do not absent yourself from your own assemblies.” How do you receive your strength for living and encouraging genuine community? Are you truly present to the community or do you find yourself isolating from the community as much as possible?

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Our Lord’s school is the Church”

From Father Judge:

“Our Lord's school is the Church. His lessons we find in His precepts, His doctrine, His Gospel. Every syllable is gospel, His every movement, a revelation. In all that He said and did no lesson is so insistent as the lesson He gave us on charity towards the Needy.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 76)

From the Word of God:

"Next, brothers, we will tell you of the grace of God which has been granted to the churches of Macedonia,²and how, throughout continual ordeals of hardship, their unfailing joy and their intense poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.³I can testify that it was of their own accord that they made their gift, which was not merely as far as their resources would allow, but well beyond their resources;⁴and they had kept imploring us most insistently for the privilege of a share in the fellowship of service to God’s holy people—⁵it was not something that we expected of them, but it began by their offering themselves to the Lord and to us at the prompting of the will of God." (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

Paul is writing to the Church in Corinth, a Church community with which he was having some severe problems. He points out to them the example of spontaneous generosity and goodness of their sisters and brothers in the Church of Macedonia. This is meant to be, for them, a spur, a help, an increased motivation and challenge. This is one of the special gifts of living in community, and especially in the community of the Church. No matter what the challenge we face, if we just “look around,” we will find sisters and brothers who can assist us by their example, support, advice and prayers. The Church community – like the Cenacle community – is made up of very flawed people. The Gospel message teaches us how to learn to love and live correctly in community. It is a school of love and forgiveness, a school of mutual support and challenge rather than a “gathering of the perfect”! Do you seek “perfection” in the members of the communities to which you belong? Do you find yourself constantly disappointed and discouraged? What can you learn from the Church about how to continue successfully in building and living in community?

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “What we have heard and seen”

From Father Judge:

"In the (light) of our Blessed Lord's teaching, if there be anguish in this world and we are indifferent to it, we are not right with God. If our neighbor be in need, this cannot be an impersonal matter to us. Our Lord has heaped curse upon curse against those who have hardened their hearts to a cry of distress as He has heaped blessing upon blessing upon those who are swift to relieve distress. When the disciples of St. John insisted that He give a sign that He was the promised Christ, He did not work before them some (earth-shaking) miracle, but made the reply, "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Mt. 11:4-5)" (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 76)

From the Word of God:

²Now John had heard in prison what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him,³“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?”⁴Jesus answered, “Go back and tell John what you hear and see;⁵the blind see again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.” (*Matthew 11:2-5*)

Jesus says that the true sign of a Christian community is the healing and the joy that occur there. When people feel loved, accepted, welcome, then health and happiness and joy can come. The authentic mark of Christian community is an attentiveness among the members to the “cry of distress”, first – perhaps – of those in the community and, then, of those beyond the community’s boundaries. Communities of faith always are both attentive to the health and happiness of their own members and aware of and seeking to respond to the pains and sorrows of others outside their community. How about the communities to which you belong? Have you become either too self-enclosed and directed or so outer-directed that the community members themselves feel neglected and abandoned? Ask the Holy Spirit for the right balance.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “Dreadfully personal”

From Father Judge:

“Our Lord is dreadfully personal in this matter of our exercising ourselves in corporal and spiritual works of mercy, saying that what we do to the least of His little ones, we do unto Him. “For I was hungry, and you save me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger and you took me in: Naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me.” (Mt. 25:35-36).” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 76)

From the Word of God:

³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right hand, “Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.”³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome,³⁶lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.”³⁷Then the upright will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?³⁸When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you?³⁹When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?”⁴⁰And the King will answer, “In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”” (*Matthew 25:34-40*)

St. Vincent de Paul insisted with his missionaries that their service to the poor be direct and personal. Father Judge continued in this tradition. It was not enough to give conferences, to teach others, to write reports and administer properties that served others. It was important to know the sisters and brothers by name, to minister directly to their needs. This created not simply an effective social service agency but, instead, a community where Jesus’ Presence is known and honored in the person of the poor.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK II

Weekend Reflection: **“Called together from all nations”**

[From Vatican II, Lumen Gentium: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church²]

“7. In the human nature united to Himself the Son of God, by overcoming death through His own death and resurrection, redeemed man and re-molded him into a new creation.(50) By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body.

In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified. Through Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body"(51). In this sacred rite a oneness with Christ's death and resurrection is both symbolized and brought about: "For we were buried with Him by means of Baptism into death"; and if "we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be so in the likeness of His resurrection also"(52) Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread".(53) In this way all of us are made members of His Body,(54) "but severally members one of another".(55)

As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the faithful in Christ.(56) Also, in the building up of Christ's Body various members and functions have their part to play. There is only one Spirit who, according to His own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives His different gifts for the welfare of the Church.(57) What has a special place among these gifts is the grace of the apostles to whose authority the Spirit Himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms.(58) Giving the body unity through Himself and through His power and inner joining of the members, this same Spirit produces and urges love among the believers. From all this it follows that if one member endures anything, all the members co-endure it, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice.(59)

The Head of this Body is Christ. He is the image of the invisible God and in Him all things came into being. He is before all creatures and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the Body which is the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the first place.(60) By the greatness of His power He rules the things in heaven and the things on earth, and with His all-surpassing perfection and way of acting He fills the whole body with the riches of His glory

All the members ought to be molded in the likeness of Him, until Christ be formed in them.(62) For this reason we, who have been made to conform with Him, who have died with Him and risen with Him, are taken up into the mysteries of His life, until we will reign together with Him.(63) On earth, still as pilgrims in a strange land, tracing in trial and in oppression the paths He trod, we are made one with His sufferings like the body is one with the Head, suffering with Him, that with Him we may be glorified.(64)

From Him "the whole body, supplied and built up by joints and ligaments, attains a growth that is of God".(65) He continually distributes in His body, that is, in the Church, gifts of ministries in which, by His own power, we serve each other unto salvation so that, carrying out the truth in love, we might through all things grow unto Him who is our Head.(66)

²The numbers in parenthesis in this text refer to the footnotes in the original document. These footnotes are not given here but the references can be found by going to the full text of *Lumen Gentium*.

In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in Him,(67) He has shared with us His Spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the Head and in the members, gives life to, unifies and moves through the whole body. This He does in such a way that His work could be compared by the holy Fathers with the function which the principle of life, that is, the soul, fulfills in the human body.

Christ loves the Church as His bride, having become the model of a man loving his wife as his body;(68) the Church, indeed, is subject to its Head.(69) "Because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily",(70) He fills the Church, which is His body and His fullness, with His divine gifts (71) so that it may expand and reach all the fullness of God.(72)

Read over this text carefully several times. God's most compelling desire is that the Church be the instrument by which all the various nations of the world will be gathered into one. God has gifted the Church with all the assistance necessary to help to bring about this "dream of God" for all creation. The Church is not simply, however, a "servant" of God's Kingdom. Rather, the Church is the Beloved of Christ Jesus, His spouse. The Church's ultimate destiny is to "expand and reach all the fullness of God"! Reflect as deeply as possible on these realities. Every authentic community is a profoundly personal reality since it proceeds from and is destined to return to God Who is a Community of Persons!

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK II

Monday: “We must have compassion”

From Father Judge:

“You can readily see then, the moral necessity of exercising ourselves in these works, the corporal and spiritual. And if this necessity be not seen, it is because people are ignorant of the teaching of Jesus Christ or because they condemn it. It is certain, first of all, that we must have compassion on our brother and our sister in their needs. Secondly, in as far as we can, charity declares we must bring them help. Thirdly, this should be done to give God greater honor and glory in order to help our neighbor more efficaciously. For our own eternal reward, we must be charitable for God's sake.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 76)

From the Word of God:

“²⁹But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’³⁰In answer Jesus said, ‘A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead.’³¹Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.³²In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side.³³But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him.³⁴He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him.³⁵Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have.’³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits’ hands?’³⁷He replied, ‘The one who showed pity towards him.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go, and do the same yourself.’” (*Luke 10:29-37*)

Today's Gospel reading gives us a sterling example of what Father Judge is talking about. Jesus' clear teaching is that, first, we must have compassion. Our hearts must be open to and desirous of entering into the pain and sorrow and loss of our sisters and brothers no matter who they are or where they live. Second, it is not enough to simply have a deeply felt reaction when confronted with this suffering. We must do something – whatever we can – to respond to or alleviate this suffering. Third, as is clear from the context of the question in the Gospel, this action on behalf of the sister or brother in need is in response to Jesus' clear commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.” The love of God and the love of neighbor are necessarily and intimately intertwined.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “Be Christlike”

From Father Judge:

“If you would be Christlike, then be charitable, for you cannot be Christlike unless you have compassion for others. All this begins in a compassionate heart. This is a grace-to have it you must be favored by the Father of Light.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 76)

From the Word of God:

“You have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator;¹¹ and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised and uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.¹² As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience.¹³ Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same.¹⁴ Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond.¹⁵ And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful.¹⁶ Let the Word of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you.” (*Colossians 3:10-16*)

A “compassionate heart” is a heart ever more fully transformed into the heart of Christ. One of the clear marks of such a Christ-like heart is the nature of its ever more inclusive love. As the human person is “renewed in the image” of her or his Creator, distinctions between persons begin to break down. There is no more “them and us” but rather all peoples become “we”! The result of such a transformed life is a person who radiates peace and gratitude, a transparent vessel of the “Father of Light.” Be grateful for the transformation that has already occurred in you. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you, day by day, the “universal sister or brother” who is the true missionary.

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Grouping together all people”

From Father Judge:

“We cannot speak of love of God without speaking of the love of our neighbor-charity, the bond of perfection. What holds us to God? It is love. What a wonderful thing is the Catholic Church-grouping together all people who love under every part of God's heaven, every corner of the earth-different nationalities, people with contradictory interests all supermanaged and harmonized in the love of God. ” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 300)

From the Word of God:

“³⁴Then Peter addressed them, ‘I now really understand’, he said, ‘that God has no favourites,³⁵ but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.³⁶ God sent his word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that the good news of peace was brought by Jesus Christ—he is the Lord of all....⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners.⁴⁵ Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on gentiles too,⁴⁶ since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said,⁴⁷ ‘Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’⁴⁸ He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.” (*Acts 10:34-35,44-48*)

Jesus came to proclaim a Kingdom of Peace for all men and women. All have a place as honored daughters and sons at God’s Table! This is the life-giving vocation of the Church: to be that home where all women and men are welcome as they open their minds and hearts to the healing, saving message of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is meant as a gift from the heart of the Father and the Son to all who seek God with sincere hearts. Are our church communities places of welcome? Do people who are “different” than us – culturally, racially, age-wise – find a ready and welcoming home among us? What can I do, as a missionary, to reach out to people who presently do not feel welcome in the community of God’s People?

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “The Gospel of Love”

From Father Judge:

“The Gospel to us is the Gospel of Love. Love has no limits. The Gospel of Love tells us that we must love our enemies; we must do good to those who torment us. We must bless those who revile us. We must be patient. We must be forgiving. We must treat that neighbor of ours as we expect God to treat us. That is the rule-to do unto another as we want God to do to us. He tells us that as we treat another, as we deal with another, so He will deal with us. If we want His mercy, we must be merciful to our neighbor. If we want His pity, we must pity our neighbor. If we want His forgiveness, we must forgive our brother. He will not forgive our sins if we do not forgive the sins of others.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 300)

From the Word of God:

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged;²because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the standard you use will be the standard used for you.³Why do you observe the splinter in your brother’s eye and never notice the great log in your own?⁴And 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?⁵Hypocrite! 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....¹²So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets.” (*Matthew 7:1-5,12*)

Living the Gospel is a demanding task. There is no doubt about it. Daily it requires a firm intention to live for God and in God. No one just “drifts”into holiness! No one becomes an apostle or missionary by just wishing it. To spend one’s life creating community and peace among peoples requires a constant death to self, a willingness to put others and their interests and desires before one’s own. Community demands always being ready to give the sister or brother another chance. Am I overly demanding on those whom God brings into my life? Would I want to be judged by God according to the criteria or the demands I make – at least interiorly – on others? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a “gentle touch”when dealing with others. Community can blossom under these circumstances.

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “This new paganism”

From Father Judge:

“In proportion as we have that human, kind, brotherly spirit; in proportion as we have a loving, forgiving, forgetting spirit-in that proportion will our judgment be later on. If we want a severe judgment, then let us be censorious of our brother. If we want God to treat us sternly on that terrible day, let us cherish the things done against us; let us seek reprisal; let us wish to take our revenge from God and say: “Leave this thing to me, O God.” Then prepare your soul for a terrible judgment. “Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors,”(Mt. 6:12) Men must know us by this spirit. If the pagans could detect the Christian spirit in our brothers and sisters of the faith centuries ago, this new paganism must detect this in us.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 300)

From the Word of God:

“²¹Then Peter went up to him and said, ‘Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?’²²Jesus answered, ‘Not seven, I tell you, but seventy–seven times.’” (*Matthew 18:21-22*)

Speaking probably sometime in the 1920s, Father Judge describes what he calls the “new paganism.” How much more might one today describe the prevailing culture and norms as “pagan” in the values they present! The only real response to this pagan world is the same response that worked two thousand years ago: a community of faith and love where people know how to forgive one another and have compassion on one another. Such a community conquers all the negativity and the darkness of the “new paganism..” Pray that you may always be an instrument of ready forgiveness, healing, and compassion in the communities where God has placed you. This is the most vital missionary task a person can do.

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK III

Weekend Reflection:

The People of God

[From Vatican II, Lumen Gentium: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church³]

9. At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right.(85) God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness. He therefore chose the race of Israel as a people unto Himself. With it He set up a covenant. Step by step He taught and prepared this people, making known in its history both Himself and the decree of His will and making it holy unto Himself. All these things, however, were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant, which was to be ratified in Christ, and of that fuller revelation which was to be given through the Word of God Himself made flesh. "Behold the days shall come saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . For all of them shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, saith the Lord.(86) Christ instituted this new covenant, the new testament, that is to say, in His Blood,(87) calling together a people made up of Jew and gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God. For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God,(88) not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit,(89) are finally established as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God".(90)

That messianic people has Christ for its head, "Who was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification", (91) and now, having won a name which is above all names, reigns in glory in heaven. The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in His temple. Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us.(92) Its end is the kingdom of God, which has been begun by God Himself on earth, and which is to be further extended until it is brought to perfection by Him at the end of time, when Christ, our life,(93) shall appear, and "creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God".(94) So it is that that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may look like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. Established by Christ as a communion of life, charity and truth, it is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth.(95)

Israel according to the flesh, which wandered as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God.(96) So likewise the new Israel which while living in this present age goes in search of a future and abiding city (97) is called the Church of Christ.(98) For He has bought it for Himself with His blood,(99) has filled it with His Spirit and provided it with those means which befit it as a visible and social union. God gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church that for each and all it may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity. (1*) While it transcends all limits of time and confines of race, the Church is destined to extend to all regions of the earth and so enters into the history of mankind. Moving forward through trial and tribulation, the Church is strengthened by the power of God's grace, which was promised to her by the Lord, so that in the weakness of the flesh she may not waver from perfect fidelity, but remain a bride worthy of her Lord, and moved by the Holy Spirit may never cease to renew herself, until through the Cross she arrives at the light which knows no setting.

³The numbers in parenthesis in this text refer to the footnotes in the original document. These footnotes are not given here but the references can be found by going to the full text of *Lumen Gentium*.

The Second Vatican Council (1961-1965) used a n “image”for the Church that had not been common up to that time: the “People of God”. It was a pilgrim image that reflected the Church’s beginnings among the Jewish people as they roamed in the desert, led and protected and guided by God. The People of God image also helped to emphasize that the Church was not itself the “Kingdom”but, rather, was a servant of that Kingdom. Although, at times, the Church might be just a “small flock”as it goes on its pilgrim way, nonetheless it is “a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.” This pilgrim people is, before all else, a “communion of life, charity, and truth . . . an instrument for the redemption of all.” Do you see yourself and the communities of faith in which you share as “pilgrim people” on a journey? Or do you find yourself trying to “build a kingdom”-- or better a “fiefdom”! – for yourself right here? The distinction is a vital one if one hopes to effectively be a genuine “servant of the Reign of God”!

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK III

Monday: “Cherish one another in Christ”

From Father Judge:

“Love one another. How these [members of the Missionary Cenacle Family] love one another! How do they love one another? First of all, we are going to be loyal to one another. We must have a family spirit. We must support one another; we must be patient with one another. We must cherish one another in Christ. You are my children and I know it will please Jesus if I cherish you, if I love you, if I hold you this way for His Name's sake. He will take that as done to Himself. I cannot come to Him with my fervent acts of love if I have not a love of my brother and sister in my heart. If I show Him I have no love of my brother and sister in my heart, if I will not forgive them, if I will not pity them in their miseries, if I do not reach out a saving hand, if I do not pray for them and even suffer for them, I cannot come to Jesus with my fervent acts of love.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 300)

From the Word of God:

⁹Whoever claims to be in light but hates his brother is still in darkness.¹⁰ Anyone who loves his brother remains in light and there is in him nothing to make him fall away.¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in darkness and is walking about in darkness not knowing where he is going, because darkness has blinded him.” (*1 John 2:9-11*)

Love of God and love of neighbor are intimately and forever connected. Basically, the teaching of the Scriptures could not be clearer. If you do not love your sister or brother, you cannot claim to love God. Hatred or indifference toward the sister or brother is hatred or indifference toward God. While the opposite is also true. Father Judge once wrote that “a safe and rather accurate measure of our love for God is our love for our neighbor.” How much do you love your neighbor, near or far? How much do you “cherish” those whom God has given to you as sisters and brothers in the Missionary Cenacle Family?

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “What an astonishing fact!”

From Father Judge:

“What an astonishing fact is the Catholic Church. She is the marvel of the ages. Her life, her mission, her extraordinary vitality are incomprehensible to human reason. She is of the ages. but in vivacity and (youthfulness) she is of yesterday. Human reasoning cannot understand her longevity and her perennial youth. Mere human reason is disturbed about the Catholic Church and says of her: "It is priest-craft" or "It is a superb organization." We of the Faith know that this is not so.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 77)

From the Word of God:

“¹Bless Yahweh, my soul, from the depths of my being, his holy name;² bless Yahweh, my soul, never forget all his acts of kindness.³ He forgives all your offences, cures all your diseases,⁴ he redeems your life from the abyss, crowns you with faithful love and tenderness;⁵ he contents you with good things all your life, renews your youth like an eagle’s.” (*Psalms 103:1-5*)

The Church, throughout the ages, is always in a process of being renewed, made new and fresh. No matter what the difficulty confronting her, there is source of never failing renewal in the depths of the Church’s being. That power of renewal is the Holy Spirit. As we look at the challenges the Church faces in our day and time, always be aware that – hidden deep within – is a never failing spring of new life welling up. This spring of life-giving water is the Holy Spirit who “renews your youth like an eagle’s!” Let us give thanks and praise!

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “Her mission and her life”

From Father Judge:

“We know the secrets of the beginnings of the Church, and her mission and her life. There have been other bodies and movements and states as admirably organized, and they have disappeared. disintegration and decay are their accompaniments. We know the secret of the divine life of the Church to be that living promise of her Divine Founder that He will be with her all days even to the consummation of the world.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 77)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁶Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them.¹⁷When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated.¹⁸Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.’” (*Matthew 28:16-20*)

This particular Gospel passage is the one most quoted by Father Judge in all his writings and conferences. It combines both the mission and the promise. The mission: take the Gospel, the Good News to all the ends of the earth. Teach others the way of Jesus. Lead them to the divine Life! The promise: I will be with you always, “yes, to the end of time!” There is nothing to fear as you go about the fulfillment of this mission. He is with you! How are you living out this missionary mandate? As you face the challenges involved in being a missionary, do you sometimes feel overwhelmed and afraid? Go back always to the last line of this Gospel so often repeated by Father Judge himself: “Look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time!”

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “The Church of God”

From Father Judge:

“What is the Church of God?. We have nothing around us in the world with which to compare it. It is distinct; it is unique. The Church of God. is all of the Holy Spirit. It is the Kingdom of God. It is His shrine. It is His city. His sanctuary. The Church is the union of God's people. It is the union of all those who love Him, believe in Him. who are united in faith and love with His representative on earth. the Pope.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 77)

From the Word of God:

“Then the angel showed me the river of life, rising from the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing crystal-clear.²Down the middle of the city street, on either bank of the river were the trees of life, which bear twelve crops of fruit in a year, one in each month, and the leaves of which are the cure for the nations. ³The curse of destruction will be abolished. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city; his servants will worship him,⁴they will see him face to face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.⁵And night will be abolished; they will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will be shining on them. They will reign for ever and ever.” (*Revelation 22:1-5*)

The Church’s theology has developed since the time of Father Judge. For example, the Church would not say today that she is “the Kingdom of God”but rather, as we have seen above, the servant of the Kingdom of God. Likewise, the Church would understand itself to be, as Father Judge writes, “the union of God’s people.” However, this would include all the baptized, those directly in union with the Pope and those who are not currently in union with the Pope. This full union of all God’s People in one flock with one shepherd is God’s ultimate desire for the Church. Nonetheless, we are sadly not there yet. Still the life-giving waters of the holy City flow richly among all the People of God, constantly bringing forth new fruits of holiness and joy and peace for all humanity. We can rejoice immensely in the flowing of those life-giving waters while, at the same time, earnestly praying and working that all of God’s People might be fully “united in faith and love”in the full communion of one Church.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “The Communion of Saints”

From Father Judge:

“The Church is the union of all these, one with another and united to Jesus Christ. In the state of grace, they are called Saints. There is the Communion of Saints. If they are constituted in glory, if they have kept the faith and fought the good fight and God has called them to Himself they will forever claim the title, "Saint;" The Church has for its heart, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with its power to thrill and to attract. The Church calls to all for union in that Sacred Heart. The communion of saints is that assembly of all those who wish to be united one to another in the Sacred Heart. The Church is the meeting place of these souls which God has created. Those immortal souls, no matter of what class, no matter of what tribe, no matter what generation, no matter of what caste or color, each and everyone is called to be a saint in Christ's Church. And we magnify God in his saints.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 77)

From the Word of God:

“After this I heard what seemed to be the great sound of a huge crowd in heaven, singing, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power to our God!...’⁴ Then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures threw themselves down and worshipped God seated on his throne, and they cried, ‘Amen, Alleluia.’⁵ Then a voice came from the throne; it said, ‘Praise our God, you servants of his and those who fear him, small and great alike.’⁶ And I heard what seemed to be the voices of a huge crowd, like the sound of the ocean or the great roar of thunder, answering, ‘Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun;’⁷ let us be glad and joyful and give glory to God, because this is the time for the marriage of the Lamb.⁸ His bride is ready, and she has been able to dress herself in dazzling white linen, because her linen is made of the good deeds of the saints.’⁹ The angel said, ‘Write this, “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”’ (*Revelation 19:1,4-9*)

One of the immensely consoling realities of our faith is the mystery of the Communion of the Saints. This truth basically affirms that all genuine community will endure forever! All those who are united in love and faith to the heart of God and with whom we have shared community while here on earth continue to be one with us beyond the veil of death. Life is truly eternal and more powerful than the forces of darkness and death. Community – in Christ Jesus – conquers the boundaries of even space and time. Think of those who have preceded you in this marvelous journey of faith. They are still present to you and with you but now in the full light of the Kingdom. Someday your destiny, if you remain faithful, will be to share with them that same Glory and Light. Give thanks and pray to them. They continue to be your sisters and brothers, united with you in the “communion of saints”!

✎ Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK IV

Weekend Reflection: **“The Priestly Community”**

[From Vatican II, Lumen Gentium: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church]

10. Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men,(100) made the new people "a kingdom and priests to God the Father".(101) The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.(102) Therefore all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God,(103) should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.(104) Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.(105)

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.(2*) The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist.(3*) They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.

11. It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation. Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church. They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ. Taking part in the eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service, not indeed, all in the same way but each in that way which is proper to himself. Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament.

Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from the mercy of God for the offence committed against Him and are at the same time reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins, and which by charity, example, and prayer seeks their conversion. By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of her priests the whole Church commends the sick to the suffering and glorified Lord, asking that He may lighten their suffering and save them;(106) she exhorts them, moreover, to contribute to the welfare of the whole people of God by associating themselves freely with the passion and death of Christ.(107) Those of the faithful who are consecrated by Holy Orders are appointed to feed the Church in Christ's name with the word and the grace of God. Finally, Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, whereby they signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church,(108) help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children. By reason of their state and rank in life they have their own special gift among the people of God.(109) From the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a

sacred state.

Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.

“All the faithful ... are called by the Lord ... to that perfect holiness!” This pilgrim People of God is a community of holiness! This holiness is meant not just for a particular class or group of people within the community but is meant for everyone according to the state of life to which God has called them: married, single, widowed, young, old, infirm, healthy, women, men, sisters, brothers, priests. Each has a different role to play within the Body, but the distinction of role does not diminish or alter the unique and universal call to holiness. All the means necessary are there – in this “priestly community” – to live a life of “perfect holiness.” The seven sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony, Anointing of the Sick – are specially privileged moments of encounter with and growth in this holiness that proceeds from the heart of God. Do you share as often as possible in the sacramental life of the Church, especially in Eucharist and Penance? These are two sacraments that keep us nourished and focused on this spiritual journey we call life. They also build up the community of God’s People. Commit yourself once again to a frequent sharing in this sacramental life of holiness as a vital member of this “Priestly Community” of the Church.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

WEEK IV

Monday: “The secret of the divine life”

From Father Judge:

“The world knows what the Church was and is and gives invincible proof of going on in her vigor and abundant life. We know the secrets of the beginnings of the Church and her mission. Other bodies, movements and states have been admirably organized. Yet, eventually decay and disintegration have accompanied them and they have disappeared. We of the family of the Church know the secret of the divine life of the Church to be that living promise of her divine founder that He will be with her all days even to the consummation of the world. Our divine Lord came not to institute a way of social prestige, or to scintillate in the ways of the world as a great teacher or author of theory or system.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 77)”

From the Word of God:

¹⁰In the spirit, he carried me to the top of a very high mountain, and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God.¹¹It had all the glory of God and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond²²I could not see any temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple,²³and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God, and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.²⁴The nations will come to its light and the kings of the earth will bring it their treasures.²⁵Its gates will never be closed by day—and there will be no night there—²⁶and the nations will come, bringing their treasure and their wealth..” (*Revelation 21:10-11,22-26*)

In the Church, through the gift of the sacraments, we already live in the “heavenly Jerusalem”. Every time a sacrament is celebrated, the doors of this heavenly realm open up to the eyes of the one who has faith and the glory of God radiant in the heavenly Temple is revealed. Faith is the key. For those who desire it, the fullness of God’s life and holiness and light is theirs. This is the source of all genuine community, the source of the Church’s authentic life. How great is your faith? Do you experience in the Church and through the sacraments this “opening up”into the heavenly realm? This is the “secret of the divine life”!

Write down your reflections briefly here:

Tuesday: “One aim”

From Father Judge:

“As this Cenacle spirit manifests itself there is a simplicity about it, and persons with the Cenacle spirit are simple persons. They do not have recourse to deceptive methods; they go straight, they are straightforward; their simplicity begins with purity of intention. They have one aim, they are working for the love of God” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 187)

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.² So 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.³ But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing;⁴ your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.” (*Matthew 6:1-4*)

Helping to form community is a challenging task. One of the most devastating challenges that needs to be overcome in this missionary work is lack of trust regarding one’s real motives. It is difficult for many people to imagine that one is acting truly and wholly out of love for God and a disinterested love for the sisters and brothers. Always the question is “what’s in this for him/her?” The only way to meet this challenge is to be clear and consistent in one’s own motivation. Why am I doing this? Is it truly for the love of God? Or am I secretly – or maybe not so secretly – seeking my own interests and “glory”? Ask the Holy Spirit once again for this spirit of simplicity.

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Wednesday: “For the love of God”

From Father Judge:

“There are three motives for which good might be done, there are three loves. First of all, the love of self. Now, there are many people who do good for the love of self. The heart is naturally good. When God created man He created him good. People try to find satisfaction in doing good because their consciences direct them to it, they want to do good deeds. Many people do good just for the pleasure it gives them. They know they are doing good. They do not, understand, do it for the love of God, but it is good and they are satisfied with themselves.

That kind of motive won't appeal to us. There is another class who wish to do good for the love of their neighbor, the brotherhood of man; they are altruistic. People can do that and not act from the love of God. The perfect thing is to do it for the love of God: nothing should be done unless it is done first of all for the love of God. We should do good to our neighbor first of all for God's sake, because he is a creature of God.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 187)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁸So they called them in and gave them a warning on no account to make statements or to teach in the name of Jesus.¹⁹But Peter and John retorted, ‘You must judge whether in God’s eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God.’²⁰We cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.’²¹The court repeated the threats and then released them; they could not think of any way to punish them, since all the people were giving glory to God for what had happened.²²The man who had been miraculously cured was over forty years old.” (*Acts 4:18-22*)

As we live out our missionary vocation, it is important to constantly examine and question our motivation. There are so many contrary voices and “words” that can come into our minds and hearts. Doing things out of human respect, out of a desire to be “successful,” to be considered “nice” or “helpful” or a “good person” are all dangerous motivations. Why? They distract us from doing the “one thing necessary”, that is, the Will of God! Pray that you may have the wisdom and the courage of the apostles. That no matter what others may say or think, your one intention is to do the Will of God as best you understand it. Despite difficulties, this will be the strongest basis upon which true community can be built.

p Write down your reflections briefly here:

Thursday: “The missionary idea”

From Father Judge:

“There must be prudence. What does that mean? It means we must be tactful. There must be a limit: we cannot take up all kinds of successful ideas and methods. We shall not say our method is best, but that our method is best for ourselves. We have our Missionary Cenacle plan; a large part of the Cenacle plan is preventive; reclamation work is secondary. There will be no need of correction if there is prevention first.

“The missionary idea runs all through our work. The missionary idea is different from the teaching idea. The Missionary is one who goes out—“Go into the whole world “ That going out, that gathering, is the work of the missionary and that is the difficult part. It is not difficult to get teachers, but it is difficult to get missionaries. Why? Because there is the exhaust of self, because there must be more sacrifice of self.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 187)

From the Word of God:

“¹⁶Thank God for putting into Titus’ heart the same sincere concern for you.¹⁷He certainly took our urging to heart; but greater still was his own enthusiasm, and he went off to you of his own accord.¹⁸We have sent with him the brother who is praised as an evangelist in all the churches¹⁹and who, what is more, was elected by the churches to be our travelling companion in this work of generosity, a work to be administered by us for the glory of the Lord and our complete satisfaction..” (*2 Corinthians 8:16-19*)

The “missionary idea” requires leaving our “comfort zone,” the place and the circumstances where we “feel at home”! It requires reaching out to sisters and brothers that are unknown to us at first, who have different life experiences and often different values, who may not trust us or our motivations in coming to them. Helping God to create new communities of faith or to build up those that have been damaged or neglected through the years is a daunting missionary undertaking. It requires a certain death to self. How willing are you to enter into this missionary task? Ask the Holy Spirit to give to you what is lacking.

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here:

Friday: “A spirit of charity”

From Father Judge:

“I am telling you what the Cenacle spirit is. It demands a spirit of charity, and you understand what charity is—love of God and your neighbor. It demands a spirit of sacrifice, and this is what makes the Cenacle spirit difficult. That is why we must pray to acquire it; we cannot possess that unless we are willing to put ourselves out. With sacrifice the Missionary Cenacle will never perish. As long as that spirit is in the Missionary Cenacle the Cenacle will be useful; God will use the Cenacle.” (*Missionary Cenacle Meditations*, p. 187)

From the Word of God:

“Whatever bold claims anyone makes—now I am talking as a fool—I can make them too.²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.²³ Are they servants of Christ? I speak in utter folly—I am too, and more than they are: I have done more work, I have been in prison more, I have been flogged more severely, many times exposed to death.²⁴ Five times I have been given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews;²⁵ three times I have been beaten with sticks; once I was stoned; three times I have been shipwrecked, and once I have been in the open sea for a night and a day;²⁶ continually traveling, I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from brigands, in danger from my own people and in danger from the gentiles, in danger in the towns and in danger in the open country, in danger at sea and in danger from people masquerading as brothers;²⁷ I have worked with unsparring energy, for many nights without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty, and often altogether without food or drink; I have been cold and lacked clothing.²⁸ And, besides all the external things, there is, day in day out, the pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.²⁹ If anyone weakens, I am weakened as well; and when anyone is made to fall, I burn in agony myself.³⁰ If I have to boast, I will boast of all the ways in which I am weak.” (2 *Corinthians 11:21-30*)

The mark of the authentic missionary and what makes missionary effort truly fruitful is a spirit of sacrifice. Father Judge stated it simply as a willingness “to put ourselves out,” to respond to the needs of the sisters and brothers God brings into our path. This spirit of sacrifice bears fruit in an ever broadening, expansive community. How often are you willing to “put yourself out” for others? Do you consciously or unconsciously look on community as the place or the group of people that will “meet your needs”? Community is not the place where we “get our needs met.” Rather, authentic community demands often sacrificing “my” needs, desires, wants. But this type of sacrifice out of love gives birth to community that reflects the Image of God Community, God Family!

▶ Write down your reflections briefly here: