

RULE OF LIFE

for the
Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity
and the
Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

1986 ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

IN THE NAME OF
THE FATHER
AND OF
THE SON
AND OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT

AMEN.

Father Thomas Augustine Judge, C.M., was ordained a priest at the dawn of the twentieth century when the Church in the United States faced the task of absorbing thousands of immigrants from the Catholic countries of eastern and southern Europe. During the early years of his priesthood, the Church experienced the revival of Nativism, active proselytizing of Catholic immigrants, and the erosion of Catholic faith among the uninstructed, the indifferent, and those Americanized Catholics who reacted to the apparent foreignness and paternalism of the Church.

A ministry experience of ten years, and the daily struggle with these issues as they touched the lives of the people he served, convinced Father Judge that the priest by himself was insufficient to meet the pastoral needs of the day. He realized that the latent, but undirected, power for good present in the laity must be tapped. Therefore, at a time when the lay apostolate was a considerable innovation, Father judge preached apostolic involvement to the general body of the laity.

On April 11, 1909, at a meeting in Brooklyn, New York, six women responded to his appeal for lay apostles who would share in the mission and ministry of the Church. In the years immediately following, Father Judge's influence inspired women and men from many walks of life to become members of this apostolic band, later known and accepted in the Church as the Cenacle Lay Apostolate. Father Judge became their example of missionary zeal and personal prayer. He taught them that the essence of apostolic spirituality resides in devotion to the Trinity, and that this devotion must find its expression in love and concern for one's neighbor-especially those who have the greatest spiritual and temporal need, or who are the least appealing. As a pioneer of the Catholic lay apostolate in the United States, Father Judge did not think of an apostolic laity as something novel. Rather, he claimed that the mutual ministry of priest and laity in the mission of the Church was not "some new spirit invented in modern times," but he said, "it is the Gospel spirit," the fire Jesus came to cast upon earth, desiring that it burn continually through the working of his Spirit in others.

Between the years 1910 and 1915, when Father Judge was an active member of the Vincentian Mission Band, he established lay apostolate groups in major cities and small towns from Maine to West Virginia. During these years, with special counsel from Father Judge, some laity gave themselves completely to the work of the Missionary Cenacle in communal apostolic life. In 1912, under the auspices of Cardinal Gibbons, women associates opened a Missionary Cenacle in Baltimore for the care of homeless and unem-

ployed young women, and for work among the Italian immigrants in that city. The year following, another Missionary Cenacle was opened in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where the work of the associates pioneered the Catholic Charitable Bureau of that Diocese. By 1915, when Father Judge was unexpectedly assigned to a rural Vincentian mission in Opelika, Alabama, some of the men and women he had trained in the apostolate followed him to the heart of the American southland. Between 1916 and 1918, while the Cenacle Lay Apostolate continued to flourish in the north, a number of lay volunteers gave their lives completely to the Missionary Cenacle, which was taking a different shape in a rural and remote area of the south. The formal beginnings of distinct religious apostolic life emerged.

Principally for legal purposes, members of the Cenacle in Alabama were incorporated in February 1918 under the title "Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity." The incorporation was specific at the time to the "Catholic ladies" working in Alabama, but this same title represented the pivotal devotion and apostolic thrust of both the men's and women's emerging religious communities. For some time the name was employed by both groups.

Very soon, the call to mission spread beyond Alabama as bishops and pastors from other parts of the country asked for the services of the Missionary Servants. Father Judge counseled both men and women of the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity that their central mission to humanity was to be servants of the Triune God in the lives of the people they served. How they were to be such servants, he expressed in two guiding principles: preserva-

tion of the faith, and zeal for the abandoned. He noted further that they were to “serve the Church ... to think with the Church ... to have at heart what the Church has at heart.”

Approbation of the life and mission of the Cenacle began with the blessing of Bishop Edward P. Allen of Mobile and, in the course of some years, was variously expressed in commendations from other members of the hierarchy. For Father judge, a most significant approbation was that of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop John Bonzano, who in 1920 directed his approval both to the newly formed religious communities and to the Cenacle Lay Apostolate. From this time forward, what Father judge came to call the "Missionary Cenacle Family" grew steadily.

Within this Cenacle family was a young woman of unusual natural talent and extraordinary spiritual leadership. Louise Margaret Keasey, a school teacher from Butler, Pennsylvania, had gone south in 1916 at the age of thirty-one to render whatever service she could to the struggling band, and to teach in their mission school in Phenix City, Alabama. By 1919, she was appointed by Father judge to be the first General Custodian of the new sisters' community and received the name of Mother Mary Boniface. Under the combined leadership of Father Judge and Mother Boniface, the Missionary Cenacle Family further developed in distinct forms of apostolic life: clergy, religious and lay. Some of the young men who had followed Father Judge south became, through the special help and encouragement of Mother Boniface, the first priests of the Cenacle family. In 1929, the priests and brothers received official canonical

status from Rome, and were established as a clerical institute under the title of "Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity." Mother Boniface died in 1931. Less than three months after her death, in February 1932, the sisters received canonical status from Rome under the original title, "Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity."

The initial canonical approval given to the Missionary Servants was of major importance to Father Judge, for the new status incorporated the old from which it had evolved. The Cenacle Lay Apostolate was to remain since the rules of both religious congregations assert that members will foster and train lay apostles for the mission of the Church.

Father Judge died in 1933. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Missionary Cenacle Family continued its growth. In 1958, each of the religious congregations, the one of priests and brothers, and the other of sisters, received Pontifical Status and the Decree of Praise from Rome. The original Cenacle Lay Apostolate is now known as the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate, within which a Pious Union, the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute, was erected in 1964.

Thus, the grace given to Father Judge and Mother Boniface by the Holy Spirit continues in the Church today. Father Judge expressed the hope that this "holy tradition" would live on in these words:

*The family idea is dear to God and to the Church
...I declare that I recognize the value of a family
spirit, of a family working in the Church, of a
family that with ardor will take these words*

*from our dear Lord's lips: "Going, therefore,
teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name
of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit.'*

Mt 28:19

[NOTE: Words in italics are direct quotes from
Fr. Thomas Augustine judge, C.M.]

1. Our Lord had very much at heart the creating of a spirit, a missionary spirit, an evangelical burning that would sweep over the whole world. He came to cast a fire on the earth, and he willed that it would be enkindled (Lk 12:49).

The Holy Spirit has enkindled this fire in our hearts. This is our heritage: *an apostolic spirit, a Gospel spirit, a Catholic spirit*. The Missionary Cenacle spirit is *charity, charity aflame*.

NATURE AND PURPOSE

2. We are two religious Institutes of pontifical right, branches of one apostolic family, who have been called by God to be missionaries in the Church: some as Sisters, Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity; and others as priests, deacons and Brothers, Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity. Together, our religious and lay branches comprise the Missionary Cenacle Family.

3. By our lives as Missionary Servants we seek first to *glorify the Triune God*. We follow in the footsteps of the apostles who, filled with the Holy Spirit, went forth from the Cenacle to spread everywhere the knowledge and love of Jesus. We live and work that God's name may be hallowed, that his kingdom come, that his holy will be done (Mt 6:9-10).

4. *The missionary thought, the missionary idea, the missionary spirit should be dominant in our Missionary Cenacles*. We meet the pressing needs of our day by undertaking works that the Church wants, that are good and necessary, and that have a note of abandonment about them. In all our apostolic commitments, we recognize the authority of the bishops and their special role as signs of unity and as pastors in the local churches.

5. Our specific mission is *the preservation of the faith* in those areas and among those people who are spiritually neglected and abandoned, especially the poor. Our chief effort is to develop a missionary spirit in the laity, with the goal that *every Catholic be an apostle*.

6. We are to have *an ardent zeal for the poor, for those desolate in all things spiritual* and for victims of injustice. Charity urges us to action on behalf of justice as an integral part of announcing the coming of the kingdom.

7. *The Cenacle spirit is a Catholic spirit, a living, burning, operating love of God and neighbor.* We are to share this spirit by promoting and supporting the ministries of the laity in the mission of the Church. We acknowledge "different gifts but the same Spirit, different ministries but the same Lord" (1 Cor 12:24).

8. We are to call forth apostolic men and women from everyday walks of life to become lay associates in the Missionary Cenacle Family. A family spirit should be demonstrated by loving regard among the members of the branches and, when feasible, by collaboration in apostolic works. It is our particular responsibility as religious members of this family *to conserve this Cenacle spirit* and to be *the sanctuary where that fire is kept*. Father Judge declared that

if the right spirit is maintained, if the primitive spirit is passed down, this family idea will engender the most beautiful fruits for the honor and glory of God and for the edification of the Church.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

9. *The Cenacle spirit is a Christlike spirit* of "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). We are to confess in our hearts the mysteries of faith: the Trinity, the Incarna-

tion, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. We aspire to *a devotional knowledge* of these mysteries, that is, a deeply personal and interior *faith that is restless until it finds expression in good works*; our good works, in turn, nourish our life of faith and bear fruit in apostolic holiness.

10. We are to have a personal love of God our Father, of his Son Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit who abides with us. In a particular way we *cherish in our prayer and labor the naked, abandoned Jesus on Calvary*. We express our love through personal service to his poor and abandoned members.

11. We are to make the Holy Spirit better known and loved. By steadfast prayer in our Cenacles we seek *to attract the Holy Spirit* so that our own hearts may be enkindled with God's love and that we may spread this fire to others. We ask to be filled with the gifts of the Spirit, wisdom and fortitude especially.

12. *The Cenacle spirit is a Gospel spirit*. In order to follow Jesus more closely, as set forth in the Gospels, we profess by public vows the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience as a fuller expression of our baptismal consecration. The uncompromising message of the Gospels calls us to exercise our prophetic role as *witnesses to truth*.

13. Vowed life in community unites us, in our respective Institutes, in faith, hope and love. We strive to emulate the early Christians who had one heart and one mind and were nourished by the teaching of the apostles, and

the breaking of the bread and the common prayers (Acts 2:42; 4:32).

14. We shall hold *the Word of God in high esteem*. We cherish the Gospels in particular because they depict Jesus showing by word and example the way to the Father. By reflection on the *providence of everyday life* in the light of the Gospels we come to a *devotional knowledge* of the mysteries of faith and a deeper understanding of our own experience. Each shall have a copy of the Sacred Scriptures and make frequent use of them in prayer and proclamation.

15. The Eucharist is the *center and sun* of our apostolic lives. We are to worship God in the daily celebration of the Eucharist, our sacramental participation in the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. We should so prepare and celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy that it will be a genuine expression of community and source of apostolic vitality. We are to have reverence for the sacramental presence of the Lord Jesus and for all that is related to the Eucharist, especially the priesthood.

16. Because of our need for God's mercy in our brokenness, we are to approach the Sacrament of Penance frequently for reconciliation and healing. By our experience of sacramental forgiveness, we grow in mercy and compassion towards others.

17. *The Cenacle spirit is a prayerful spirit*. We recognize that *only a spiritual person can lead an apostolic life, and that we cannot be spiritual without prayer*. Great value, then, shall be placed upon periods of prayerful silence and

recollection. We are to devote suitable time each day to personal prayer, meditation and spiritual reading. Our reading should include Missionary Cenacle writings and, in keeping with our maxim, *sentire cum ecclesia*, we are to reflect prayerfully on the documents of the Church.

18. Periodically we shall seek extended times of prayer and recollection. We are each to make an annual retreat. In order that we may be more attentive to *the lights and impulses* of the Holy Spirit in our following of Christ, we are encouraged to seek personal spiritual direction.

19. We are to glorify the Triune God through common prayer, especially the Liturgy of the Hours. We pray together to promote greater zeal in the apostolate, more supportive community life and stronger bonds within the Missionary Cenacle Family. We shall encourage others to share our prayer.

20. *Our prayer should not be narrow, personal prayer; it should reach the throne of God only after having touched the farthest bounds of God's creation and mourned in every human misery and rejoiced in God's goodness.* We are to pray, therefore, for the needs of the entire Church, especially for the Holy Father, for bishops and for priests; we pray for youth and for those who are sick, suffering or abandoned. We have a special obligation to pray for our living and deceased relatives, friends, benefactors and members of the Missionary Cenacle Family.

21. In our religious family we have a special devotion to *Mary, Queen of the Missionary Cenacle*, to *Joseph, an unfail-*

ing and powerful friend, to the Apostles, ardent followers of Jesus, and to Vincent de Paul, patron of charity and humility.

22. The Cenacle spirit is an apostolic spirit which finds its perfection in zeal, the white heat of charity. We are to become perfect in the spirit and virtues of the Cenacle, to live and die simple, prudent, humble, charitable men and women; men and women of sacrifice, of patience, of self-denial whose lives are spent and consecrated to the service of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

VOWED LIFE

23. Christ calls us to follow him with liberty of spirit and to share in his emptying of self for others (Phil 2:7). He was celibate and poor (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58) and obedient unto death (Phil 2:8). We freely vow chastity, poverty and obedience as a personal response in faith to God whose love the Holy Spirit has poured out in our hearts (Rom 5:5).

24. Our religious profession binds us to the Church and its mystery in a special way. By profession of vows we are joined together in our respective Institutes for the sake of apostolic mission, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Our vows should help us express a more generous love of one another in community; community life, in turn, should contribute to the faithful living of the vows.

25. We imitate the single-hearted love of Jesus who gave himself for us as an offering to God (Eph 5:1). Our gift

of self in consecrated chastity should liberate our hearts to love and to be loved by all those given us in community and ministry. Our chastity should find expression in a warm and selfless love of others.

26. By the vow of chastity, we promise to remain celibate and to lead lives of perfect continence for the love of God and for the sake of the kingdom (Mt 19:22). By accepting the gift of celibacy, we express our preferential love of the Lord Jesus.

27. In the spirit of the Missionary Cenacle, we are to offer each other support and understanding, *rejoicing with those who rejoice and sorrowing with those who sorrow*. In a special way, our love is given to the sick and aging who are our particular treasure in community.

28. We imitate the poverty of Jesus who for our sake "made himself poor though he was rich, so that we might become rich through his poverty" (2 Cor 8:9). The virtue of poverty inspires us to be totally dependent upon the providence of God, to be subject to the common law of labor, to heed the cry of the poor and to live simply, holding all things in common in our respective Institutes.

29. By the vow of evangelical poverty, we renounce our right to dispose of and to use anything that has material value without permission. We retain the radical right to own and acquire goods.

30. We are to be responsible stewards of the material goods entrusted to us. Our Cenacle heritage, moreover,

directs us to be generous in sharing with others and in offering hospitality.

31. We imitate the obedience of Jesus, who "humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). The virtue of obedience is grounded in faith and love, generosity and forgetfulness of self. Our obedience should be *humble and of the heart, simple and entire, constant and strong in everything*.

32. By the vow of obedience, we pledge to obey those persons who exercise authority in our respective Institutes in everything that pertains to the observance of the Constitution and the integrity of our religious profession. We are to obey the Holy Father in virtue of our vow of obedience and to show him a particular loyalty.

33. Relying on the Holy Spirit, we are to seek together, in our respective Institutes, to discover God's will in a climate of respect and trust. With genuine love, we call each other to grow in apostolic holiness through encouragement and mutually appropriate accountability. This practice of taking counsel in matters of common life and mission is a cherished tradition in the Missionary Cenacle. After prayer and counsel, we humbly accept the decisions of those in authority.

MINISTRY OF AUTHORITY

34. Religious authority is exercised in our respective Institutes by those chosen to call us to be faithful to our vocations as Missionary Servants. The functions of

this authority are to assist each other to seek the will of God, to promote a true spirit of community and to unite us in pursuing our apostolic goals.

35. This authority, a ministry after the example of Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve (Mt 20:28), is to be exercised according to the Constitution and other statutes of common and particular law.

36. We recognize the value of counsel and consultation in important matters of common concern. In house council, we are to share the responsibility for decisions affecting the local community. Local Custodians and other designated persons exercise personal authority within their mandate.

37. In each Institute full authority shall be exercised in an ordinary manner by its General Custodian assisted by its General Council. This authority encompasses religious leadership and government of our Institutes, the call of members to mission and responsibility for administration of our temporal goods.

38. In each Institute full authority shall be exercised in an extraordinary manner by its General Cenacle, which is convened to elect its General Custodian and General Council, to protect the spiritual patrimony of the Institute and to foster its appropriate renewal, and to legislate for the entire Institute in those matters that touch upon policy, works and the general good.

MEMBERSHIP

39. *The apostolic spirit is a rare spirit, a priceless spirit, a spirit*

high above that of those who are ordinarily devout. This is the spirit of those great, self-denying, sacrificing lovers of Jesus who leave everything and dispose themselves to go anywhere.

40. We are each to encourage and to foster vocations to our religious Institutes. We look for candidates who, in addition to meeting the canonical requirements, manifest *a love of God, a zeal for neighbor and a spirit of sacrifice*. The candidates are to be acquainted with the life and spirit of the Missionary Cenacle.

41. The novices of each Institute are introduced to the nature and practice of the vows, according to our charism. At the completion of the novitiate, those novices who are admitted to each Institute make profession of vows according to the Constitution. This commitment must be renewed until the time for profession of perpetual vows.

42. Profession of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience is made to the Triune God, according to the Constitution, and is received by the General Custodian of the respective Institute. Since all members profess vows according to the Constitution, all are equally obliged to its observance. Separation from our respective Institutes is to be effected with charity and equity according to the common law.

43. Fidelity to our vocation demands that we continue our spiritual, apostolic, academic, personal and social development, within our common goals and mission. We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on

each of us (Rom 12:6). In community we should be challenged to discover, develop and use our gifts, lest the grace of God be given in vain (1 Cor 15:10). This is a lifelong process, and, as we advance in age, we are to follow Jesus ever more faithfully in the power of the Spirit, until that day when, with him, we enter into the glory of the Father.

Do give this much thought, do hold yourselves responsible for the future of the Cenacle; do remember that as you are, so others will be. What more beautiful legacy can you leave than that of an example and life fragrant and rich in the Cenacle traditions. This means that even after your death you will be continuing your apostleship through others whom your virtue has attracted to the service of God. Such will be my constant prayer for you; do make it your constant effort.