

Reading 1: "Spirituality and formation", *The Missionary Cenacle Apostolate*, Philadelphia 1974, pp. 8-11.

## **SPIRITUALITY**

We should not be frightened by the word spirituality. It is not the privilege of a few chosen souls nor is it something reserved for special times or segments of your life. It is you and your relationship to God in all the concrete circumstances of your life. Christian spirituality is in fact a way of life. It is rooted in belief in and surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord, who, through the Holy Spirit leads us to the Father.

Every genuine spirituality has its roots in the Gospel. This divinely fertile soil has always nourished a wide variety of spiritual traditions. Each of these traditions takes its shape from the living Gospel experience of spiritual leaders and their followers. A large portion of this experience is the changing apostolic need served by each group.

The spiritual traditions of the Missionary Cenacle Family form a definite pattern. Simply stated, this pattern is one of being good, doing good, and being a power for good. Although this formula sounds simplistic, it is a distillation of the legacy of Father Judge to his apostolic family. A fuller understanding of our traditions can come only from study, prayer, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit given in every circumstance of our lives.

Being good implies practicing in our lives certain Christian devotions and virtues which are conducive to the nature, purpose and spirit of the Missionary Cenacle Family. Devotion is the living expression of faith in a Christian mystery. Father Judge spoke of having a devotional knowledge, "a knowledge that begets fruit, that works in charity." We understand this as a loving awareness and deeper penetration into the mysteries of the Faith which motivates people in a practical way in their spiritual and apostolic lives. Father Judge called his followers to a devotional knowledge of these key mysteries of our Faith as revealed in Sacred Scripture:

The Triune God, the Holy Spirit in a special way, the Incarnation, and the Church.

In his followers Father Judge looked for and encouraged the growth of certain qualities especially related to their apostolic purposes. These qualities included charity, self-sacrifice, prudence, humility, simplicity, patience, and self-denial. He likewise repeatedly reminded his followers of the need to make reparation.

He also singled out exemplars of these virtues, patron saints whose lives in some way reflected the spirit of the Missionary Cenacle; St. Joseph, St. Vincent de Paul, the Apostles, and especially Mary the Mother of God.

The Missionary Cenacle spirit means sharing the universal concerns of Christ and his Church; it means thinking and feeling with and in the Church, as we respond to the needs of the Church, while exercising leadership within the Church.

In order to be responsive to our apostolic grace a strong Faith is necessary. And to be strong and active, Faith must be nourished by prayer especially prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Doing good implies helping people to deepen their Faith through instruction, inspiration, example, and service. The work of the Missionary Cenacle always shows a preference for

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people who are abandoned or neglected. We try to meet the urgent needs that are not being met by anyone else. There is also a special concern for the young because they are the hope of the future.

Father Judge saw that the apostolic work of the Missionary Cenacle could be better accomplished by cooperation among all the people and resources that were concerned with any particular apostolate. He encouraged a special cooperation among the various groups he organized and referred to this as "family spirit." The family spirit is fundamental to this whole notion of Cenacle Spirit. Each member is to be alert to the apostolic opportunities that occur in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life.

Being a power for good means, in a word, to make other people apostles. This happens when Cenacle members help others to discover, develop and use the gifts they have in helping to build up the kingdom of God.

This Cenacle pattern of spirituality is acquired not merely by superimposing a program of spiritual exercises. Rather, it occurs when one develops behavior and attitudes that flow from a prayer life rooted in reflection on the word of God as revealed in Sacred Scripture and from the concrete circumstances of our daily lives with the support and challenge that comes from our association with each other in the living traditions of our apostolic family.

While Cenacle spirituality is rooted in the Gospel and in our Cenacle traditions, it has true life only in an individual. A family draws its strength from the members who each bear a personal responsibility to participate in and give growth to community.

## **FORMATION**

Within the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate formation is the lifelong development of the whole person. It is the constant effort to motivate, to inculcate Gospel attitudes and values. It is carried out in the tradition and spirit of the Cenacle as a response to the present day needs of the Church.

The MCA seeks to provide the Church with spiritualized, apostolic lay people fully participating in the life and mission of the Church, in the tradition and spirit of the Cenacle family.

While frequent meetings are not essential to the MCA idea, gathering together as a group is vital to a healthy, growing family spirit.

Meetings are strongly recommended but the frequency and type is best determined by the members.

The content, too, is best determined by the needs of the members, but because of the specific nature of always be given to the writings of Father Judge. Among the essential sources of Christian formation are, of course, prayer, Sacred Scripture, and the celebration of the Liturgy.

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Discussion of topics of spiritual and I or apostolic nature is also an important formational tool.

Other elements in the continuing growth of MCA members are: days of recollection, the MCA Newsletter, regional meetings, workshops, social gatherings of the Cenacle family, and the apostolic ministries themselves, either individual or part of a group effort.