

# **RULE OF LIFE AND CONSTITUTION OF THE MISSIONARY CENACLE APOSTOLATE**

This Rule of Life and Constitution was adopted on October 13, 1984 by the General Council of the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate after study and consultation with the membership. It is an adaptation of the Rule of Life of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity and the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity. Further revisions were made in 2007. 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 (Luke 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.*

## **IDENTITY AND PURPOSE**

**2.** We, the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate (MCA), are a self-governing, international association of the Catholic faithful, who have been called by God to be missionaries in the providence of our daily lives. We have a special relationship with the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity, the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, and the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute. Together we comprise the Missionary Cenacle Family.

2.1 Originally called the *Outer Missionary Cenacle*, the MCA was founded by Fr. Thomas Augustine Judge, C.M. in 1909 in Brooklyn, New York. The religious and secular institutes of the Missionary Cenacle Family find their origin in this *Outer Missionary Cenacle*

2.2 The MCA is comprised of Catholic lay persons eighteen years of age or older, who are called to holiness of life while sharing in the apostolic goals of the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate.

2.3 The MCA is made up of Associates, members with full rights, and Candidates, members in basic formation with limited rights. Rights and duties of Associates and Candidates are defined in the Norms and Policies.

**3.** *By our lives 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 that first 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 (Matt. 6:9-10).*

**4.** *The missionary thought, the missionary idea, the missionary spirit should be dominant in our Missionary Cenacles.* In thinking with the Church we strive to meet the pressing needs of our day by undertaking works that are good and necessary, and have their focus on the poor and abandoned. In all our apostolic works, we recognize the authority of the bishops and their special role as signs of unity and as pastors in the local churches.

4.1 In the providence of our everyday lives we look for opportunities to serve the economically and spiritually poor and abandoned, especially those who do not experience the love of God. We strive to live out Gospel teachings in our homes, our communities, and in our places of work and recreation.

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

5.1 We especially look for those Catholics not practicing their faith or who are in danger of losing the Catholic faith which is their heritage.

5.2 We are to manifest a particular concern for family life, especially for the spiritual and moral development of children and youth.

5.3 Recognizing the power of the laity to be apostles, we seek to empower those around us to do the same.

**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. In response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the social teachings of the Church, we labor to proclaim the Gospel and to correct injustices.

**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). We carry out our apostolates in such a way that we inspire and encourage others to participate more fully in the work of the Church.

**8.** We are to call forth apostolic men and women from everyday walks of life to become Associates in the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate and to encourage those who feel called to other branches of the Missionary Cenacle Family. We demonstrate a family spirit by having a loving regard for all the members of the family and, when possible, by collaboration in apostolic works. It is our particular responsibility as members of this family to spread the Cenacle spirit. 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 Christ-like spirit of "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). We confess in our hearts the mysteries of faith: the Trinity, the Incarnation, 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 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 seek 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 consecrate ourselves to be apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ within the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate as a fuller expression of our baptismal consecration. The uncompromising message of the Gospel calls us to exercise our prophetic role as *witnesses to truth.*
- 13.** Our act of consecration unites us 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, the breaking of the bread, and the common prayers (Acts 2:42; 4:32).
- 14.** We 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 member 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 frequent, even daily, celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is 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 relates to the Eucharist.
- 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 is 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” (to think with the Church), we are to reflect prayerfully on the documents of Church.*

**18.** Periodically we shall seek extended times of prayer and recollection. We are 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 and in our continuing formation, we are encouraged to seek spiritual guidance from a person well-versed in Cenacle spirituality.

18.1 Spiritual Guides shall be appointed for the well-being of the MCA as directed by the Norms and Policies.

**19.** We are to come together regularly to glorify the Triune God through common prayer. We pray individually and collectively to promote greater zeal in the apostolate, more supportive community life and stronger bonds within the Missionary Cenacle Family.

19.1 Cenacles are encouraged to come together frequently for a communal day of recollection.

**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 and the world, especially for the Holy Father, for bishops, priests and religious; 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 Missionary Cenacle Family we have a special devotion to *Mary, Queen of the Missionary Cenacle; to Joseph, an unfailing 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 of sacrifice, of patience, of self-denial whose lives are spent consecrated to the service of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

22.1 Our spirituality is nurtured by the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and charity and the Cenacle virtues.

## CONSECRATION IN THE MISSIONARY CENACLE APOSTOLATE

**23.** We seek to imitate Jesus who calls us to follow him with liberty of spirit and to share in his emptying of self for others. (Philippians 2:7) In Baptism we were anointed with the Holy Spirit and united to Jesus in his mission as Priest, Prophet and King. Our Act of Consecration is an affirmation of our baptismal consecration and our personal response to God whose love has called us to the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate.

23.1 We affirm with the Church that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love. (cf. Lumen Gentium, No. 40)

**24.** Our Act of Consecration joins us together for the sake of apostolic mission through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Our consecration encourages the expression of a more generous love of one another as a community. Community, in turn, contributes to the faithful living of our commitment to the Triune God and to the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate.

24.1 The act of consecration brings one into full membership as an Associate of the MCA, whereby we commit ourselves to live the Rule of Life and Constitution.

**25.** We strive to imitate the self sacrificing love of Jesus by a life of service for the love of God and neighbor.

**26.** 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 our sick and aging members.

26.1 In that same spirit we also pray for the sick and aging members of the other branches of the Missionary Cenacle Family.

26.2 Associates who are sick know that they are united with the suffering Christ for the salvation of the world. They grow in holiness, accepting their sickness with faith.

26.3 Associates who are no longer able to fully participate in the life of the Cenacle due to aging or other infirmities are encouraged to take as their apostolate a ministry of prayer for the members of the MCA and the other branches of the Missionary Cenacle Family. Members shall treat these Associates as the treasure they are, seeking out their gift of wisdom and including them as much as possible in the activities of the Cenacle.

**27.** Jesus "made himself poor though he was rich, so that we might become rich through His poverty" (2 Cor. 8:9). This inspires us to depend upon the providence of God, to heed the cry of the poor and to live simply, using what we have for the honor and glory of God.

27.1 The lay vocation demands a profound involvement with the mission of Jesus in the world. We witness to our reliance on God as the source of all blessings in our daily work and service for the building up of the reign of God.

27.2 The Gospel urges us to a simple lifestyle. We frequently examine our lives, attitudes, decisions, and possessions in light of the call to simplicity and to freedom from attachment to worldly standards.

27.3 Associates and Candidates pledge to give freely of their time, talent and treasure to further the work of the MCA.

27.4 Our cenacle heritage directs us to be generous in sharing with others and in offering hospitality, according to the circumstances of our life.

**28.** Jesus, "humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross." (Phil. 2:8) His example inspires us to daily surrender to the will of God. Our obedience should be *humble and of the heart, simple and entire, constant and strong in everything.*

**29.** We pledge to respect the authority of the Custodians in everything that pertains to the integrity of our act of consecration, the observance of our Rule of Life, Constitution and Norms and Policies.

**30.** Relying on the Holy Spirit, we are to seek together to discover God's will in a climate of respect and trust. With genuine love, we help each other to grow in apostolic holiness through mutual encouragement and appropriate accountability for our Cenacle responsibilities.

## **MINISTRY OF AUTHORITY**

**31.** Authority is exercised by those chosen to call us to be faithful to our vocation as Associates of the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate. 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.

**32.** This authority, a ministry after the example of Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve (Matt. 20:28), is to be exercised with charity, prudence and humility according to the Rule of Life and Constitution and the Norms and Policies.

**33.** The practice of taking counsel is a cherished tradition in the Missionary Cenacle. After prayer and counsel, we humbly accept the decision of those in authority.

### **Cenacles**

**34.** A Missionary Cenacle is a local unit of the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate. It shall be officially established by MCA authority and governed according to MCA Norms and

Policies.

## **Custodians**

**35.** Custodians and Assistant Custodians at the local level are elected by the members of the cenacle and are responsible for shepherding the cenacle. Policies relating to the office and responsibilities of Custodians and Assistant Custodians are specified in the Norms and Policies.

## **Regional Custodians and Regional Councils**

**36.** Each region of the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate elects a Regional Custodian and an Assistant Regional Custodian. Policies relating to the office and responsibilities of the Regional Custodian and Assistant Regional Custodian are specified in the Norms and Policies.

36.1 Regions may be divided into areas under the direction of an Area Custodian elected by the Associates of the area. The Regional Council is made up of the Area Custodians Policies relating to the office and responsibilities of the Area Custodian Custodians and the Regional Council are specified in the Norms and Policies.

## **General Custodian and General Council**

**37.** In the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate, full authority is exercised in an ordinary manner by the General Custodian assisted by the General Council. This authority encompasses leadership and governance of the MCA, the call of the members to our apostolic way of life, and responsibility for administration of the temporal goods of the MCA. Policies relating to the office and responsibilities of the General Custodian and Assistant General Custodians are specified in the Norms and Policies.

37.1 An individual must have been an Associate for three years to be elected to the office of the General Custodian or Assistant General Custodian.

37.2 The terms of office of the General Custodian and the Assistant General Custodian are established in the Norms and Policies. Persons may be elected to a second term but not a third consecutively.

37.3 The General Custodian and the Assistant General Custodian shall be elected by a majority of the voting Associates. The Norms and Policies set forth the voting procedures for these offices.

37.4 The members of the General Council assisting the General Custodian are the Assistant General Custodian and the Regional Custodians. The General Custodian and General Council are responsible for the good order and development of the MCA. Policies relating to the office and responsibilities of the General Council are specified

in the Norms and Policies.

37.5 The General Custodian and General Council determine the practical application of the Rule of Life and the Constitution. Any proposed changes to either document must be approved by two-thirds of the voting Associates.

37.6 The General Custodian and General Council determine the practical application of the Norms and Policies. Changes and additions to the Norms and Policies must be approved a vote of two-thirds of the General Council.

### **General Assembly**

**38.** A General Assembly may be called when the General Custodian and a majority of the General Council judge that this will be beneficial to the MCA. It shall be concerned with setting direction for the MCA, fostering its renewal and calling forth leaders.

## **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 Christ who strive to be good, to do good, and to be a power for good in the providence of everyday life.*

### **Candidates**

**40.** We are each to encourage and foster vocations to the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate. We look for candidates who manifest *a love of God, a zeal for neighbor, and a spirit of sacrifice.*

40.1 Candidacy is a period of formal preparation leading to a mature commitment expressed in an Act of Consecration. It is a time to consider deeply his or her vocation, to experience the apostolic way of life, to become formed in the Cenacle spirit, to accept the responsibility of membership, and to test suitability for a vocation in the MCA.

40.2 Candidates who are to be admitted as Associates shall make an Act of Consecration according the Rule of Life and Constitution. The Act of Consecration is made to the Triune God in the presence of the Regional Custodian or delegate.

### **Associates**

**41.** Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life. The Rule of Life and Constitution help us to walk in this Way, to live this Truth and to find this Life. The Associates shall esteem the Rule of Life and Constitution, hold them sacred and keep them faithfully. They shall read them, meditate upon them and aspire to live them. .



**42.** 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). We are to encourage one another 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.*