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## Son of Saint Vincent\*

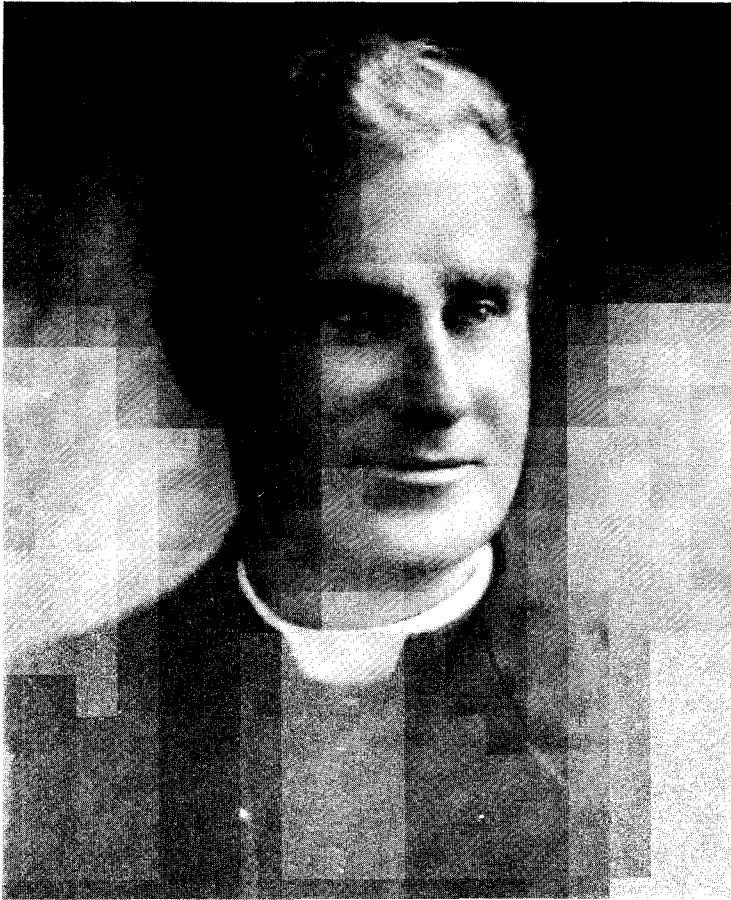
*John W. Carven, C.M.*

One year ago, almost to this day, Fr. William M. Slattery, C.M. was buried from this Chapel. He was the Vincentian Provincial Superior of the Eastern Province at the time Fr. Judge was buried from this same Chapel fifty years ago. That fiftieth anniversary is the reason why we are here this morning. Ninety years ago Thomas Augustine Judge began his novitiate here at St. Vincent's Seminary, began his study of St. Vincent de Paul.

Through years of meditating on the teachings of St. Vincent, the rules he gave his Community and the conferences on those rules, through spiritual reading on the life of the Saint and other Vincentian topics, through his own attempts to lead the life of a Vincentian, Thomas Judge grew to love and appreciate St. Vincent de Paul. Of the Founder of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity Fr. Judge expressed his esteem thus: "St. Vincent spiritualized every heart-beat. He loved God supremely and he felt secure only when he loved all men in God and because of God. His heart, thus spiritually refined, went out in love and compassion to humanity; and, if his love had any preference, the poor, the miserable, the unfortunate, the outcast were the privileged objects of that love."

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\*Sermon delivered on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Fr. Judge; Shrine Chapel of the Miraculous Medal, St. Vincent's Seminary, Germantown, PA.; August 13, 1983.



*Very Reverend Thomas Augustine Judge, C.M.*

Fr. Judge was ever and always a Vincentian—and wished to impart the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul to you his spiritual children—you his heirs.

It is worth our while this morning to examine some of the similarities in the lives of St. Vincent and Fr. Judge and to appreciate Fr. Judge's assimilation of St. Vincent's ideals so that you can grasp the spirituality he passed on to you.

St. Vincent was about forty years old when he undertook his major works. A variety of experiences had molded his soul, had prepared him for the kaleidoscope of works on which he ventured. He preached missions to those for whom few priests ministered. They were in great need because they were abandoned spiritually. He was joined by a few good men, a handful of zealous priests, and the Congregation of the Mission evolved. The missions gave birth to the Confraternities of Charity. A practical result of each mission was the establishment of a confraternity for men and women. For a nucleus in a parish the mission would thus have a lasting spiritual effect. He gave them directives to nourish their spiritual life and for the works of charity they were to undertake. In time, St. Louise de Marillac joined him in this work. He relied on her judgment in guiding the Confraternities of Charity; she was a valued partner in his work. From her participation flowed the foundation of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

Here we can only scratch the surface of his work. His zeal knew no bounds; the variety of works to which he put his talents in the service of God is mind-boggling. God guided St. Vincent into all these avenues—He showed the Saint the needs of the Church and inspired him to hear and obey the call of lawful authority.

How much like him was Fr. Judge. He, too, was about forty years old when the Cenacle movement began. His family life and his Vincentian life molded his thinking. Some ten to fifteen years of preaching missions confirmed him in the wisdom of St. Vincent's policy of organizing and directing a nucleus of laypeople in each parish to carry on the fruit of the mission. As St. Vincent did with the Confraternities of Charity, Fr. Judge provided a spiritual foundation for the Cenacle Associates—days of

recollection, annual retreats, and semi-monthly meetings. Some of these lay associates developed their own distinctive practices and spirit when they began to lead a community life in Phenix City, Alabama. As a result, two missionary Congregations evolved and grew into the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity and the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity—none of which was planned by Fr. Judge, but which Bishop Allen urged and the Vincentian Superiors sanctioned.

Like St. Vincent, Fr. Judge had a valued partner in Mother Mary Boniface. She was his right hand—“Mother” for both Communities. Fr. Judge instilled in her complete selflessness, intense prayerfulness, unwavering faith, and dauntless courage—and she has passed them on to you.

What is the legacy of Fr. Judge to you? What are some of the keys he left you to the mystery of the Cenacle life? Very simply, his life was characterized by a determination to do the Holy Will of God as made known to him by legitimate authority and as he discovered it in long hours of prayer—keys given to him by St. Vincent de Paul.

Fr. Judge never wanted anything unless it was the Will of God. There was this characteristic about him—he insisted upon, he demanded a sign from God. If God sent obstacles, trials, or crosses, and his work stood this test, then he felt it was the Will of God. His trust in Divine Providence is very evident in this statement which the world would consider extraordinary: “If it is the work of God, it will go on; if not, let it perish.”

This conviction he learned from St. Vincent. “The most assured means of succeeding in any enterprise,” the Saint said, “is a total abandonment of one’s self to Divine Providence and an entire dependence on His arrangements.” In another place he said, “God ordinarily allows obstacles to arise to good projects in order that He

may be recognized as the author of the success attending them." Or again, "The greater the opposition to the affairs of God, the more happily also shall they succeed, provided our resignation and our confidence do not fail."

Hand in hand with trust in Divine Providence goes obedience to lawful authority. This was the discipline St. Vincent taught his disciples: "An humble submission and obedience to the decrees of the Holy See is a good method of distinguishing the true children of the Church from those who are rebels to her authority."

Fr. Judge assimilated this lesson and made it part of himself—and confided it to you. Obedience to the Church and respect for ecclesiastical authority must be rooted in each one of you and your Communities. *Sentire cum ecclesia* was his exhortation. He wanted you to think with the Church, to study with her, to examine prayerfully her documents and proclamations.

In his own life Fr. Judge practiced what he preached. In each step of the development of the Cenacle he had the permission from his Vincentian Superiors. Fr. Francois Verdier, the Superior General, wrote to him: "God is visibly blessing your work.... At the altar of St. Vincent and before his relics I pray in a special way for you and your Institute." Fr. Patrick McHale, who had been Provincial Superior of the Eastern Province and, in 1920, Assistant to the Superior General, wrote in that year: "The Cenacle seems to be the work of Providence..." Its members "have my unqualified esteem, and I commend myself to their prayers."

Well might have Fr. McHale commended himself to your Institute's prayers since Fr. Judge made prayer the bedrock of your missionary zeal. He always preached prayer, he ever practiced prayer. And he inspired you to say in your revised rules: "Only a spiritual person can lead an apostolic life, and we cannot be spiritual without

prayer.” This seems to me to be but an echo of St. Vincent: “Prayer is absolutely necessary for those who labor for the salvation of souls, either to nourish in them an ardent desire of making new progress in devotion and fervor, or to inspire them with new zeal and courage in the services they render to their neighbor.”

What can I say in conclusion? Fr. Judge was and is your spiritual Father. You no longer have his presence, but you have his intercession to help you. You have the same Holy Spirit who formed his vocation, he who is the pattern for your own Cenacle vocation.

For Fr. Judge St. Vincent was the spiritual Father he followed. As St. Vincent said to his children, Fr. Judge could say to you in the words of St. Vincent: “I beg the Holy Spirit, Who is the bond of the Father and the Son, that He may unite you closely and preserve and increase in you strength of soul and body so that you may correspond with the designs of Divine Providence.” Using the words of St. Vincent, may I add: “May the Spirit of Jesus be your strength in the labors and difficulties in which you find yourselves.” Finally, may the Holy Spirit continue to inspire you to follow the guidance of your Father and St. Vincent’s son to be good, to do good, to be a power for good.



*We must belong wholly to God; to accomplish this we must root out self-love.*

St. Louise de Marillac