**INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVENA**

GOD’S SAVING LOVE IS MY LIFE, AND MY LIFE IS LOVE OF THE SAVIOR:

TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF MAZENODIAN MUSIC THAT HAS FILLED THE WORLD WITH THE MELODY OF SALVATION

“Music is my life and my life is music. Anyone who does not understand this is not worthy of God.” Perhaps this quotation from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart may startle as an introduction to a time of immediate preparation for our bicentenary. Yet, looking at the gift that God gave us in and through Eugene de Mazenod, the image of music seems to be the most appropriate way of describing our Oblate life. Filled with the melody of God’s saving love, Eugene played this music with his life and taught others to find their personal and communal song of God’s love and to be filled by its melody.

The charism, which Eugene received as a gift of the Holy Spirit, can be likened to a very specific melody. He allowed it to penetrate the depths of his being, to transform him into an instrument that constantly played this melody. In his priestly ministry to the most abandoned, he captivated them with his music and made them participants in the song of the Savior’s love for them. Two hundred years ago he invited other like-minded persons to join him with the instruments of their lives and to form an “orchestra” of missionaries. For two hundred years our Mazenodian family has been playing this music and filling the world with its melody.

Adapting the words of the great composer and jazz player, Ornette Coleman: “Jazz is the only music in which the same note can be played night after night but differently each time,” we can recognize the same note played out in our history, with different and richer tones each time, depending on which part of the Oblate world it is played in.

Our preparation to mark our 200th anniversary of foundation is an invitation to listen once again to that music which is our charism, to allow it to transform us in a new way, and to be renewed in our commitment to continue reproducing the love of our Savior in the lives of those who are the most abandoned.

The nine reflections which follow are offered as a guide and to give you basic material to choose from and adapt for personal, community and ministerial use. They aim at preparing us to celebrate the day of our bicentenary. More material will be provided after 25 January to help us to reflect on the effects of this event on our 200-year history.