**REFLECTION FOUR: WHY WAS OUR ORCHESTRA FORMED?**

**CALL TO PRAYER**

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, who call us to respond to the cry of the most abandoned”

Forty years I endured that generation.

I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray and they do not know my ways.”

So I swore in my anger, “They shall not enter into my rest.”

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, who call us to respond to the cry of the most abandoned”

**REFLECTION**

Continuing the image of our Oblate congregation as an orchestra, or group of musicians, playing the melody of a specific God-given charism, we ask, “Why did Eugene form the orchestra in January 1816?”

A group of priests, painfully aware of the suffering of the people of Provence, joined Eugene in the process of rebuilding the post-revolution church of France and dedicated their lives to bringing these abandoned victims of the revolution into the fullness of communion with Jesus Christ and the Church.

##### *****The Church, that glorious inheritance purchased by the Savior at the cost of all his blood, has in our days been cruelly ravaged…… In this lamentable state, the Church calls for help to her ministers, those to whom she has entrusted the most precious interests of her Divine Spouse…*****

##### Preface

Those who suffered were the Christians: it was not their fault that they had become ignorant and indifferent. No one had ministered to them in any meaningful way - they were truly abandoned and without direction in matters of their faith. It was this situation that deeply moved Eugene and his companions.

##### *****Now, you will perhaps ask why, since I wish to be a missionary…*****

##### *****But what must be remembered is that our regions are without any help, that their peoples offer hopeful signs of being converted and must not therefore be abandoned... We have to speak in their own language in order to be understood by them. We have to preach in Provençal.***** (Letter to Father Forbin Janson, 28 October 1814, O.W. VI n 2)

The local church did have a pastoral concern for their salvation but, with the best will of those involved, it still remained insufficient and even useless. The task was too big and the availability of persons was limited. Hence the need for a decisive intervention as he explained to a prospective member:

##### *****The good we intend to do must remedy the greatest evils that face us. Those who deal with them dwindle; there is nothing more urgent.*****

##### *****It is a matter of some priests banding together and continually preaching missions in all sectors of this vast diocese and surroundings … We would begin in your part of the country where religion is practically extinct as in so many other places.***** (Letter to Hilaire Aubert, 1815, O.W. VI n 3)

**WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD**

Matthew 9: 35-38

Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”

Matthew 23: 37-39

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you were unwilling! Behold, your house will be abandoned, desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

**WE LISTEN TO OUR RULE OF LIFE:**

"We are a missionary Congregation. Our principal service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. We preach the Gospel among people who have not yet received it and help them see their own values in its light. Where the Church is already established, our commitment is to those groups it touches least.

Wherever we work, our mission is especially to those people whose condition cries out for salvation and for the hope which only Jesus Christ can fully bring. These are the poor with their many faces; we give them our preference.” CC&RR Constitution 5

**WE RESPOND:**

What touched the heart of Eugene and made him respond was the plight of people in Provence who were not being adequately catered for by the normal ministry of the local church.

* Who are the people we encounter in our Province who are in the same situation today?
* Rule 8a invites us to reflect on how we “let our lives be enriched by the poor and the marginalized as we work with them, for they can make us hear in new ways the Gospel we proclaim.”
* It also invites us to assess whether we are always “sensitive to the mentality of the people, drawing on the riches of their culture and religious traditions.”
* Other…

**CONCLUDING PRAYER**

God our Father, we thank you for the gift of the charism which

you have given us through St. Eugene de Mazenod

You have called us to a missionary life

in order to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned:

*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*

*Pauperes evangelizantur*

At this time of celebration of the 200th anniversary of our foundation,

we ask you for the grace of finding in your Son,

Jesus Christ, the center of our life and of our mission.

We hear the call to a profound

personal and communal conversion.

Help us to become the salt of the earth

and the light of the world,

so as to proclaim in today’s world

the values of your Kingdom in word and deed.

We beg you, Lord, to send upon us your Spirit.

Help us to be yours, inflamed with your love,

sparing no effort to extend your Kingdom

and totally committed to the good of today’s poor.

We ask this through the intercession

of Mary Immaculate, our Mother,

and of Saint Eugene de Mazenod.

Amen.

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| “Why blame the dark for being dark? It is far more helpful to ask why the light isn’t as bright as it could be.” Rob Bell |