**REFLECTION FIVE: THE MEMBERS OF THE ORCHESTRA ARE CHOSEN**

**CALL TO PRAYER**

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, who has chosen us to be missionaries”

Know that the Lord is God,

he made us, we belong to him,

we are his people, the flock he shepherds.

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, who has chosen us to be missionaries”

**REFLECTION**

The time had come for Eugene to begin to invite others to join him in his missionary project – or to use the image that is accompanying us, to bring the instruments of their lives to join the “orchestra” he was forming.

*Through the eyes of the Crucified Savior*

His letter to the 27 year-old diocesan priest, Henri Tempier, is an essential foundation document for us. It contains the seeds of what is essential in our vocation. The letter shows the fundamental starting point of the vocation of any member of the Mazenodian family: it has to be through the eyes of Christ the Savior. "Read this letter at the foot of your crucifix" is a necessary attitude: Eugene experienced God's love for him and understood his vocation at the foot of the Crucifix. Anyone who was called to join Eugene needed to have as a starting point and as a point of focus the fact of God's love expressed on the Cross.

***My dear friend, read this letter at the foot of your crucifix***

***with the desire to listen only to God regarding what the good of his glory and the salvation of souls demand from a priest like yourself.***

Henri Tempier was invited to look at the religious situation of the poorer people in Provence through the eyes of the Crucified Savior. It was an invitation to feel from the depth of his heart their experience of not having a sense of direction in their lives because God was absent.

***Dismiss the attraction of possessions, the love of comfort and convenience;***

***allow yourself to be fully penetrated by the situation of the people who live in the countryside, by the state of religion among them, by the apostasy that daily spreads wider with dreadfully ravaging effects.***

***Look at the feebleness of the means employed to date to oppose this flood of evil; ask your heart what it would like to do to remedy these disasters and then reply to my letter.*** (Letter to Henri Tempier, 9 October 1815 O.W. VI n 4)

*A group of young idealists*

Who were these first men who joined the “orchestra” on 25 January 1816?

" Eugene de Mazenod was 33 years old, and had been a priest for four years.

The first three of his companions had been seminarians in Aix at the time when he had been a part-time spiritual director and confessor there from 1812 onwards:

Auguste Icard was 25-years old, ordained two years before.

Henri Tempier was 27, and had been a priest for two years.

Sébastien Deblieu was 27, and had had three years of priestly ministry.

I am always struck by how young these four were when they came together, full of youthful ideals and not too long an experience of priestly ministry.

Emmanuel Maunier was 46, and was a widower who was ordained a priest for 18 years.

Pierre Mie was 47, and had been a priest for 18 years.

The older men, Maunier and Mie, had both experienced being persecuted as priests during the Revolution and, at danger to themselves, had ministered secretly to people. Their experiences would have made them very open to Eugene's understanding of the damage caused to the Church by the Revolution - especially as expressed in the Preface.

*Fragile instruments*

The missionaries were fragile persons and not all was rose-colored in their life.

Within months the youngest, Auguste Icard, was expelled from the group. In the *Register of Admissions to the Novitiate*, Eugene made a note next to Icard's entry that "reasons of major importance" obliged him "shortly after to notify Icard he was no longer to consider himself a member of our Society." Over twenty years later Eugene recalled in his Mémoires the one "whose name we no longer mention amongst us" in this way:

***Can one believe that the very one who indicated the first companions whom I chose, and who proposed himself to join me with them, was a miserable priest whom I had to chase after the first mission. He never rid himself of his infamous habits, and lived as a bad priest for the rest of the few years he spent on this earth, and died without any religious assistance, impenitent, by a death that they say was self-inflicted.*** (Rambert I, p. 164)

In 1823, Emmanuel Maunier and Sébastien Deblieu also left the Missionaries to be diocesan priests elsewhere.

Three of Eugene's original five first companions did not persevere! Indeed the missionary is a fragile instrument.

**WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD**

John 1: 38 -40

Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus.

Mark 3: 13- 19

He went up the mountain[e] and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve [whom he also named apostles] that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons: he appointed the twelve: Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

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

“The sight of these evils has so touched the hearts of certain priests, zealous for the glory of God, men with an ardent love for the Church, that they are willing to give their lives, if need be, for the salvation of souls.” (Preface)

“Jesus never ceases to call people to follow him and to proclaim the Kingdom. Some are drawn to answer that call through the joy and generosity of our lives. We must lose no opportunity to let people see how urgent are the needs of the Church and the world and come to know the way in which our Congregation responds to those needs. We will also pray and have others pray that the Lord send laborers into his harvest.” CC&RR Constitution 52

“Novitiate formation ends with a free and faith-filled commitment in the Oblate Congregation. The novice, having experienced the Father's love in Jesus, dedicates his life to making that love visible. He entrusts his fidelity to the one whose cross he shares, whose promises are his hope.” CC&RR Constitution 59

**WE RESPOND:**

* Recall your vocation story – when and how did you become aware of the eyes of the Savior looking at you?
* Constitution 59 describes the goal of our novitiate process. What has been the theme playing throughout your life since then?
* What is the “vocation story” of your community – what was the purpose of its coming into existence?
* Prayerfully recall some of those who were part of the Oblate journey and have left
* Sadly, at times we have been the cause of pain and destructive disharmony in the lives of others. A good opportunity now to pray for forgiveness in thought and action
* 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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| “Have you seen a symphony orchestra? There is a person at the back carrying a triangle. Now and again the conductor will point to him or her and that person will play "ting." That might seem so insignificant, but in the conception of the composer something irreplaceable would be lost to the total beauty of the symphony if that "ting" did not happen.” Desmond Tutu |