**REFLECTION SEVEN: THE MUSIC IS WRITTEN AS A GUIDE TO OUR LIFE**

**CALL TO PRAYER**

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, whose Word is a light for our path”

O God, be gracious and bless us and let your face shed its light upon us.

So will your ways be known upon the earth and all nations learn your saving help

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, whose Word is a light for our path”

**REFLECTION**

What did the newly-formed group of Missionaries do on 25 January 1816? A few weeks' before, Eugene had written to Henri Tempier about his program for this day:

***At this meeting we will draw up the Rule which we will have to follow.***

***We will confer on the manner in which we will carry out our good work.***

***We will help each other mutually with advice and with all that the good God will inspire in each of us for our common sanctification.***

***We will then issue our first declaration for the edification of the Church and of the people. This will be a decisive step.*** (Letter to Henri Tempier, 13 December 1815, O.W. VI n.7)

Continuing our musical image, a composer creates a melody and writes the score for it to be played by others. The Rule which Eugene drew up was the score for us to reproduce the melody of our Oblate charism in the instruments of our lives.

After nearly 3 years of working with his youth congregation members, Eugene knew how essential it was to have a Rule to keep the group together and moving in the same direction. For him a Rule was much more than a book of regulations to ensure the efficient functioning of a group: a Rule was the putting into words of the ideal that inspired the group, the vision which was to guide their daily actions, and the means to achieve their ideals.

The letter that the newly formed group wrote to the Capitular Vicars of Aix contained what we can call our first Rule. The first part reads:

Deeply moved by the situation of the abandoned people, they explained their vision.

***The undersigned priests:***

 ***-deeply moved by the deplorable situation of the small towns and villages of Provence that have almost completely lost the faith;***

***-knowing from experience that the hard-heartedness or indifference of these people renders the ordinary help supplied by your concern for their salvation insufficient and even useless;***

***-convinced that missions are the only means by which these people who have gone astray can be brought out of their degradation;***

***-desiring, at the same time, to respond to the call which summons them to consecrate themselves to this demanding ministry;***

***-and wishing to accomplish it in a manner as useful to themselves as it is beneficial for the people whom they propose to evangelize;***

***-have the honor of requesting from you the authorization to come together at Aix in the old house of the Carmelites which one of them has acquired; and to live there in community under a Rule whose main points they now indicate to you.*** (Request to the Capitular Vicars of Aix, 25 January 1816, O.W. XIII n.2)

Today we celebrate how the Mazenodian family has continued to live this same response for two hundred years.

[*The rest of the Rule will be dealt with in the lead-up to and preparation for our convocation in April*.]

**WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD**

Deuteronomy 30: 18-20

I tell you today that you will certainly perish; you will not have a long life on the land which you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land which the Lord swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them.

Luke 10: 26-28

Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”

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

“Such are the great works of salvation that can crown the efforts of priests whom God has inspired with the desire to form themselves into a Society in order to work more effectively for the salvation of souls and for their own sanctification. To bring all this into being, they must carry out their duty worthily, faithfully fulfilling their splendid vocation.

But it is not enough for them simply to be convinced of the sublime nature of the ministry to which they have been called. The example of the saints and reason itself make it amply clear that the success of such a holy undertaking as well as the maintenance of discipline in any society make certain rules of life absolutely necessary for unity of thought and action among the members. Such unity is a body's strength, keeping up its fervor and insuring that it lasts.” (Preface)

The Constitutions and Rules set out a privileged means for each Oblate to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. They are inspired by the charism lived by the Founder and his first companions; also, they have received the approval of the Church. Thus, they allow each Oblate to evaluate the quality of his response to his vocation and to become a saint. CC&RR Constitution 163

**WE RESPOND:**

* At our oblation we received the Rule, with the words: “Do this and you will live.” And since then…?
* What is the Rule of Life that personally guides you? How does it nourish and inspire you?
* 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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| “It's easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument will play itself.” Johann Sebastian Bach |