**REFLECTION EIGHT: LET THE MUSIC PLAY…**

**CALL TO PRAYER**

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, who sends us to proclaim the Gospel”

Glorify the Lord, Jerusalem; Zion, offer praise to your God,

He sends his command to earth; his word runs swiftly!

R/ “Come, let us worship the Lord, who sends us to proclaim the Gospel

**REFLECTION**

*Mission is a fruit of prayer*

Once the missionaries had completed the presentation of their vision statement to the diocesan authorities, they began a ten-day period of prayer and recollection in preparation for their first parish mission, which was to begin in the village of Grans on 11 February. In this way a pattern was established of setting time aside for intense prayer before each mission.

*Leading the most abandoned to share our music*

The first parish mission set the pattern for all the missions animated by the Oblates throughout Eugene’s lifetime. It began at the entrance of the village with a brief ceremony of adoration of the Cross, which was then carried in procession to the church for the start of the activities. There was to be no doubt in the minds of the villagers that the whole mission was being undertaken “through the eyes of the Crucified Savior.” Eugene, and the Oblates ministering with him, aimed at sharing his own transforming experience of Good Friday. What God had done in his life, he wanted God to repeat in the life of those they ministered to.

In five weeks they received a thorough daily catechesis from the Oblates, being instructed in the important elements of the faith.

***The people are caught up in thoughtless ignorance of all concerning their salvation. The consequence of their ignorance has been a weakening of the faith and a corruption of morals with all the license which that inevitably entails. Thus, it is supremely important, it is urgently imperative, that we lead the multitude of lost sheep back to the fold, that we teach these degenerate Christians who Jesus Christ is, that we rescue them from Satan's power and show them the way to eternal life***. (Preface)

Learning “who Jesus Christ is” the people were helped to see themselves, one another and the world through His eyes. The aim of the missionaries was to instruct, and then to accompany the people to an enduring commitment to the Savior, expressed in the sacraments and in service and prayer. In two hundred years our methods have changed, but our missionary goals remain the same: to help people to see themselves through the eyes of Christ the Savior, and to understand what this means and how to live it.

*Our first mission center*

Once the mission was over in Grans, Eugene and the missionaries returned to Aix in March 1816. Forty years later Eugene reminisced about the activities of our first community:

***[Fr. Tempier had remained in Aix during the mission in Grans] but certainly not in idleness. Service had to be provided in the church where I had arranged to have prayers for the faithful every evening. This prayer was always either preceded or followed by a subject for meditation.***

***Every day there were numerous young people (more than three hundred) members of my Youth Congregation who gathered in the choir of the church or played together in the large room of the house. On Sundays they assisted at Mass during which they received an instruction. In the afternoon, during or after Vespers, they were taught catechism, which did not mean that there was no public sermon... The confessions of that little flock also had to be heard…; the work was really too much.*** (Diary of 5 September 1857, O.W. XXII)

It is easy here to recognize the same spirit that motivated the parish missions in the villages - this is why Eugene referred to the ministries of our communities as being "permanent missions." Leflon's description of the early days of the church of the mission gives a good idea of the foundations laid by Eugene and his first companions in 1816:

“In fact, the public also attended Mass there; their number soon became large enough to warrant hastening the renovation of the church, and on Palm Sunday, April 7, it was ready for public worship… More and more, the mission church became a hub of intense spirituality for the city and, due to the Sacred Heart League which the Founder established there, it was also the center of a devotion that was very dear to the heart of Father de Mazenod.

As soon as the Mission Church-as the faithful soon referred to it-was opened for worship, Father de Mazenod made it the center of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart which he had previously founded. Each First Friday of the month, the associates assisted at Mass and communion, which were preceded by a meditation read aloud, and returned in the evening for a special instruction.” (J. Leflon, Volume II p. 42-43)

Youth, prisoners, those condemned to death, the sick, the workers, those on the margins – all found a spiritual home in our mission centers: through instructions in the faith, adult catechesis, preaching, sacraments, devotions, sodalities and Oblate closeness to the people, all were invited to participate in and appropriate the salvation offered on the Cross.

**WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD**

Luke 10:

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy[-two][b] others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. 2 He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. 3 Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves.

Mark 6: 6-13; 30-33

He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching. He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.” So they went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them.

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

“The call of Jesus Christ, heard within the Church through people's need for salvation, draws us together as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Christ thus invites us to follow him and to share in his mission through word and work.

We are a clerical Congregation of pontifical right. We come together in apostolic communities of priests and Brothers, united to God by the vows of religion. Cooperating with the Savior and imitating his example, we commit ourselves principally to evangelizing the poor..” CC&RR Constitution 1

“The community of the Apostles with Jesus is the model of our life. Our Lord grouped the Twelve around him to be his companions and to be sent out as his messengers (cf. Mk 3:14). The call and the presence of the Lord among us today bind us together in charity and obedience to create anew in our own lives the Apostles' unity with him and their common mission in his Spirit.” CC&RR Constitution 1

**WE RESPOND:**

* Recall some of the highlights of your ministry and give thanks as you do so
* Are there people that you have hurt or failed in your ministry? Take some time to pray for them.
* Who are the people who have supported you in your ministry? Give thanks and pray for them
* 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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| “Music is your own experience, your own thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn. They teach you there's a boundary line to music. But, man, there's no boundary line to art.” Charlie Parker |