**11**

**“…if priests could be formed…”**

**SETTING**

The animator of the encounter arranges the ambience so that all may be comfortably seated in a circle to facilitate prayer and discussion. A candle, the Bible, the GNOF, an Oblate Cross may be placed in the center of the community.

**MOTIVATION**

In this encounter we gather to share about our formation story and how we are living our ongoing formation process.

**SONG**:

Here I am, Lord

Lord, when you came to the seashore

**PRAYER**

**THE WORD OF GOD: From the Prophet Jeremiah 18:1-6**

The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh as follows: 'Get up and make your way down to the potter's house, and there I shall tell you what I have to say.' So I went down to the potter's house; and there he was, working at the wheel. But the vessel he was making came out wrong, as may happen with clay when a potter is at work. So he began again and shaped it into another vessel, as he thought fit.

Then the word of Yahweh came to me as follows, 'House of Israel, can I not do to you what this potter does? Yahweh demands. Yes, like clay in the potter's hand, so you are in mine, House of Israel.

Or also Titus, 2.

**TIME FOR SILENT REFLECTION**

**RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD: Psalm 25**

Antiphon: My hope, Yahweh, is in you.

DIRECT me in your ways, Yahweh, and teach me your paths.

ENCOURAGE me to walk in your truth and teach me since you are the God who saves me. FOR my hope is in you all day long -- such is your generosity, Yahweh.

GOODNESS and faithful love have been yours forever, Yahweh, do not forget them.

HOLD not my youthful sins against me, but remember me as your faithful love dictates.

INTEGRITY and generosity are marks of Yahweh for he brings sinners back to the path.

JUDICIOUSLY he guides the humble, instructing the poor in his way.

KINDNESS unfailing and constancy mark all Yahweh's paths, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Antiphon: My hope, Yahweh, is in you.

**OBLATE TEXT: Preface**

They are convinced that if priests could be formed, afire with zeal for men’s salvation, priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue – in a word, apostolic men deeply conscious of the need to reform themselves, who would labour with all the resources at their command to convert others – then there would be ample reason to believe that in a short while people who had gone astray might be brought back to their long unrecognized responsibilities. “Take great care about what you do and what you teach,” was Paul’s charge to Timothy, “Always do this, and thus you will save both yourself and those who listen to you” (1 Tim 4: 16).

How, indeed, did our Lord Jesus Christ proceed when he undertook to convert the world? He chose a number of apostles and disciples whom he himself trained in piety, and he filled them with his Spirit. These men he sent forth, once they had been schooled in his teaching, to conquer the world which, before long, was to bow to his holy rule.

**GOING DEEPER INTO THE THEME**

Article 47 develops a first characteristic of this formation: it is personal. It has as its aim the “integral growth” of the person, i.e, his human, psychological, doctrinal and spiritual growth. Four points are mentioned; we must consider all of them.

1. The time span. It is a lifetime process. Formation is a constant growth. This kind of growth does not come to an end with perpetual vows or ordination to the priesthood or the jubilees which may follow. It is a lifelong journey; it demands openness, effort and, to the very end, the ability to adapt. The apostolic friendship established in our interior life with Christ the Saviour asserts itself with evermore clarity and intensity as we move forward in life. An 80-year-old Oblate is still invited to renew his outlook, accept youth following in his footsteps, accept suffering and let his faith shine forth in new ways.

During his last weeks, a fellow Oblate, now deceased, said, “I have been joyful all my life... Now that sickness has paralyzed me, I am sad... I am unhappy, in a difficult situation and hard to deal with... I did not think it would be like this!... I still have to struggle.” His formation continued to his very death. (Fernand Jetté, The Apostolic Men, p. 264)

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**SHARING OUR FAITH:**

The animator invites each Oblate present to share what has inspired him in the reflection and around the questions:

* What was the most important experience in my first formation process?
* Can I remember something that I was taught, but understood or accepted only later on?
* Some aspects, in which I have changed from my first years as an Oblate?
* How and when do I read the Bible? Oblate books?
* A book, an article which opened my eyes in the last time?
* What was the course, study, meeting which really helped me a lot in the last years?
* What would I still love to study?

**COMMITMENT:**

The animator reminds everyone that we are preparing for the Triennium by seeing how we can grow, change, be transformed. We are asked to consider a concrete gesture in the life of our community as a sign of conversion. Let us ask God to inspire us, help us be bold and courageous so that during these weeks and months of preparation we will commit ourselves to some real sign of new life among us.

**A TIME FOR PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING / INTENTIONS**

**FINAL PRAYER:**

**BLESSING AND SONG**:

The animator asks an Oblate present to pray a blessing over the group and then all sing the final song.