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## **Jesus gives his life on the Cross**

**1. Setting**

**2. Introduction**

**3. Hymn**

**4. Prayer**

**5. The Word of God –** 1Co 1:18-25; 2:1-5

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19**For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

6. Time for silent reflection

7. Response to God’s Word: song, psalm or prayer

**8. Oblate Texts**

– The cross of Jesus Christ is central to our mission. Like the apostle Paul, we “preach Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). If we bear in our body the death of Jesus, it is with the hope that the life of Jesus, too, may be seen in our body (cf. 2 Cor 4:10). Through the eyes of our crucified Saviour we see the world which he redeemed with his blood, desiring that those in whom he continues to suffer will know also the power of his resurrection (cf. Phil 3:10). (Constitution 4)

**–** “A second special trait of the Oblate as an apostolic man is that he strives *to live fully and to preach the mystery of the cross, the paschal mystery.* This is stated in article 4. The substance of this article is found in the Constitutions from the very beginning (cf. *Constitutions,* 1826, 2 texts quoted on p. 16 of the Rulebook). The Founder attributed a truly major importance to the mystery of the cross, in our apostolate as well as in our lives. He adopted this outlook for several reasons: first and foremost, the cross is God’s chosen way for saving the world; secondly, the cross is needed to keep the apostolic man rooted in humility and in truth, for by his ministry he is both witness and instrument of God’s marvelous deeds; and thirdly, ever since the internal shock of his “conversion” on the Good Friday of 1807, Eugene maintained a vivid awareness of the need to make reparation for his own sins and for those of the world. We can also note Paul the Apostle’s influence on him in this regard.

In its present formulation, however, article 4 adds some new aspects to the former text. The first addition responds to the religious sensitivity current today, namely, never to speak of Christ’s cross, suffering and death without also mentioning that it is the seed of life and resurrection. The cross of Jesus, which is “central to our mission” results in hope of paschal joy, of new life in Jesus.

A second addition expresses the purification and transformation that our outlook undergoes when it is in contact with the mystery of the cross: “Through the eyes of our crucified Savior we see the world which he redeemed with his blood.” Our outlook on the world becomes that of Jesus the Savior crucified. It was the Founder’s outlook after his “conversion”, how he saw himself and the world in terms of Christ’s blood. The expressions: “souls at the price of Christ’s blood”, “who have cost him his blood”, recur again and again in his writings. Therese of Lisieux and the Ursuline nun, Mary of the Incarnation, lived similar experiences and their missionary spirit also sprang from the same source. Farther on, in Rule 12, we will find the complementary expression: “to love others as Jesus loves them”. Indeed, the Oblate’s apostolic spirit consists in contemplating the world with the eyes of Christ, loving it with the heart of Christ, and working wholeheartedly with Christ in the work of its redemption.

A final point that is also rather new in this article is the following: we are invited to contemplate the cross, Christ’s suffering not only within ourselves but also in others. Our desire is “that those in whom he continues to suffer will know also the power of his resurrection.” This brings to mind Pascal’s reflection: “Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world; we must not sleep during this time”. (*Pensees*, no. 736, in *Oeuvres complètes,* coll. La Pleiade, 1962, p. 1313). (F. Jetté, *O.M.I. The Apostolic Man. A commentary on the 1982 edition of the Oblate Constitutions and Rules,* Rome 1992, p. 57-59)

**9. Going Deeper into the Theme**

The Cross of our savior is for me, not a sign of sorrow, pain or bitterness. It is a symbol of victory, salvation and life. It is from the cross that I realize the amazing power of God’s love to and for me.

As an Oblate, I have the cross as a distinctive sign (Const. 64), a sign that I am loved by God. Just like someone who when he takes a look at the pictures of his loved one becomes emotional and re-lives the best good memories, I am motivated and helped to grow in love, faith and service by my Oblate Cross. My eyes should never be taken away from the Cross, lest I look at a wrong side and finds myself naked like our first parents in Genesis, ripped off all the love I enjoy from the Cross. Indeed, the Cross is the fountain of my Oblate Identity and Mission.

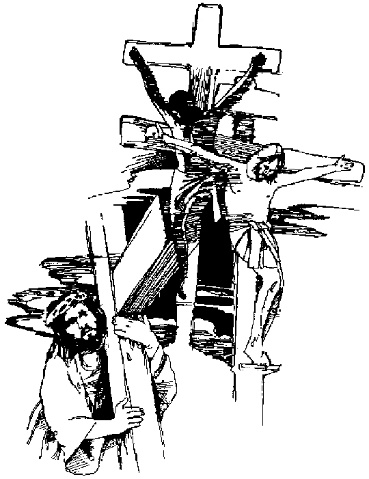
I always get moved by the Good Friday liturgy, when people come to church, make very long queues just to come and venerate the Cross. Everyone coming before the Cross, to say to the Lord and Master, ‘Thank you for loving me!’ There is a Protestant family in my neighborhood that never misses the Good Friday Services at the Catholic Church. The family is not that blessed with the earthly riches so much that some of the kids could not make it to school because of financial constraints, but it is a peaceful and humble family. This family has always seemed to be having a deeper understanding of the mysteries of the Cross more than some of the Catholics do. They were always a point of reference in my family because my parents would always tell us that if those people (Protestants) go to venerate the Cross on Good Friday why we can’t learn from them that the Cross is a rich symbol of who God is to us. We in response became quick to go to Church, to show them that we too have respect for the Cross. When I think about this today, I come to realize how the love of the Cross has made that family to be missionary to me and my siblings.

Even before knowing the Oblates, I had already developed a great love for the Cross and without doubt that family gave me an example to love the Cross. I believe that, the power of the resurrection always brought some blessings to the family. They were aware that they are powerless on their own but powerful because of the Cross. I then see it so important that as Oblates, we need to speak the language of the Cross, live a life of the Cross and continue the life-giving works of the Cross. God Bless us always! (*Reflection written by Father Sidney Mothusi Boatile OMI*)

**Other texts:** F. Emanuelson, *Oblate Cross,* in *Dictionary of Oblate Values*, Rome, AOSR, 2000, p. 638-650; G. Mammana, *Saint Eugène de Mazenod et la croix*, «Vie Oblate Life» 63 (2004), p. 177-215.

**10. Sharing our faith**

– Take some time to contemplate your Oblate Mission Cross; your missionary life; the suffering of the people you have met; the suffering of Oblates; the difficulties in your own life; the signs of resurrection; the new life that you have seen; the signs of hope that give you life, energy.

– What does the Cross mean in my life?

– How do I relate the Cross to my missionary life as an Oblate?

– Tell a story from your life or mission in which the power of the Cross was made manifest.

**11. Personal and**

**communitarian commitment**

**12. Final prayer**

**13. Blessing and song**