**16. Apostolic community
is witness, evangelization by lived example**

For this encounter, the community may choose to invite some lay collaborators or others. 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, an Oblate Cross or a Sign that reminds us of our Oblate Motto: “Evangelizare Pauperibus Misit Me”, may be placed in the center of the community.

**Introduction**

As brother Oblates, our commitment is to live among ourselves the love that binds us to the Lord and to God’s people. (C 12)

**Song:** Bind us together Lord – We are one in the Spirit (*or any other appropriate song*)

**Motivation**

As a Church, we are embarking in a new era facing many challenges. St. Eugene de Mazenod also faced many challenges in his time after the French Revolution. Thus, he launched his missionary team to go out to meet the people wherever they were. Oblates today are also to do in the same manner. In fact, Pope Francis is himself leading the way when he affirms that: “we have to avoid the spiritual sickness of a self-referential church. It’s true that when you get out into the street, as happens to every man and woman, there can be accidents. However, if the church remains closed in on itself, self-referential, it gets old. Between a church that suffers accidents in the street, and a church that’s sick because it’s self-referential, I have no doubts about preferring the former.”… (Quoted by John L. Allen Jr., *Profile: New pope, Jesuit Bergoglio, was runner-up in 2005 conclave*, March 03, 2013)

**Let us pray**

Lord Jesus, you called together companions to live and share the love that you received from your God; be with us as we bear witness to your love for the world as we prepare to celebrate the triennium.

**The Word of God –** Jn 15:12-17

This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his [life](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=7101) for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that [will](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) last; so that the Father [will](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) give you anything you ask him in my name. My command to you is to love one another.

(*Time for silent reflection*)

**Response to God’s Word**

Responsorial Psalm: 96:1-3; 7-8a

***R: Proclaim God’s marvelous deeds to all the nations***

Sing to the Lord a new song;

Sing to the Lord, all you lands.

Sing to the Lord; bless his name. **R./**

Announce God’s salvation, day after day.

Tell his glory among the nations;

Among all peoples, God’s wondrous deeds. **R./**

Give to the Lord, you families of nations,

Give to the Lord glory and praise;

Give to the Lord the glory due his name! **R./**

*(Time for silent reflection*)

(C 3) 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.

**Going deeper into the theme**

“(…) in our ministries, we are acting as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, i.e. as religious missionaries. We are called to witness in this world of ours as consecrated persons and as apostolic communities. As consecrated persons we will act with a religious motivation and purpose, we will work for the coming of God’s Reign. And as members of apostolic communities, we will opt for team work rather than for individual commitments”. (*Vade Mecum on JPIC,* page 17)

As missionaries responding to the challenges of the kingdom of God, part of our continuous conversion demands that we seek to integrate Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation in all aspects of our ministry. As Pope Paul VI said: “It is impossible to accept that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems… concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi,* 31). We are not only called to a change of heart but also to changing unjust structures (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction “Conscientia Christiana” on Christian Freedom and Liberation,* 75). But in a world that experiences so much injustice, it is easy to be discouraged. Even if our efforts make almost no difference, we must continue our work. The following reflection honors Archbishop Oscar Romero’s life testimony and reminds us of the role of our personal and common efforts:

*“It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. Amen”.*

**Sharing our Faith.** How does the community of the apostles inspire you to live? Describe your most inspiring experience lived in apostolic community? What aspects of our community would need improving so that it better reflects the apostolic community?

**A time for prayer and thanksgiving**

Let us give thanks to our Lord for the gifts that each one of us brings to our community. These gifts we bring are blessings to us because they strengthen, inspire and challenge us. By our sharing in community, we are evangelized and encouraged to live out our Oblate charism, our mission to the poor and care for creation.

**Commitment.** Saint Eugene, we see you contemplating the cross and being touched to the core of your soul, experiencing your unworthiness at Christ’s immense love for you. This inspired you to dedicate your whole life to share this love with the most abandoned. Open our hearts to Christ’s love so that we may also overcome our trials and difficulties.

**Let us pray with Mary.** Mary, at Cana you told the servants to do whatever Jesus said. By turning water into wine, the disciples believed in your Son and followed Him. Help us increase our faith in your Son and to follow Him in all moments of our lives.

**Responsorial**

Holy Mary, Mother of God Pray for us

Immaculate Mary, Mother of the Oblates Pray for us

Saint Eugene de Mazenod,

founder of the Oblates and bishop of Marseilles Pray for us

Man of ardent faith Pray for us

Man with burning zeal Pray for us

Man with heart on fire Pray for us

Blessed Joseph Gerard, missionary to faraway nations Pray for us

Blessed Joseph Cebula

and Martyrs of Spain, who died for the crucified Pray for us

Venerables Albini, Grandin,

and Kowalczyk, missionaries of the gospel Pray for us

You, our first fathers Pray for us

You, faithful Oblates who gave your life for the gospel Pray for us

All you faithful Oblates who humbly perform your daily ministry Pray for us

All you Oblate Associates

who have shared, prayed and ministered with the Oblates Pray for us

All you People of God Pray for us

**Blessing and Song**

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