**5**

**Pastoral / Missionary experience: a formation forum**

**Setting**: The community gathers around a table where candle, an Oblate Cross and the Bible are placed.

**Song**: any mission song: Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord…

**Motivation**: Evangelization is the principal goal of our vocation as Missionary Oblates. It is the Lord who calls us, forms us and sends us. We are invited to prepare ourselves properly for every missionary – pastoral experience and to take time to evaluate our missionary life and to equip ourselves for a more meaningful missionary presence. Let us listen to Word of God.

**The Word of God:** **GOSPEL OF** **Luke 10:1-5; 17-21**

After this the Lord appointed seventyothers, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, and no sandals; and salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

**Oblate Text:**

Conversion in Formation requires that we provide a deeper Oblate missionary spirituality for our candidates and formators. Scholastics should spend at least one year of pastoral experience outside of their culture during their formation journey. (2010 Chapter document, Conversion, Formation #2)

**Going Deeper into the theme:**

The Missionaries will divide their group in such a way that while some strive in community to acquire the virtues and knowledge proper to a good missionary, others are touring the rural areas proclaiming the word of God. When their apostolic journeys are over, they will return to the community to rest from their labours by exercising a ministry that is less demanding, and to prepare themselves through meditation and study for a more fruitful ministry when next called upon to undertake new work. (*Eugene de Mazenod, Request addressed to the Vicars General of Aix,* January 25, 1816)

“To be missionary” means to be sent on a mission of evangelization: it does not matter whether one is sent to the foreign missions or to the home or parish missions. The missionary is a frontier man, one who is always intent on forging ahead, ongoing farther afield. Zeal, daring, mobility, availability are his characteristic traits! And obedience too: he receives the mission of another, the mission of the Church: he is a man who “is sent”. In whatever work is assigned to him the Oblate will have to act in an authentic missionary spirit, that is to say, with the concern that he himself, like Christ, lives like a poor man, reaches out to the most abandoned in his milieu and reveals Jesus Christ. (*Fernand Jetté, The Apostolic Man*, pp 60, 61)

**Moment of silence**

**Faith Sharing**

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

* How often do we reflect on our lived missionary and pastoral experiences?
* Could we do this together in apostolic community and learn from each other?
* How often do we evaluate our lives, ministries and the mission of our community in order to deepen our missionary commitment? Is evaluation an important element of first and ongoing formation in our unit?
* What is the place of pastoral/missionary experience in our formation programs?

**Intentions for our common prayer**

* That our communities may continue to deepen their religious and missionary commitments through sharing and reflecting on lived pastoral experiences. *We pray to the Lord*
* That those in first formation may benefit from well planned and supervised pastoral / missionary experiences to grow in their Oblate missionary identity and their closeness to the poor and the most abandoned. *We pray to the Lord*
* That our Oblate units and communities be more aware of the importance of regular evaluation of our missionary lives and practices in order to renew ourselves in the spirit of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. *We pray to the Lord*

**Commitment**

What was Jesus’ pastoral secret? He took “time out”, from the busy demands of the ministry, to be alone with the Father. He even took the disciples aside for rest and prayer, because they were tired from the ministry. What is our pastoral – missionary secret? How can we measure up to the mission entrusted to us as Oblates? We should make time for fruitful monthly and yearly “stronger moments” of prayer, reflection and evaluation of our missionary lives and activities. We should make out time for daily community prayers and regular sharing sessions in order to enrich our missionary lives (cf. *James E. Sullivan, Prayer with our Constitutions*, pp 132-134). Let our community be open to receive, plan, accompany and adequately evaluate the pastoral experiences of the formandi.

**Final Prayer**

God our Father, you will that all be saved and know your truth. Send workers into your great harvest that the Gospel may be preached to every creature that your people, gathered together by the Word of Life and strengthened by the power of the sacraments, may advance in the way of salvation and love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen

**Blessing and song**