**Faith Sharing Encounter 2**

**Growing into Christ: Formation throughout our lives deepens our life-long project as Oblates of Mary Immaculate**

**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, an Oblate Cross may be placed in the center of the community.

**MOTIVATION**

In this encounter we gather to share about how we look on ourselves and how Jesus looks on us.

**SONG**

**PRAYER**

**THE WORD OF GOD: GOSPEL OF LUKE 2: 41-52.**

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover,and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”But they did not understand what he said to them.  He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

**TIME FOR SILENT REFLECTION**

**RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD: A Psalm**

**OBLATE TEXTS:**

**OMI Constitution 2**

We are men “set apart for the Gospel” (Rom 1: 1), men ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus. The desire to co-operate with him draws us to know him more deeply, to identify with him, to let him live in us.

We strive to reproduce in ourselves the pattern of his life. Thus, we give ourselves to the Father in obedience even unto death and dedicate ourselves to God's people in unselfish love. Our apostolic zeal is sustained by the unreserved gift we make of ourselves in our oblation, an offering constantly renewed by the challenges of our mission.

**OMI Constitution 47**

Formation is the process which aims at the integral growth of a person and lasts a lifetime. It enables us to accept ourselves as we are and develop into the persons we are called to be. Formation involves us in an ever renewed conversion to the Gospel and a readiness to learn and to change in response to new demands.

**2010 Chapter Calls**

**“Formation” #8**

A clear program for ongoing formation in every Unit. That each Oblate be constantly renewed in the knowledge of the Scriptures for the good of the mission. For this purpose, Oblates are invited to avail of the “Centre De Mazenod” Aix programs for renewal in the Oblate Charism and family.

**GOING DEEPER INTO THE THEME:**

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**Lean upon the bosom of Christ.** If Christ is light for our eyes, truth for our minds, He is also support and relief, consolation and joy, strength and enthusiasm for our worried, fragile and hesitant hearts… Only He could say words ineffably encouraging like these: “Come to me all you who are tired and burdened and I will give you rest…learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls…” (Mt 11:28s). We think about the friend who never fails, about the Good shepherd who carries on His shoulders the lost sheep, about the Master who lets His beloved disciple rest calmly on His chest… Sustained by Him…

In the midst of the battles and contradictions, uncertainties and perplexities, we count on a firm and secure support…With the Apostle we will be able to say in any case: “I know in whom I have believed” (2 Tim 1:12). He had the respect to consider us worthy of his trust (cf. 1 Tim 1:12); and therefore He counts on our poor clay vase to carry His treasures.

The Master did not show us an easy path, He introduced us into His, that of the cross, of persecution, of trouble and failures. So it was for the apostles, for Saint Eugene and his missionaries. So it is for us in our materialistic world, allergic to true values and saturated with egoism and violence. Paul spoke of the outside battles and the fears he felt interiorly (2 Cor. 7:5). Battles and fears surround us and attack us dangerously and can lead us to fatigue, skepticism, to a neurosis or to search for a remedy in a weak and sterile activism. The Mission, with its great demands and its dangers, with its inevitable hardships, invites us to seek refuge in Christ, to count on His comforting presence in our ministry (“I will be with you always”: (Mt. 28:20) ) and especially in the Eucharistic banquet. There He will repeat to us: “It is I, don’t be afraid” (Lk. 24:36) and “Take courage, I have conquered the world!” (Jn 16:33).

Our Founder ends his enthusiastic sketch of apostolic men who want to renew the society of his time with this phrase: “thus, filled with unbounded confidence in God, they are ready to enter the combat, to fight, even unto (a cruel) death…” (Preface).

This strength which is Christian hope, we need to make it grow and enliven it even more when we are surrounded by dissatisfaction, disappointment, practical skepticism and the same despair which darkens all horizons. Today the missionary not only has to give the world “reasons for hope” (1 Pt. 3:15), but also must make his attitude contagious by his generous, serene and happy life. He must give a clear witness of the Gospel beatitudes. This can only be possible by cultivating an intimate friendship with the Savior.

**SHARING OUR FAITH:**

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

The Gospel of the Finding of Jesus in the Temple tells the story that he was lost for three days: has Jesus at times disappeared from my life?

How did Mary and Joseph ‘lose’ their understanding and image of Jesus and have to find a ‘new’ son afterward?

When have I lost an image of Jesus or of God to which I was familiar and accustomed in my life? What was it like?

How has my image of Jesus grown over the years?

**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.

What might be a gesture of conversion we are called to hear: to deepen our prayer life? To have a spiritual director or accompanier or a ‘spiritual friend’? Study of theology and the Word of God.

**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.