**Faith Sharing Encounter 3**

**Saint Eugene transformed Crises into Opportunities for Ongoing Formation**

**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**

Crises come to us in many shapes and forms. They can help to form us and have the potential to bring growth. Crises can provoke conversion within us. We probably learn and grow more from hindsight after a particular crisis rather than right in the middle of it! We are invited in faith to remember God’s presence with us always, and with God’s grace we struggle to accept crises, to face them and grow through them. In spite of getting knocked down or stunned by a crisis, we try to be mindful that it is part of the spiritual journey and they can actually help us grow. Friendship with Jesus, our life of prayer, the Word of God, consistent spiritual direction, openness with community assistance and the support of good friends all sustain us in facing and accepting a crisis with grace.

**Hymn**

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, as we gather to share our faith we ask to be strongly united by your Spirit in the richness of our differences. May our time of listening to one another and the reality of personal crises in our lives help us to deepen our solidarity with each other, our compassion and our communion of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

**The Word of God** - **The Agony in the Garden: Mark 14:32-42**

Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch.” He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; he said, “Abba, Father,\* all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.” When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing. Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him. He returned a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

*(This is one of the key moments of crisis in Jesus’ life before his death on the cross. He withdraws to pray with the Father and seeks the support of three of his closest friends. A dialogue with the Father takes place while his friends snooze. Jesus, utterly alone, asks the Father to remove the chalice before him. If it cannot be removed, he accepts his Father’s will with love and in obedience. It is a true agony, not just theatre, and Jesus was frightened, in great anguish, offering up to God loud cries and tears (Heb 5:7) and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Lk 22:44). We are told that he prayed with all the greater intensity in this crisis.)*

*Also, the animator could choose: Matthew 14: 1- 13a, Luke 13: 34-35, or Luke 19:41-48****.***

**Oblate Texts**

**OMI Constitution 34**

Faith moves us to accept for love of the crucified Lord our personal sufferings, the various trials of the ministry and the daily demands of community life (cf. 2 Cor 12:10). Moreover, we will heed the invitation of the Lord when he calls us to practice other forms of voluntary penance.

**Going Deeper Into the Theme**

During the ‘Icosia Affair’ (see Eugene de Mazenod, Vol II, by Jean Leflon, pp. 429-516), Eugene de Mazenod lived perhaps his most severe years of tribulation, attack and misunderstanding on the part of the French government, Vatican officials and local Marseillaise administrators. This was a period of great crisis in which he was shaped spiritually and humanly. The experience was bitter and humiliating for him and he suffered especially because of the Holy Father’s position toward him. With prayer, deep roots of faith and the support of his Oblates around him, this period of crisis and tribulation helped sanctify him.

Spiritual Writings, 1812-1856, by Saint Eugene de Mazenod, pp. 221-222, # 175, “*To Bishop L. Frezza, Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Affairs*”

*In response to the communication of Bishop F. Capaccini, and so as not to give displeasure to the Pope, the Bishop of Icosia desists from his appeal to the Royal Court of Aix.*

Marseilles, November 28, 1834

[…] So as not to cause the least distress to the Holy Father, I have instructed my advocate to abandon my action and withdraw my appeal. But I was not the one who initiated this process, as Bishop Capaccini wrongly says, since a prior judgment entered against me (erasure from the electoral lists) at the instigation of the Government had condemned me; this sentence would have had immediate force as a final judgment, had I not appealed. So I repeat, it was not I but the Government who brought the action before the courts. The Pope was unhappy about it, he will no longer be so. My deference to his wishes has been total.

Bishop Capaccini is happily undisturbed in the Quirinal, he pays no heed to the quality and immensity of the sacrifice made by a Bishop who abandons his rights and disarms in the face of an astute and powerful enemy, quite ready to abuse his victory and walk all over me as he likes.

Enclosed is a copy of my letter to the Ministry of Worship. In it you will see I leave everything and abandon myself to Divine Providence. I wish I could add “and to the benevolence of the Holy Father,” but I hope for little from that quarter. The Holy Father, if I understand him correctly, has placed no value on either my character or my services, which gave me a right to his protection, nor on the affection accorded me by Leo XII and Pius VIII. If persecution drives me into exile from my country and to withdraw to Rome, I know I may not count on either grace or favour; my reward must come from God.

I wish I had a less sensitive heart, I would love less, be less tied up in a host of things which affect me very deeply within and I would be happy.

**Moment of Silence**

Consider Article 20 of the OMI Constitutions and Rules, second paragraph: “When faced with the demands of our mission and the needs to be met, we may feel weak and helpless. It is then that we can learn from the poor, especially making our own their patience, hope and solidarity.”

**Faith Sharing**

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

* What do we notice in the way Jesus faced crises in his life?
* From the incident we have read here, or any other you would like to mention, how did Saint Eugene approach difficult times in his life?
* What have I learned, what wisdom have I gained from crises that I have suffered?
* In this second year of the Oblate Triennium in which we focus on the Call to Conversion in the area of **Formation**, how do crises help “form” us, shape us, and call us to conversion?

As we reflect more deeply on the vow of poverty this year of the Oblate Triennium,

* Share how you have experienced your own poverty in times of crisis.
* Share a time from your personal experience of weakness and helplessness in the mission.
* What have you learned from the poor?

**Thanksgiving/ Prayer of Intentions**

**Prayer**

Addressing God, pray spontaneously for one another in ways that relate to what was shared, praising, thanking or asking God for the needed assistance, strength, light and love. Pray for each member of the group.

**Song/Blessing**