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**ONGOING FORMATION: Following Christ into the Paschal Mystery**

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

**Song:**

**Motivation**: The transfiguration experience, the teachings on the passion, death and resurrection are moments of intimacy where Jesus prepares his disciples for his passage. Our lives involve many moments in which we experienced the paschal mystery. There have been deaths and hopefully resurrections. Sometimes, we are stopped or imprisoned in a failure, a hurt, a rejection, an error, and we have not moved into new life. Livelong formation invites us to a new synthesis, to healing and to wholeness on individual, community, unit and congregational levels. Jesus invites us once again to learn from him.

**The Word of God Gospel of Matthew 17:1-8; 21-22**

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellingshere, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved;with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised.” And they were greatly distressed.

**Oblate Texts**

**Constitution 4**

The cross of Jesus Christ is central to our mission. Like the apostle Paul, we “preach Christ and him crucified” (1Cor 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)

**Going Deeper into the Theme**

In answering Christ’s invitation to follow him, we have already experienced the thrust of his challenge. “If anyone wishes to follow after me, then let him deny himself and take his cross upon him and follow me”. (Mark 8:34) The prospect of a Messiah who had to suffer and die prompted Peter to rebuke Jesus for making such a prediction. Jesus, in turn, rebuked Peter, and called on his disciples to follow him as a crucified Lord. We too share Peter’s abhorrence at this prospect and we are fearful before its challenge. Like Peter, we want strength, power, achievement, success in our apostolate. We are prepared to take a certain amount of suffering. But we find it hard, and, at times, almost impossible to face rejection, or the apparent failure to effect change with its accompanying frustration. Many of us experience a sense of helplessness in the face growing evil and injustice. Our fragile faith is tested.

In the experience of this fear and doubt we are at one with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Their confusion is ours, and like them, we are invited to take it to Christ for meaning. There is little value in wishing, as they did, that things had been otherwise. The cross is reality of life. We must learn to carry it as Christ did. (cf. *James E. Sullivan, Prayer with our Constitutions,* p 26)

**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 do I understand the paschal mystery in my missionary life as an Oblate?
* What has been for me a personal experience of death and resurrection?
* How do we as a community of Oblates experience the paschal mystery?
* Do I take some time to reflect on some particular situations and experiences of frustration, failure, suffering, mine and that of others, in the light of the paschal mystery?

**Intentions for our common prayer**

* That our formation houses and communities may be open to answer God’s call anew today and that we may let Christ mold us and afire in us the missionary zeal according to the Charism of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. *We pray to the Lord*
* That oblate formation today may be deeply rooted in Christ, with our charism, and open to the needs of the community and the mission of preaching the Good News to the poor.

*We pray to the Lord*

* That we may learn to always embrace, with faith and trust in the Risen Christ, the sufferings and crosses we encounter in our missionary lives, in order to become missionaries of hope and joy. *We pray to the Lord*

**Commitment**

Jesus personally formed the disciples he had chosen, initiating them into “the mystery of the Kingdom of God” (Mk 4:11). As a preparation for their mission he had them share in his ministry; to confirm their zeal he sent them his Spirit. This same Spirit forms Christ in those who endeavour to follow in the Apostles’ footsteps. As they enter more deeply into the mystery of the Saviour and his Church, he moves them to dedicate themselves to the evangelization of the poor. (Constitution 45)

We have to remain open and available to accomplish the Word’s work in the new world which is unfolding. Thus, Oblate formation will seek to make us genuine disciples of Jesus, friends united to him by unbreakable bonds, who will have as their goal in life to make him known, loved, and to spread his Kingdom. (Fernand Jetté, *Jesus Christ*, in Dictionary of Oblate Values, p.485)

**Final Prayer**

Grant us, Lord, we pray, that, being rightly conformed to the paschal mysteries, what we celebrate in joy may protect and save us with perpetual power. Though our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Blessing and Song**