**7**

**THE VOW OF POVERTY AND ONGOING FORMATION: MUTUAL sharING from OUR own poverty**

**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 9:10-17**

When the apostles returned, they explained to him what they had done. He took them and withdrew in private to a town called Bethsaida. The crowds, meanwhile, learned of this and followed him. He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, “Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.” He said to them, “Give them some food yourselves.” They replied, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people.” Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of [about] fifty.” They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking[\*](http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/9%22%20%5Cl%20%2250009016-1) the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

**TIME FOR SILENT REFLECTION**

**RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD: Psalm**

**OBLATE TEXTS:**

**OMI Constitution 20**

Our choice of poverty compels us to enter into a closer communion with Jesus and with the poor, to contest the excesses of power and wealth and to proclaim the coming of a new world freed from selfishness and open to sharing.

 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.

**2010 Chapter Calls**

 **“Mission” #6**

That Oblate Units and Regions continue to develop in the sharing of resources, personnel and finances across the Congregation.

**“Financial Stewardship” #1**

A renewed emphasis on our living and expression of the vow of poverty as a call to follow Jesus in solidarity with the poor with their many faces in our different contexts.

**GOING DEEPER INTO THE THEME:**

*Wilhelm Steckling, omi former Superior General, 2002*

**Collective witness to the first beatitude**The vow of poverty is not only a question of our personal following of Christ or a way of deepening our communion with the poor, it is also constitutive of a new type of brotherhood among ourselves. Through the vow, what happened at the beginning of the Church is made to happen again: “The Spirit prompted the first Christians to share everything. Under the influence of that same Spirit, we hold all things in common” (C 21). The vow thus constitutes community. If we fail to live it, community will suffer. If we live it out, our special way of being together can be a path of evangelization powerfully united to preaching and to our personal witnessing.

How can the community aspect of poverty become meaningful for people? Our choices of where we live, build our houses and facilities, make a statement. Many Oblate communities are established in poor areas. The 1992 Chapter is emphatic on this point: “Thus sharing in the life of the poor, they will be better able to announce more fully ‘the liberating presence of Jesus Christ’ and to accompany the poor in their efforts to construct ‘a world born of his resurrection’ (C 9). They will then be able to welcome the poor more easily....” (MTW 25).

At the same time not all the communities can be “inserted” in impoverished areas. The situation of small and large communities also differs. A small fraternity may more easily live at the level of ordinary people; big houses, on the other hand, witness to saving costs through sharing. But in any situation the vow of poverty lived as community should make us counter-cultural.

Greed and individualism thrive in the present system of global economics. In contrast, the major religions of the world proclaim very different values – care for creation, sharing with the less fortunate, holding out the hope of a better world. Can our communities become striking witnesses to a life based on Gospel values? Can our ways of dealing with finances evangelize society as the Benedictine monasteries transformed Europe centuries ago, or as the Franciscans did in Latin America, etc.?

Our holding all things in common will make an impact. More lay associates will take up some of the values enshrined in the Oblate charism; others, including leaders of society, will find inspiration in our communal use of this world’s bounty. The 50,000 participants at the World Social Forum 2002 in Porto Alegre saw “solidarity economy” as an alternative to neo-liberal globalization. When, among us Oblates, “all we acquire... belongs to the community” (C 22) our sharing becomes a sign of the universal destination of the goods of this world.

**SHARING OUR FAITH:**

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

* Can you remember any particular experience in which you were able to share with others out of your poverty?
* Can you share an experience of someone who was poor or marginalized sharing something with you?
* What can we do to make our vow of poverty more life giving to those around us?

**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.

**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.