

## NOVENA FOR OBLATE VOCATIONS

“Living the Oblate Charism: Inspiring Oblate Vocations”

(On the Occasion of the 150th Death Anniversary of Saint Eugene de Mazenod)

### Introduction

This year marks the 150th death anniversary of the Founder of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Saint Eugene de Mazenod. On this special occasion in the Institute’s life, we are invited to pray in thanksgiving and discernment on what the Congregation, its members, those they work with as Partners in Mission, and those whom they serve, the poor and the most abandoned, have become.

A century and a half after the death of the Founder, the Oblate vocation remains to be to proclaim the Good News to the poor and the most abandoned with zeal for the salvation of souls. There may have been changes and developments in the methods and scope of the missions over the years but the spirit of charity and love that drove the Founder and his first Oblates continues to be the same constant motivation of the Congregation. As individuals and as an apostolic community, Oblates strive to grow in the charism, the Spirit that moved the Founder, in its different elements and dimensions to continue the work of Jesus Christ in bringing the eternal decree of salvation especially to the poor and the most abandoned.

In our prayers, we implore that, through the intercession of Saint Eugene de Mazenod and of the Most Holy Immaculate Mother, Oblates and all those who share in their mission may continuously live the way of Jesus and the gift of Oblate charism. We pray that by such holy undertaking they may inspire more vocations, especially amongst the youth.

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DAY 2	THE OBLATE RESPONSE: OUR CALL
DAY 3	APOSTOLIC COMMUNITIES
DAY 4	AMONG THE POOR WITH THEIR MANY FACES
DAY 5	ADVOCATING JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION
DAY 6	PROMOTING INTER-RELIGIOUS AND INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE
DAY 7	FORMING THE YOUTH TO FACE TODAY’S CHALLENGES
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## DAY 1

## THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH

The weakening of the faith and the corruption of the world are challenges confronting our Church today. “Faced with such a deplorable situation, the Church earnestly appeals to the ministers whom she herself enrolled in the cause of her divine Spouse, to do all in their power, by word and example, to rekindle the flame of faith that has all but died in the hearts of so many of her children.” (EdM, Preface of the Rules)

All Christians are called to help the Church in shepherding back to the flock those who have been lost and in inviting those who have not received the Good News to become engaged in the communion of love in the Body of Christ. Through words and deeds, we teach them who Jesus Christ is and show them the way of love. “We lead them to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become like saints. “

**Scripture Reading** (choose any of the following:)

Dt 4:1, 5-9                      or;      Luke 15:11-31                      or;      Romans 1:24-32

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following:)

It is supremely important, it is urgently imperative, that we lead the multitude of lost sheep back to the fold that we teach these degenerate Christians who Jesus Christ is, that we rescue them and show them the way to eternal life. We must spare no effort to extend the Savior’s empire...and establish the honored observance of every virtue. (EdM, Preface)

Our Lord Jesus Christ has left us the task of continuing the great work of redemption of mankind. It is towards this unique end that all our efforts must tend. [The] spirit of being wholly devoted to the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls, is the spirit that is proper to our Congregation, a small one, to be sure, but which will always be powerful as long as she is holy. (EdM – 1817)

*Silence for reflection.*

### **Novena Prayer**

Merciful God, look with favor on your Church. Inspire each one of us to be more fervent in faith, steadfast in love and committed in hope. Instill in us a heart to serve those who are most in need.

Help us to loyally live up to our Christian calling, to serve and to love. By Your grace, may we be firmer in our commitment to follow Your will and so one day attain the glory of Your Kingdom.

Draw us together as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and those who share in the charism of St. Eugene so that we may be united in our endeavors for the salvation of all. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

Heavenly Father, You inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to send forth missionaries to teach and live the Gospel among the poor. Increase our love, we humbly pray, for those who are most abandoned.

Extend your loving call to many young men in our community, and grant them the generosity to give of themselves, their lives and their talents, to the service of Jesus Christ and the Church in the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

May more men of our community go forth as priests and brothers of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to serve those who are most in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, may our desire to serve You as Oblates of Mary Immaculate be always enflamed by the same Spirit who inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to dedicate and commit his life to the service of the poor and the most abandoned. Help us to live the Oblate charism with greater fidelity and joy so that many more will be inspired to hear and respond to the call of proclaiming the Good News to the world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Pray for us.*

*Praised be Jesus Christ. And Mary Immaculate.*

## **DAY 2**

### **THE OBLATE RESPONSE: OUR CALL**

Over the years, the motivations and directions of the Christian mission have taken on various developments as the Church witnesses in a fast-evolving world. The ever-changing signs of the times, taking on the realities of globalization, secularization, inculturation and information technology and the academic and scientific sophistication in philosophy, psychology and theology, among other fields, prompt the Church to continually discern the nature, directions and motives of its mission. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate share the same situation.

Always keen to put themselves at the service of the Church and its mission in the world, the Oblates dedicate themselves to the evangelization of the most abandoned (CC 5) by proclaiming the Word (CC 7) with boldness, humility and confidence (CC 8) as prophets of the new world (CC 9) who strive to reproduce in themselves the pattern of the life of Jesus (CC 2) and who through the eyes of the crucified Savior see the world which He redeemed with his blood (CC 4). Like Christ, the Oblates willingly leave everything behind and commit their lives, even to the point of death, for the proclamation of the Good News of the Lord to all peoples.

**Scripture Reading** (choose any of the following)

Exodus 3:1-14            or;        Mark 10:17-29            or;        2 Corinthians 4:1-13

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following)

What more sublime purpose than that of their Institute? Their founder is Jesus Christ, the very Son of God; their first fathers are the Apostles. They are called to be the Savior's co-workers, the co-redeemers of mankind... (EdM)

“What must we do, in turn, to succeed in winning back for Jesus Christ so many souls who have cast off his yoke? Work seriously to become saints...” (EdM)

Today, do we discern God’s will as to our congregational mission to evangelize the poor or just keep doing by inertia what we are used to? Our own saints will show us the right way! When it comes to solidarity with the poor, we have many martyrs of love and even of blood among our confreres, and they all have in common that they loved the poor with God’s heart. (Report of the Superior General to the 35th General Chapter)

*Silence for reflection.*

### **Novena Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us Saint Eugene de Mazenod whose love for our Lord Jesus Christ, passion for the Church and zeal for the salvation of souls have inspired us to come together to share the mission of proclaiming the Good News to the poor and most abandoned as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Amidst the many challenges we are facing in this world marked with secularization, globalization, sophisticated science and advanced technology, our hearts remain steadfast in hope and trust in your abounding grace to sustain us in carrying out the mission, which Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, inaugurated and commanded us to continue, with fortitude, wisdom and love.

Teach us to reproduce in our lives the pattern of the life of Jesus and to witness to the message of the Gospel that we may become His worthy and genuine disciples in proclaiming Your Kingdom to all peoples.

Grant us the grace to make our hearts constantly open to your will and to always be sensitive and respond to the urgent needs of the Church, especially the poor and the most abandoned, with daring, humility and trust. May all our deeds and words be done and uttered in holiness as a response to your call to a loving relationship and a genuine discipleship with Saint Eugene and the Blessed Virgin Mary as our models.

All these for Your glory, for the love of the Church and for the salvation of souls through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

### **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

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Extend your loving call to many young men in our community, and grant them the generosity to give of themselves, their lives and their talents, to the service of Jesus Christ and the Church in the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

May more men of our community go forth as priests and brothers of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to serve those who are most in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, may our desire to serve You as Oblates of Mary Immaculate be always enflamed by the same Spirit who inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to dedicate and commit his life to the service of the poor and the most abandoned. Help us to live the Oblate charism with greater fidelity and joy so that many more will be inspired to hear and respond to the call of proclaiming the Good News to the world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Pray for us.*

*Praised be Jesus Christ. And Mary Immaculate.*

## **DAY 3**

## **APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY**

Oblates are not just missionaries but are religious men of evangelical counsels living in faith as an apostolic community. At the heart of an Oblate's life is the apostolic community to which he belongs and from which all his missionary endeavors spring forth. This draws its inspiration from the life of Jesus and the Apostles who went together as brothers and friends to carry out the mission of proclaiming the Good News of salvation.

The apostolic community is "the living cell" of the Church and of the Congregation. Characteristic of the Oblates is their fraternal inter-dependence, sharing, care and concern for the sake of the Gospel, their hospitality that radiates the warmth of the Gospel, and their oneness in prayer that leads them to constant renewal and conversion. Indeed, community life is a witness to the presence of Christ amongst Oblates, the support of their evangelical life and a necessary condition for missionary effectiveness.

**Scripture Reading** (choose any of the following)

Sirach 25: 1                      or;      Matthew 28:16-20                      or;      Philippians 2:1-11

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following)

The Founder left us a legacy: "Among yourselves practice charity, charity, charity – and, outside, zeal for the salvation of souls." In fidelity to that testament, each member's zeal is sustained by the bonds of fraternal charity. By growing in unity of heart and mind, we bear witness before the world that Jesus lives in our midst and unites us in order to send us to proclaim God's reign. (Art.37, Constitutions and Rules)

On Prayer/Oraison: "This is the only way of reducing distances, to be at the same moment in our Lord's presence, it is so to speak like being side by side. We do not see each other, but we sense each other's presence, hear each other, lose ourselves in one and the same central point." (–EdM, 1852)

"You have earned all the love I have for you; you form only one person among yourselves. You form only one person with me. That is what the Lord demands of us since he is the principle and the bond of our union." (EdM, 1843)

"Between us missionaries [...] we are what we ought to be, that is to say, we have but one heart, one soul, one thought. It is admirable! Our consolations, like our hardships are unequalled." (EdM, 1816)

*Silence for reflection.*

### **Novena Prayer**

Heavenly Father, your Son Jesus Christ chose the Twelve to become his disciples with whom He shared His mission of bringing the Good News of salvation to Your beloved people. Their discipleship with Jesus went beyond the typical teacher-learner relationship. Their discipleship established a bond of true brotherhood and intimate friendship which they shared in turn to their successors in your holy Church. Through your Holy Spirit, we, too, share that intimate relationship with Christ through our apostolic community as Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

We thank and praise You for the gift of a Spirit-filled apostolic community on which all our missionary endeavors for the sake of Your Kingdom are founded and which helps us remember, interiorize and actualize the Oblate charism you bestowed on us through Saint Eugene de Mazenod, under the patronage of the Most Holy Immaculate Virgin Mary.

May our hearts and minds be receptive to your gift of the virtue of charity, desirous of union with You and with one another in prayer and meditation, capable of radiating the warmth of the Gospel to all. Help us to be steadfast in making the Oblate apostolic community a witness to the apostolic bond Jesus himself established with the Twelve for the Church to emulate in its life and mission.

We ask that our Oblate apostolic community be a testimony to the communion of love to which You invite us through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

### **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

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May more men of our community go forth as priests and brothers of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to serve those who are most in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Concluding Prayer**

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*Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Pray for us.*

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## DAY 4

## AMONG THE POOR WITH THEIR MANY FACES

The staggering rise in the level of poverty in the world today puts into the limelight the widening gap between the poor and the rich. But who are the poor? Why are they poor? These questions require serious reflection as to where we have gone to as Christians and as people of God.

We are a missionary Congregation. Our principal service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the poor and the most abandoned (CC 5). Cooperating with the Saviour and imitating His example, we commit ourselves principally to evangelizing the poor (CC 1). Thus, whatever their work, Oblates will collaborate, according to their vocation and by every means compatible with the Gospel, in changing all that is a cause of oppression and poverty (R 9a).

**Scripture Reading** (choose any of the following)

Sirach 4:1-10                    or;     Luke 4: 16-21                    or;     Romans 15:25-29

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following)

Come, then, and learn what you are in the eyes of God. All you poor of Jesus Christ, you afflicted, unfortunate, suffering, infirm, diseased, all you who are burdened with misery... You are the children of God, the brothers [and sisters] of Jesus Christ, co-heirs of His eternal kingdom, the cherished portion of his inheritance. In the words of Saint Peter, you are the holy people, you are kings, you are priests, in a certain sense you are Gods! (EdM 1813)

What do these poor people expect from the priest and the Oblates? They certainly expect us to show them much esteem, respect and love. They must feel that they have value in our eyes and merit our full attention. This is the starting point if we are to help them gain confidence in themselves and become aware of their dignity. (Fernand Jette, 1982)

*Silence for reflection.*

### **Novena Prayer**

God our Father, your Son Jesus Christ came into the world to free us from the slavery of sin and make us share in Your divinity, worthy to be called Your sons and daughters. His coming renews our relationship with You which enables us to taste the same glory which Your Son offers to us.

We thank you for the gift of Your Son. By His being poor, we become rich; from being enemies we are treated as His friends. By the gift of Saint Eugene to the Church, may we share the richness of Your presence with our brothers and sisters, especially with the poor and the most abandoned. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

### **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

Heavenly Father, You inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to send forth missionaries to teach and live the Gospel among the poor. Increase our love, we humbly pray, for those who are most abandoned.

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## **Novena Prayer**

Merciful and just God, by Your infinite love You shared your divine life to us and continue to impart your abundant grace to all of creation. We praise and thank you for your generosity and continuing presence in our lives through which we are able to serve you with hearts filled with joy.

In the world where injustice flourishes, grant us the courage to commit to the ideals of justice and equality which we as Your sons and daughters inherit by our dignity. Give us the gift of perseverance to preserve the order You established in the beginning of time and to promote values that would transform the world into a state according to Your will.

Give us ears, Lord, which can truly hear the cry of the voiceless. Give us mouths that passionately speak of God's glory to the innocent by preaching the gospel message of justice and peace, of love and mercy. Give us the hands filled with compassion for all of Your creation, recognizing the value of every creature so that Your love for all may be manifested by our service to all.

We ask all of these in the name of your holy and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

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## **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, may our desire to serve You as Oblates of Mary Immaculate be always enflamed by the same Spirit who inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to dedicate and commit his life to the service of the poor and the most abandoned. Help us to live the Oblate charism with greater fidelity and joy so that many more will be inspired to hear and respond to the call of proclaiming the Good News to the world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## **Day 6                    PROMOTING INTER-RELIGIOUS AND INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE**

In the recent past century, the world has indeed become a global village. Diverse cultures and religions, races and colors, and beliefs and traditions co-exist and merge into a rich dynamic of global existence crossing all borders and boundaries of differences. But behind the seeming beauty of divergence is the sad reality that in such condition, religious indifference and conflicts as well as violation and corruption of cultures emerge as consequences.

The Oblate mission envisages a world which values the richness and uniqueness of religious and cultural traditions. In all our missionary endeavors, we must always be sensitive to the mentality of the people, drawing on the riches of their culture and religious traditions. One of the mission's aims is the recovery of the sense of identity of the people, that is, to establish Christian communities rooted in the local culture (C7). Recognizing differences in beliefs, cultures, traditions, way of life, we should remember that all are humans with dignity and individuality to be respected and valued (RR 8a). To bring out the best in every culture and religion for the upholding of the dignity and the common welfare of all peoples is the goal of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

**Scriptural Reading** (choose any of the following)

John 4:4-26                      or;        Acts 13: 44-47                      or; Romans 3:25-30

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following)

We can recognize God's Spirit working within people of differing beliefs and cultures. In this dialogue with them we are certain that we shall encounter God. (1986 General Chapter)

Dialogue is an expression of charity towards all human beings. Charity is sharing in the Trinitarian love; it is a fundamental command of Jesus Christ and as such it is the driving force of mission. (Marcello Zago, OMI)

All men form but one community. This is so because all share a common destiny, namely God. The Church, therefore, urges her children to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture. (Vatican II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions)

**Novena Prayer**

Compassionate God, we are thankful to you for giving us St. Eugene de Mazenod to be our model in following the Christ our Crucified Savior. Help us, loving Father, to be compassionate to one another.

Help us to realize and appreciate our own identity so that we can recognize and value the uniqueness of others. Make us sensitive the cries and clamor of our brothers and sisters so that we can be the channels of and living witnesses to your great love. Enlighten us so that we may always be aware that we are one in the whole of creation and that we are part of the greater scheme of things.

Grant us the spirit of dialogue; dialogue with oneself, with our fellow humans, with nature and, most of all, the spirit of authentic dialogue with You, Lord.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to be compassionate and to love to one another, with the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

Heavenly Father, You inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to send forth missionaries to teach and live the Gospel among the poor. Increase our love, we humbly pray, for those who are most abandoned.

Extend your loving call to many young men in our community, and grant them the generosity to give of themselves, their lives and their talents, to the service of Jesus Christ and the Church in the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

May more men of our community go forth as priests and brothers of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to serve those who are most in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, may our desire to serve You as Oblates of Mary Immaculate be always enflamed by the same Spirit who inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to dedicate and commit his life to the service of the poor and the most abandoned. Help us to live the Oblate charism with greater fidelity and joy so that many more will be inspired to hear and respond to the call of proclaiming the Good News to the world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Pray for us.*

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## **DAY 7**                      FORMING THE YOUTH TO FACE TODAY'S CHALLENGES

The youth of today face numerous options in life which this complex world brings about. In the midst of these options, confusion often blinds them regarding their choice of what is best for them. Sometimes they take the wrong path by their myopic vision, selfish tendencies and often unguided decisions. This is the poverty of the youth – the dire need of a vision to see the future and the proper way to reach the destiny which God has prepared for them. To respond to that need is our mission. For Saint Eugene, the direction and guidance of the youth is an essential duty of the Institute.

To sustain our mission, we have to consider the people who will continue to work in it. We, therefore, need the youth to carry on the task we have started. We have to share with them the vision we have gained through the years. It is thus that we pass on from one generation to the next the legacy of Saint Eugene and the Oblates, all for the kingdom of God.

**Scripture Reading** (choose any of the following)

Psalm 25:6:7                      or;      Matthew 18: 1-5                      or;      Romans 10:17-18

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following)

Christian families, youth groups and Christian communities, whether parish or other, provide a favorable environment for the growth of vocations. Many young people discover there the person of Jesus and feel the attraction of his message. (C.53a)

Very well! I, too, will concentrate on the adolescent. I will make every effort to preserve the youth from the evils that threaten them, some of which have already affected them. And I will do it by inspiring them early in life with a love of virtue, respect for religion, a taste for piety, and horror of vice. (Abbé de Mazenod, Leflon, Vol. 1, p. 415.)

The direction of the youth will be considered an essential duty of our Institute. Consequently a society for young men will be established, if possible, in all our houses. (The Rule of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, Ch. 3 Sec. 3 Art. 1 & 2)

*Silence for reflection.*

### **Novena Prayer**

Almighty and loving God, You entrusted to our care the young people to be formed and educated in the light of the Gospel. Enlighten our minds so that through Your inspiration, we may inspire them to follow Your Holy Will. The example of Your Son is a grace for us. Grant us the courage to imitate Him and the fidelity to follow in His footsteps.

The youth is facing the enormous challenges of today with fear and uncertainty. May our ministry with them as entrusted by our Founder help them in their struggle for self-identity. Guide them to certainty in times of doubt and educate them in the values of the Gospels. Teach us to live out the ideals of our Founder, through which we can fulfill our duties to the youth, nurture vocations to the religious and priestly life and guide the youth in their decision-making.

May our love for them make the young experience God's love so that in return, they may respond with joyful hearts open to the Oblate way of life. May they respond lovingly and generously to the call of God who became man and offered his life generously to all. Grant us the fidelity of heart, Father, that we may closely follow Your Son, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

### **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

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### **Concluding Prayer**

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## Day 8

## INSPIRING OBLATE VOCATION

Today the Church is experiencing the decline of vocation to the priesthood and religious life. It is the same reality that almost all congregations are experiencing today. It is an alarming reality. As Catholic Christians and Oblates we are called to look into ourselves. Does the Church still make sense to today's younger generations? Do we make any significant impact to the youth of today in the light of the values of the Gospel? The apostolate of vocations concerns all Oblates individually and as a religious community with all their partners in mission. In cooperation with pontifical and diocesan programs, members of the Congregation should foster vocations, whether Oblate or others (R 53a).

Jesus never ceases to call people to follow him and to proclaim the Kingdom. Some are drawn to that call through the joy and generosity of our lives (CC 52). Many young people discover there the person of Jesus and feel the attraction of His message. It is primarily in such settings, then, that we ought to help the youth discover their vocation and to accompany them in their spiritual journey. In a brotherly way we will help them discern what the Lord expects of them and what special grace he offers them in his Church (CC 53)

**Scriptural Reading** (choose any of the following)

Jer 1: 4-10                      or;              Mk 10:17-22 or;              2 Peter 1: 3-10

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following)

God never asks sacrifices here on earth that are beyond our strength. This will not be an agonizing separation, a departure with no return. No, indeed! And God is witness to what I say. This is what He wishes of me: that I renounce the world...that I devote myself in a special way to His service so that I might rekindle the fire of faith which has all but died out among the poor. (EdM, 1808, when he informed his mother of his imminent departure for the seminary)

Why, then, are you disturbed Mama, and why after all that I have said, do you still listen to the evil suggestions which the evil spirit tries to put in your heart regarding my vocation to the priestly state. Ah! Good God! Isn't the Lord the Master of His creatures and who are we dare to resist Him? (EdM, 1808, to his mother)

I seem to see in each one of them an apostle called by a remarkable favor for the mercy of God, like those whom Our Lord chose for himself during his sojourn on earth, to proclaim everywhere the good news of salvation. (EdM)

### **Novena Prayer**

Compassionate Father, your son Jesus Christ called us to work in the vineyard of the Lord for the harvests are many and the laborers are few.

Grant us the grace of fidelity to our Christian calling so that we may imitate Jesus closely. By our witnessing to the great love of God for humanity we may be able to encourage and inspire others to respond to the call to priesthood and religious life, especially to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Help us become an authentic missionary so that by our way of life we may entice others to become missionary in their own way.

Help us to live in charity and increase in us the zeal for the salvation of all peoples. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our crucified savior, who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

Heavenly Father, You inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to send forth missionaries to teach and live the Gospel among the poor. Increase our love, we humbly pray, for those who are most abandoned.

Extend your loving call to many young men in our community, and grant them the generosity to give of themselves, their lives and their talents, to the service of Jesus Christ and the Church in the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

May more men of our community go forth as priests and brothers of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to serve those who are most in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, may our desire to serve You as Oblates of Mary Immaculate be always enflamed by the same Spirit who inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to dedicate and commit his life to the service of the poor and the most abandoned. Help us to live the Oblate charism with greater fidelity and joy so that many more will be inspired to hear and respond to the call of proclaiming the Good News to the world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Pray for us.*

*Praised be Jesus Christ. And Mary Immaculate.*

## **Day 9**

### **ENCOURAGING LAY PARTICIPATION IN THE MISSION**

The enrichment of the Church is not solely centered on the life of the clergy but on the participation of the great majority of the members of the Church, the lay people, as well. This calls for a process that needs dialogue, reflection and discernment making the ecclesial life meaningful and open to new gifts. Active and committed involvement of lay people strengthens and invigorates the life of the Church. Equipped and empowered lay Christians transform the wider culture of the secular world, in which they live and work.

The charism of Saint Eugene de Mazenod is a gift of the Spirit to the Church, and it radiates throughout the world. Lay people recognize that they are called to share in the charism according to their state of life, and to live it in ways that vary according to milieu and cultures. They share in the charism in a spirit of communion and reciprocity amongst themselves and with the Oblates. (R 37a)

**Scripture Reading** (choose any of the following)

Luke 10:1-5                      or;      Eph. 4:11-16                      or;      Rom 16:1-16

**Reflection Reading** (choose any of the following)

We shall support lay people in the discernment and development of their own talents and charisms, encouraging them to undertake ministries and apostolic commitments and thus to shoulder the responsibilities which are properly theirs in the Christian community. (R 7f)

The laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God. In the concrete, their apostolate is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification of men

[and] when they endeavor to have the Gospel spirit permeate and improve the temporal order. (Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People #2)

Pay tribute to our lay associates... They are for us, and through us for the entire Church, helpmates and supporters of incalculable devotedness. It is due to their friendship, prayers and generosity that many of our missionary works saw the light of day and have continued to prosper. (Fernand Jette, 1975)

### **Novena Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of vocation which you have given us. You called each of us by name, to participate in the building of your Kingdom. Help each one of us – clergy, religious and laity – to realize the vision of that Kingdom that your Son Jesus Christ has lived and proclaimed.

Father, may the charism you have given to Saint Eugene de Mazenod become visible in the life of every disciple of Christ: our Savior. And may they become for us our guide and assurance to that glorious life You promised.

Create in each of us an open heart and mind to be more zealous in our work of evangelizing the world through the gift of your Gospel. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

### **Prayer for Vocations to the OMI**

Heavenly Father, You inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to send forth missionaries to teach and live the Gospel among the poor. Increase our love, we humbly pray, for those who are most abandoned.

Extend your loving call to many young men in our community, and grant them the generosity to give of themselves, their lives and their talents, to the service of Jesus Christ and the Church in the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

May more men of our community go forth as priests and brothers of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to serve those who are most in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, may our desire to serve You as Oblates of Mary Immaculate be always enflamed by the same Spirit who inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod to dedicate and commit his life to the service of the poor and the most abandoned. Help us to live the Oblate charism with greater fidelity and joy so that many more will be inspired to hear and respond to the call of proclaiming the Good News to the world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Pray for us.*

*Praised be Jesus Christ. And Mary Immaculate.*