

## Letter for February 17, 2012

February 2nd, 2012 - Rome

Happy Feast Day! This year we celebrate 186 years since Pope Leo XII approved our Constitutions and Rules. We celebrate this grace with great joy, thanksgiving and a fraternal spirit among us. The Founder saw the Constitutions and Rules as uniting the Oblates in a society in which we would become holy missionaries and be dedicated to the salvation of God's poor. We see this expressed in the Preface to the CC&RR.

These two dimensions of our vocation strike me in the Preface. First of all, there is the strong expression of what burned in Eugene de Mazenod's missionary heart: the urgent need to evangelize, to preach the Gospel and reawaken the faith. He reached out in bold new ways to those who had lost the faith and had been neglected by the clergy of the time. This young missionary was busy reaching out to those not being touched by parish structures. He was aware of those who were being overlooked and whose faith was dying. He sought ways to speak to them in their language and to gather them. He met them on their own ground and took the Word to them. He longed to bring them into contact with the Church and to reawaken their faith so that they would come to know Jesus and become his disciples.

In the Chapter of 2010, the call made for us to Conversion in the area of Mission asked us if we are merely satisfied with what we are doing and whether we are simply caring for those who are already believers. We are invited to become uncomfortable and to question ourselves. Are we seeking to bring Jesus to those who are missing out on his Good News and to work creatively with them? As missionaries, it is not our vocation to be content in doing good pastoral work for the people who come to us. Like Eugene, moved by love for Christ and the Church, we are called to notice people who don't get touched by the pastoral structures, those on the fringes and those who suffer in poverty in its many faces. We seek them out and communicate the Gospel in their language so that God's grace might draw them to his Son and to the Church.

The other dimension which strongly appears in the Preface is the holiness of the missionaries who will be preachers of the Good News. To accomplish the great mission before them, the missionaries must be true disciples of Jesus Christ and transformed by the Word they preach. The call to conversion is a commitment to give ourselves in an ongoing, disciplined way to the transforming process of God's grace. Over a lifelong journey, the Spirit will fashion us into truer images and likenesses of God. What does holiness mean for us today? How do we live the Founder's mandate: "They must strive to be saints"?

Our CC&RR guide us in an understanding of Oblate holiness, a lifelong journey into Jesus, the Savior. Prayer, individual and communal; a life founded on the sacraments and the Word of God; apostolic communal life; a relationship to Mary; living the fullness of our four vows; and qualities like generosity, joy, humility, forgiveness and hospitality are essential to our growth in holiness found in our CC & RR. Also part of Oblate holiness expressed in our CC&RR are compassion; solidarity with the poor; hunger for justice; a capacity for dialog, mutual respect and responsibility; a simple life that respects the environment. We return to our OMI CC&RR to deepen this sense of holiness which is lived in relation to God, to our neighbor, to our very self and to creation. Do you have a copy readily accessible?

This February 17<sup>th</sup> let us ask for the grace to renew our missionary vision and our thirst for holiness. Together, let us give thanks for the Congregation and celebrate this day by renewing our commitment as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. I invite us to take some time together to share "signs of life" that we see in the Congregation.

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

*Father Louis Lougen, OMI  
Superior General*