



MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

The Superior General

Casa Generalizia – Via Aurelia, 290 – 00165 Roma, Italia
Phone: (39.06) 39.87.71 – Email: lougen@omigen.org

L.J.C. et M.I.

The Letter of Superior General to the Congregation on the Anniversary of the Papal Approval of the Constitutions and Rules – February 17, 2021

Pope Leo XII formally approved our Constitutions and Rules on February 17, 1826. To this day, revised and adapted over the past 195 years, they remain "a privileged means for each Oblate to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ "(C # 163). The Preface to the CCRR expresses the vision that burned in Eugene's heart: motivated by his love for Christ, he called together others who would embrace a life of holiness, announcing Christ to the poor and working to rebuild the Church. The virtuous life of those preachers was essential to effective evangelization.

This year, February 17th falls on Ash Wednesday, and we will celebrate our feast day on Tuesday, February 16th. All over the world marked by the pandemic, we will gather as best we can to give thanks for the grace of our vocation. The COVID-19 virus has been an occasion to see the Oblate charism, with its great flexibility and focus on the urgent needs of the people, rising to the occasion to respond with unmeasured zeal. Oblates have found creative ways to minister spiritually, as well as assisting many people in their material needs.

With our collaborators and Associates, we have provided needed financial help for the unemployed and for essential needs such as rent, food, water, medicines, cleaning needs, gloves, masks, and even some lodging. Together with the Treasurer General's office, the Office of Oblate Mission Sustainability and Global Oblate Fundraisers have assisted many Units in reaching out to the most vulnerable sectors of society at this time. OMIWORLD.ORG has been publishing the many creative efforts that Oblates have developed to attend to the needs of the people we serve.

Along with the poor and with all humanity, we too have suffered the same routines and precariousness of life: wearing masks even within our residences, constantly washing our hands, restricting our movements and following social-distancing, adapting to isolation and quarantine; we too have contracted COVID-19, and a considerable number of our brothers and sisters who live the Oblate charism have died. We are adjusting to the situation which evolves day by day: we move ahead one step with the development of vaccines; then, uneven availability and confusion. New strains of the virus appear; more uncertainty. And on and on. We are blessed that a dimension of our charism is missionary flexibility and adaptability as we consider new approaches to our life and ministry.

The pandemic is helping us see more clearly what is essential in life. The Spirit speaks to us in the signs of the times of this pandemic and enriches our missionary lives.

- **Our faith is deepened** as we affirm God is right alongside us in this mess. We know that, with God, all things work together for the good of those who love Him. Nothing is outside of God's creative ability to bring good from it. We believe this and we renew our oblation to live for the Reign of God.
- The pandemic has made us aware of **our common vulnerability**. No sector of humanity, no state, no global corporation controls the world. Armies do not regulate borders as the virus travels around the world. St. Eugene knew the wisdom and power of the cross. With courage and humility, we embrace our vulnerability and we gain wisdom and strength.
- The pandemic, with its isolation and distancing, has provided the opportunity to **draw closer together**. Both in religious traditions and secular life, we have discovered a new sense of solidarity and care for one another. The pandemic has reminded us that our missionary life must be based on apostolic community accompanied by prayer and the vowed life. Already in 1816, when Fr. De Mazenod called together Fr. Tempier and his other companions, he was convinced of this.

- We have to ask ourselves whether we too are caught up in the conversation around '**returning to normal**,' or the 'new normal,' etc. This ignores the reality that the majority of the people in the world have never experienced the concept of 'normal' being spoken of. The people we serve around the globe live without water, without the minimum of necessary food, without medical care, etc. The pandemic must open the eyes of the world to the great injustice that the majority of earth's people never have enjoyed a so-called 'normal' life.
- The pandemic has helped us become more aware that consumerism and materialism generate poverty and destroy the environment. These idols of society must be exchanged for a **concern for the common good**, expressed in caring for the poor and for our common home.

In the local community in which I am living at this time, six Oblate residents died during Advent. This was a journey through fear and anxiety, deep sorrow and pain. We recognized we were living what the rest of humanity was going through with the pandemic. The greatest pain we felt came from being separated from our brother Oblates as they lay dying. The Superior, Fr. John Hanley, geared up in hospital gown, gloves, shoe coverings, mask and visor. He crossed borders to go into the corridor that was infested with the virus in order to anoint our brothers. He was a missionary within our community, risking his health to minister to the dying.

Many Oblates and our collaborators did the same around the world. Our gratitude goes out to all of you who left nothing undared for the Reign of God! Thank you!

One very practical note: the 2nd Oblate Lay Associations Congress (2 OLAC 21) has been rescheduled from July 2021 to a date in 2022 to ensure the maximum of participation for all who live the Oblate charism around the world. The change of date will also provide for better preparation and enhance the experience of the Congress as well as its outcome. Please expect to hear the exact date from the Committee very soon.

As we give thanks for the beauty of our vocation, I ask you to pray and work for vocations. Don't miss the opportunity to invite others to live the Oblate charism! We pray to Our Lady, Mary Immaculate, to deepen within us the capacity to invite and accompany vocations to Oblate life and to the many ways of life associated with the charism. During this special year dedicated to St. Joseph, we turn to his intercession as our secondary patron and as the patron of Oblate Brothers to be our intercessor in following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Happy feast day!

Louis Lougen, O.M.I.

Father Louis Lougen, OMI
Superior General

Tewksbury, MA, USA