

**ADDRESS OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL  
AT THE CLOSING OF THE CHAPTER**

*Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
Nemi, October 14, 2022*

My dear brother capitulants and all of you who participated in the Chapter as auxiliary personnel.

The first word I want to say to you from the bottom of my heart is thank you! Thank you very much for being the way you are and for dreaming with hope what you want to be. Thank you for your effort and your work at the service of the mission and the Congregation during these days. Above all, thank you very much for the family and fraternal spirit and the mutual affection you have shown each other. Your witness makes me dream, with the Founder, that we are the most united family on earth. A unity that is built on the joyful respect for our rich diversity, joyfully lived in these days and that is a sign of hope for the poor, for the Church and for our charismatic family. I hope that what we have lived here in Nemi can gradually permeate every corner of our Oblate world.

I have heard in this room the concern about post-capitular animation. Let us begin ourselves and let us begin now, without waiting for tomorrow. At the closing of the General Chapter, I would like to place before our eyes the powerful image evoked by Pope Francis in his message to the Chapter: the group of the first missionaries of Provence on their way, on pilgrimage, to preach the Good News in the villages of Provence. I believe that this image can be an icon that expresses what we have lived in these days and also to stimulate us in our journey as pilgrims of hope in communion.

Let us remember: in the days prior to the preaching of their first mission, the Missionaries of Provence had lived through intense personal emotions: days of radical farewells for many of them; days of taking risks by abandoning their settled life to start living in community without hardly knowing each other; days of shared dreams, of preparing together the text of the Supplication to the Vicars General. We do not know how many amendments and subamendments and drafts they had to make before arriving at the final text we know. Would it be something similar to what we have experienced in this room?

Before setting out to preach the mission, they made their first spiritual retreat. Then they decided to go on foot, from the house in Aix to Grans, some forty kilometers. Their intention was to imitate as much as possible the Apostles who, sent by Jesus and in the same way as Jesus did, went out on the roads to preach the Good News of the Kingdom. They wanted in everything to live like the

Apostles, that is, they wanted to live the Gospel. Undoubtedly along the way they discovered at their side the Pilgrim who made their hearts burn with hope, as happened with those on the road to Emmaus. In his first mission the Founder sees miracles: the poor hear the Gospel in their mother tongue and open their hearts to God's mercy, reconciliation is achieved between divided families, Jesus becomes present in their midst with his forgiving and healing power.

The missionaries felt sent to preach the Good News to the poor, and the poor received it with joy. This filled the hearts of the poor with hope and also that of the missionaries. Let us say that they lived what Pope Francis asks of us in his message: "learn to recognize hope among the poor to whom you are sent, who often manage to find it in the midst of the most difficult situations. Let yourself be evangelized by the poor whom you evangelize: they teach you the way of hope, for the Church and for the world".

From the earliest days, our charismatic family has not ceased to go on pilgrimage, boldly exploring new paths to proclaim the Gospel. The Pope told us: "You have chosen to be pilgrims, to rediscover and live your condition as travelers in this world, together with men and women, the poor and the least of the earth, to whom the Lord sends you to announce his Kingdom". It would be a drama if we were to abandon the poor on our pilgrimage, but even more, we are called to walk with them to be sowers of hope and communion in the heart of the world.

We have experienced the grace of participating in this Chapter: Let us go out on the roads to meet our brothers and sisters in humanity, especially the poor! Let us go out on the roads to share the wonders we have discovered during these days! Let us walk, yes, but let us walk together, being promoters of communion in a Church that walks *synodically*. Let us walk together living the Gospel and following the path outlined by our Constitutions and Rules. Let us walk together exploring how to promote communion and universal human fraternity, how to promote peace and reconciliation in this broken world: Let us be promoters of the justice willed by God, promoters of care for all creation that inhabits our common home and accompanying and protecting the most vulnerable. Let us be simple servants inhabited by the transforming power of the Gospel, announcing in community that the Kingdom is already among us.

As we close the General Chapter, I feel that a new adventure begins for the entire Oblate family: the adventure of living our beloved as pilgrims of hope in communion. Let us be animators of the Chapter in our respective communities. To this end, let us set out each day to be those pilgrims who enthusiastically live the Gospel and invite others to share the journey towards the One who will be

all in all and who is bringing about the miracle of the new heaven and the new earth that one day we hope to inhabit. Let Eugene de Mazenod, his first companions and all the Oblate saints who have gone before us accompany us on this pilgrimage by their witness and intercession.

I declare the XXXVII General Chapter of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate closed,

Laudetur Jesus Christus, et Maria Immaculata.