

**Homily delivered by the Superior General Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI
during the Closing Eucharistic Celebration
of the Formation Workshop for OMI Post-novitiate formators**

July 30, 2021

"And how should men who want to follow in the footsteps of their divine Master Jesus Christ conduct themselves if they, in their turn, are to win back the many souls who have thrown off his yoke? They must strive to be saints. They must walk courageously along the same paths trodden by so many before them: apostolic labourers for the Gospel..." (*Preface of Saint Eugene*).

St. Eugene founded his missionary community for two finalities: to evangelize the poor, the most abandoned and to grow in holiness so that they would become saints. As formators, you have the mission to help our young men grow in zeal and holiness. In this way, you share in this special responsibility of the Superior General which is vital to the life and mission of the Congregation (C # 49).

"The task is overwhelming" was expressed by some of you.

Realizing that formation is overwhelming and somewhat beyond us is a very good place to be. It makes us humble. It calls us to prepare well, to make formation our priority in time and energy and to continually seek to prepare ourselves more fully in the art of accompaniment. The Holy Spirit is the formator par excellence and we are humble instruments of the Spirit. With the awareness that we are dealing with the sacred journeys, we approach our younger brothers with great respect for what God is doing in their lives.

I have also heard you say many times that the ministry of formation is about the growth of the formators as well as the growth of the young men. You have said that we learn from the men in formation; they teach us; they call us to grow. As formators we don't simply work to form or to minister to the young men, but there is a mutual interaction and we discover that we are shaped by those we accompany. There is humility and life in such an attitude. I encourage you to treasure this missionary dynamic and let it become a source of life for you.

Imagine how the apostles felt with the Resurrected Lord coming through the doors and upbraiding them, and then sending them out to proclaim the Good News to the entire world! That too was an

overwhelming task. Like the Apostles, Jesus assures us that He is with us, working through us and confirming our mission by the signs that accompany the ministry of formation. You have shared many good signs during these days. Thank you for witnessing to the grace of the formation process!

In this Eucharist, in the spirit of C. # 49, the members of the General Council and I wish to bless you, confirm you in your ministry and send you anew to your mission as formators. I cite the words of Paul to Timothy: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching" (2 Tim. 4:1).

You are missionary formators whose feet bring the joy and peace of the Gospel to those you accompany. We bless your feet that accompany our post-novices over the mountains, in the ups and downs of their vocational journey. May you help them discover the joy of salvation, the gift of inner healing and Gospel freedom for the mission to bring the Good News to the poor and to become saints in this missionary Congregation! God bless you!