

**Constitutions and Rules
of the Congregation
of the Missionary Oblates
of Mary Immaculate**



Rome 2018



Oblation crucifix of Saint Eugene de Mazenod and the formula of vows which he pronounced on November 1, 1824

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Presentation

Dear Brother Oblates,

It is with great joy that I present to you this new edition which contains the changes and additions made by the General Chapters of 2004, 2010 and 2016, which have been confirmed by the Holy See.

We celebrate another congregational milestone this year, recalling that Eugene de Mazenod retreated to Saint Laurent du Verdon between August and September of 1818 to write the first edition of the Constitutions and Rules for the Missionaries of Provence. He presented them to the missionaries gathered in their annual retreat from October 23 to November 1, 1818.

I invite us, personally and in community, during this jubilee year, to spend a little time each day to ponder our Constitutions and Rules. The first ten constitutions are a beautiful expression of the Oblate charism. Those from number 11 to number 45, describe our consecrated life: the evangelical counsels, living in faith and life in apostolic community. The wisdom of constitutions such as those on formation and leadership will also enrich the way

we live our charism.

Meditating on our Constitutions and Rules can assist us on the way to becoming saints, as desired by our Founder. Pope Francis' recent letter, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, expresses in very down-to-earth manner, what holiness looks like and how it is central to our lives. He is calling us to be renewed in our own charism!

During a visit to Saint Joseph's Scholasticate in Cedara, outside of the refectory, I saw the following on the bulletin board: "The Constitutions and Rules: is it a reference book, or a Book of Life?" It is a timely question for us to ponder and an invitation to renew our friendship with our CCRR so that it becomes a real guide for living the charism handed on to us by Eugene de Mazenod.

I am grateful to those Oblates who gave their time and dedication to prepare this edition of our Constitutions and Rules. May Our Lady help us to live them!

Fr. Louis Lougen, O.M.I.

Louis Lougen, O.M.I.
Superior General

Rome, May 21, 2018
Feast of Saint Eugene de Mazenod



Sacra Congregatio
pro Religiosis
et Institutis Saecularibus

Prot. n. M. 29 - 1/80

Decree

The Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, whose General House is in Rome, is devoted principally to the evangelization of the poor.

In conformity with the principles of the second Vatican Council and other ecclesiastical regulations, the Congregation has very carefully re-written the text of its Constitutions and the Superior General, in the name of the 30th Chapter, has presented the text to the Holy See for its approval.

The Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, having submitted the text to consultors for study and having taken account of the vote by the Congress

and after due consideration, by the present Decree approves and confirms it with the changes indicated by the same Congress, in conformity with the copy in French preserved in our archives *servatis de jure servandis*.

This Sacred Congregation expresses the wish that, inspired by the word and example of their Founder Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate may live ever more generously their total consecration to God and the specific mission entrusted to them by the Church.

E. Card. Pironio, Pref.

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*+ Augustin Mayer
Secr.*

+ Augustin Mayer
Secr.

Given at Rome, July 3, 1982.

Foreword

Our Lord Jesus Christ, when the appointed time came, was sent by the Father and filled with the Spirit "to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour" (Lk 4:18-19). He called men to become disciples and share in his mission; in the Church, he continues to call others to follow him.

Saint Eugene de Mazenod heard that call. Burning with love for Jesus and his Church, he suffered deeply on seeing how God's people were abandoned. He chose to become "the servant and priest of the poor" and to give his life wholly to them.

Faced with an overwhelming task, he gathered a few priests around him, men who shared his impassioned zeal for the most abandoned. "Live together as brothers," he urged them; "Strive to imitate the virtues and example of our Saviour Jesus Christ principally through preaching the Word of God to the poor." At his persuad-

ing, they committed themselves permanently to the preaching of missions, binding themselves by religious vows. Soon afterwards, he decided to receive Brothers as true sons of the family. Thus began the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of the Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary.

On February 17, 1826, the new Congregation and its Constitutions were formally approved by Pope Leo XII. For the Oblates, the Founder's *Preface* to the Constitutions will always be an unrivalled expression of his charism and a bond of unity for the Congregation. Here, then, is that text which each succeeding generation of Oblates has treasured as its *Rule of Life*:

Preface

The Church, that glorious inheritance purchased by Christ the Saviour at the cost of his own blood, has in our days been cruelly ravaged. The beloved spouse of God's only begotten Son is torn with anguish as she mourns the shameful defection of the children she herself bore. Christians, but apostates, and utterly mindless of God's blessings, they provoke divine justice by their crimes. And did we not know that the sacred deposit of faith is to be preserved intact to the end of time, we would hardly be able to recognize the religion of Christ from the few remaining traces of its past glory that lie scattered about. Such is the state of things brought about by the malice and corruption of present-day Christians that it can be truly said that the greater number of them are worse off now than was the gentile world before its idols were destroyed by the Cross.

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. Alas, few heed their

Mother's urgent plea. Indeed, many even aggravate things by their own disgraceful conduct and, instead of trying to lead people back to the ways of justice, they themselves must often be reminded of their own duties.

The sight of these evils has so touched the hearts of certain priests, zealous for the glory of God, men with an ardent love for the Church, that they are willing to give their lives, if need be, for the salvation of souls.

They are convinced that if priests could be formed, afire with zeal for men's salvation, priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue - in a word, apostolic men deeply conscious of the need to reform themselves, who would labour with all the resources at their command to convert others - then there would be ample reason to believe that in a short while people who had gone astray might be brought back to their long-unrecognized responsibilities. "Take great care about what you do and what you teach," was Paul's charge to Timothy, "Always do this, and thus you will save both yourself and those who listen to you" (1 Tim 4: 16).

How, indeed, did our Lord Jesus Christ proceed when he undertook to convert the world? He chose a number of apostles and

disciples whom he himself trained in piety, and he filled them with his Spirit. These men he sent forth, once they had been schooled in his teaching, to conquer the world which, before long, was to bow to his holy rule.

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 who, while carrying out the same ministry to which they themselves now feel called, handed on such splendid examples of virtue. They must wholly renounce themselves, striving solely for the glory of God, the good of the Church, and the growth and salvation of souls. They must constantly renew themselves in the spirit of their vocation, living in a state of habitual self-denial and seeking at all times to reach the very summit of perfection. They must work unremittingly to become humble, meek, obedient, lovers of poverty and penance, mortified, free from inordinate attachment to the world or to family, men filled with zeal, ready to sacrifice goods, talents, ease, self, even their life, for the love of Jesus Christ, the service of the Church,

and the sanctification of their brethren. And thus, filled with unbounded confidence in God, they are ready to enter the combat, to fight, even unto death, for the greater glory of his most holy and sublime Name.

How vast the field that lies before them! How worthy and holy the undertaking! The people are caught up in crass ignorance of all that pertains to their salvation. The consequence of their ignorance has been a weakening of the faith and a corruption of morals with all the licence which that inevitably entails. Thus, 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 from Satan's power and show them the way to eternal life. We must spare no effort to extend the Saviour's empire and to destroy the dominion of hell. We must check the manifold evils of sin and establish the honoured observance of every virtue. We must lead men to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become saints.

Such are the great works of salvation that can crown the efforts of priests whom God has inspired with the desire to form themselves into a Society in order to work more

effectively for the salvation of souls and for their own sanctification. To bring all this into being, they must carry out their duty worthily, faithfully fulfilling their splendid vocation.

But it is not enough for them simply to be convinced of the sublime nature of the ministry to which they have been called. The example of the saints and reason itself make it amply clear that the success of such a holy undertaking as well as the maintenance of discipline in any society make certain rules of life absolutely necessary for unity of thought and action among the members. Such unity is a body's strength, keeping up its fervour and insuring that it lasts.

Wherefore, while pledging themselves to all the works of zeal which priestly charity can inspire – above all, to the work of the missions, which is the main reason for their union – these priests, joined together in a society, resolve to obey the following Constitutions and Rules; by living them they hope to obtain all the benefits they need for their own sanctification and for the salvation of souls.

(1825 Manuscript)

*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 Saviour's co-workers, the
co-redeemers of mankind;
and even though, because
of their present small number
and the more urgent needs
of the people around them,
they have to limit the scope of their zeal,
for the time being,
to the poor of our countryside and others;
their ambition should,
in its holy aspirations,
embrace the vast expanse of the whole earth.*

- 1818 -

PART ONE

THE OBLATE CHARISM

Chapter One

Mission

1 The call of Jesus Christ, heard within the Church through people's need for salvation, draws us together as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Christ thus invites us to follow him and to share in his mission through word and work.

Our call

We are a clerical Congregation of pontifical right. We come together in apostolic communities of priests and Brothers, united to God by the vows of religion. Cooperating with the Saviour and imitating his example, we commit ourselves principally to evangelizing the poor.

2 We are men "set apart for the Gospel" (Rom 1:1), men ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus. The desire to co-operate with him draws us to know him more deeply, to identify with him, to let him live in us.

To live
Christ Jesus

To preach
Christ crucified

*Like the Apostle, to preach
"Jesus Christ, and him crucified...
not in loftiness of speech,
but in the showing of the Spirit,"
that is to say, by making manifest
that we have pondered in our hearts
the words which we proclaim,
and that we began to practice
before setting out to teach.*

- 1826 -

With Jesus on
the cross

*Since the ministers of the Gospel
will never reap
abundant fruit from their labours,
unless they hold in highest esteem,
and, so to speak, constantly bear about
in their own body the death sufferings of Jesus, the
members of our Society
will earnestly strive to keep their passions
in check and to deny their self-will in everything;
like the Apostle, they will glory
in their weaknesses, in insults,
persecutions and distress
endured for the sake of Christ.*

- 1826 -

We strive to reproduce in ourselves the pattern of his life. Thus, we give ourselves to the Father in obedience even unto death and dedicate ourselves to God's people in unselfish love. Our apostolic zeal is sustained by the unreserved gift we make of ourselves in our oblation, an offering constantly renewed by the challenges of our mission.

3 The community of the Apostles with Jesus is the model of our life. Our Lord grouped the Twelve around him to be his companions and to be sent out as his messengers (cf. Mk 3:14). The call and the presence of the Lord among us today bind us together in charity and obedience to create anew in our own lives the Apostles' unity with him and their common mission in his Spirit.

In apostolic
community

4 The cross of Jesus Christ is central to our mission. Like the apostle Paul, we "preach Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). If we bear in our body the death of Jesus, it is with the hope that the life of Jesus, too, may be seen in our body (cf. 2 Cor 4:10). Through the eyes of our crucified Saviour we see the world which he redeemed with his blood, desiring that those in whom he continues to suffer will know also the power of his resurrection (cf. Phil 3:10).

To live Christ
Jesus crucified

5 We are a missionary Congregation. Our principal service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. We preach the Gospel among people who have not yet received it and help them see their own values in its light. Where the Church is already established, our commitment is to those groups it touches least.

Wherever we work, our mission is especially to those people whose condition cries out for salvation and for the hope which only Jesus Christ can fully bring. These are the poor with their many faces; we give them our preference.

6 Our love for the Church inspires us to fulfil our mission in communion with the pastors whom the Lord has given to his people; we accept loyally, with an enlightened faith, the guidance and teachings of the successors of Peter and the Apostles.

We coordinate our missionary activity with the overall pastoral plan of the local Churches where we work, and we collaborate in a spirit of brotherhood with others who work for the Gospel.

Our efforts will be characterized by a genuine desire for unity with all who consider themselves followers of Jesus, so that, according to his prayer, all may believe that

the Father has sent him (cf. Jn 17:21). Finally, in our hope for the coming of God's reign, we are united with all those who, without acknowledging Christ as Lord, nevertheless love what he loves.

7 As priests and Brothers, we have complementary responsibilities in evangelizing. We will spare no effort to awaken or to re-awaken the faith in the people to whom we are sent, and we will help them to discover "who Christ is". Our mission puts us on constant call to respond to the most urgent needs of the Church through various forms of witness and ministry, but especially through proclaiming the Word of God which finds its fulfilment in the celebration of the sacraments and in service to others. We have as our goal to establish Christian communities and Churches deeply rooted in the local culture and fully responsible for their own development and growth.

R 7a. Oblates are committed to missionary work as members of the Congregation and of their respective Provinces. All members are to participate in the planning and orientation of the apostolate for which, however, Superiors bear final responsibility.

R 7b. Preaching missions at home, mission to youth, and sending missionaries abroad

have been traditionally central to our apostolate. There is no ministry, however, which is foreign to us, provided we never lose sight of the Congregation's primary purpose: to evangelize the most abandoned.

- R 7c.** Oblate Brothers share in the common priesthood of Christ. They are called to cooperate in their own way in reconciling all things in him (cf. Col 1:20). Through their religious consecration, they offer a particular witness to a life inspired by the Gospel.

Brothers participate in the missionary work of building up the Church everywhere, especially in those areas where the Word is first being proclaimed. Missioned by the Church, their technical, professional or pastoral service, as well as the witness of their life, constitute their ministry of evangelization.

- R 7d.** Faithfulness to our Oblate vocation must guide us in our missionary enterprises and in accepting pastoral assignments. Each Province will apply this concern as a guideline in establishing its priorities and in determining which ministries to accept within its own boundaries. The same concern will also serve as a criterion in the periodic re-evaluation of our apostolic commitments.

- R 7e.** The acceptance of a new Mission and the approval of general contracts between a Province and a local Ordinary pertain to the Superior General in Council.
The approval of the Superior General in Council is required for a Province to take charge of a major seminary or educational institution, to assume a parish in perpetuity, to accept some work which is not customary among us, and also to relinquish any of the above. Proposals are submitted by the Provincial in Council.
- R 7f.** 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 7g.** In proclaiming the Word, it is our tradition to be simple and direct and to speak a language adapted to and easily understood by our hearers. In all our ministry, but especially in that of reconciliation, we will reflect the understanding, patience and compassion of the Saviour.

Simplicity in preaching

To aim at elegance of style rather than to solidity of doctrine would go directly counter to the spirit of our Rule ... Our one and only aim should be to instruct people ... not only to break the bread of the Word for them but to chew it for them as well; in a word, to insure that when our discourses are over, they are not tempted to heap foolish praise on what they have not understood, but, instead, that they go back home edified, touched, instructed, able to repeat in their own family circle what they have learned from our mouth.

- 1818 -

The ministry of reconciliation

Why has Jesus Christ... entrusted us with this word of reconciliation, if not in order that it be effectively applied to sinners ... and that they be truly reconciled with God? "God has given us the ministry of reconciliation; he, in Christ, reconciled the world to himself, no longer reckoning mankind's sins, but planting in us the message of salvation. "Woe to the fainthearted minister ... who would hide in the earth the talent which he has received so that it may bear fruit, and who would shut off ... this abundant fountain for the rebirth of souls which Jesus Christ has put in him.

Let the missionaries always welcome sinners with an inexhaustible charity, give them courage ... by showing them an understanding heart; in a word, treat them as they themselves would wish to be treated if they were in their unfortunate condition.

- 1826 (and 1818) -

8 We will always be close to the people with whom we work, taking into account their values and aspirations. To seek out new ways for the Word of God to reach their hearts often calls for daring; to present Gospel demands in all clarity should never intimidate us. Awareness of our own shortcomings humbles us, yet God's power makes us confident as we strive to bring all people - especially the poor - to full consciousness of their dignity as human beings and as sons and daughters of God.

With daring,
humility and trust

R 8a. We will let our lives be enriched by the poor and the marginalized as we work with them, for they can make us hear in new ways the Gospel we proclaim. We must always be sensitive to the mentality of the people, drawing on the riches of their culture and religious traditions.

9 We are members of the prophetic Church. While recognizing our own need for conversion, we bear witness to God's holiness and justice. We announce the liberating presence of Jesus Christ and the new world born in his resurrection. We will hear and make heard the clamour of the voiceless, which is a cry to God who brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly (cf. Lk 1:52). This prophetic mission is carried out in communion with the Church, in con-

As prophets
of the new world

formity with the directives of the hierarchy and in dependence on our Superiors.

R 9a. Action on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity of creation is an integral part of evangelization.

Responding to the call of the Spirit, some Oblates identify themselves with the poor, sharing their life and commitment to justice; others are present where decisions affecting the future of the poor are being made. In each case, a serious discernment in the light of ecclesiastical directives will be made and the Oblates concerned will receive their mission for this ministry from their Superiors.

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. They thereby help to create a society based on the dignity of the human person created in the image of God.

R 9b. In all our ministries, prophetic voices must not be stifled. When they arise, they will be heard, tested, and supported.

With Mary
Immaculate

10 Mary Immaculate is patroness of our Congregation. Open to the Spirit, she consecrated herself totally as lowly handmaid to the person and work of the Saviour.

She received Christ in order to share him with all the world, whose hope he is. In her, we recognize the model of the Church's faith and of our own.

We shall always look on her as our mother. In the joys and sorrows of our missionary life, we feel close to her who is the Mother of Mercy. Wherever our ministry takes us, we will strive to instil genuine devotion to the Immaculate Virgin who prefigures God's final victory over all evil.

Apostolic Religious Life

The Kingdom
above all

11 Our mission is to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to seek it before all else (cf. Mt 6: 33). We fulfil this mission in community; and our communities are a sign that, in Jesus, God is everything for us. Together we await Christ's coming in the fullness of his justice so that God may be all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).

Growing in faith, hope and love, we commit ourselves to be a leaven of the Beatitudes at the heart of the world.

SECTION ONE

The Evangelical Counsels

Radical
discipleship

12 Our mission requires that, in a radical way, we follow Jesus who was chaste and poor and who redeemed mankind by his obedience. That is why, through a gift of the Father, we choose the way of the evangelical counsels.

Community is the life-giving reality fashioned by the vows which binds us in love to the Lord and to his people. Thus, we become a living cell in the Church in which we strive

together to bring the grace of our Baptism to its fullness.

13 Mary Immaculate, in her faith response and total openness to the call of the Spirit, is the model and guardian of our consecrated life.

Mary
our model

Chastity

14 In answer to a special invitation from Christ, we choose consecrated celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom (cf. Mt 19:12).

15 By this option we consecrate ourselves to the Lord and, at the same time, give ourselves to the people we serve; we thereby free ourselves for a love which reaches out to everyone and challenge the tendency to possess and use others for selfish purposes.

A liberating
challenge

This choice is also our way of giving witness to the depth of the Church's covenant with Christ, her only Spouse, and to the spiritual fruitfulness of her union with him. We live our celibacy as a sign of the perfect charity which will be fully revealed only in the Kingdom.

16 Consecrated celibacy calls us to develop the riches of the heart. It is an affirmation of life and love; it expresses our total gift of self to God and to others with all our affection, with all the life-giving powers of our being. Our celibacy allows us to be present where the most urgent needs are to be found, to give witness as a group to the Father's love for us and to our enduring love for him.

17 In our religious consecration, we choose by vow to remain celibate and to live chastely.

18 We will find our support in friendship and in fraternal life, in apostolic commitment to all, in self-denial and in prayer.

R 18a. In living their consecration, Oblates will endeavour to help each other to grow in maturity. Aware of their own frailty, they will seek spiritual direction and exercise self-discipline.

R 18b. Sincere friendship can foster the growth of an apostolic person, enabling one to love others as Jesus loves them. Developing this gift of love more and more, the Oblate will devote himself to others in frank and honest affection, without being either fearful or rash.

In his relationships, he will keep in mind the customs of the country and the sensitivities of the people among whom he lives and works.

- R 18c.** As the generous example of married or single lay persons often inspires us, Oblates in turn, by their own genuine affection and fidelity, will inspire them to faithfulness in the face of their struggles and difficulties.

*“If you wish to be perfect, says our Lord,
sell what you have.”*

*The first Christians followed
that counsel faithfully to the letter.
They still had fresh before them
the example of their divine Master,
who chose to be born in a stable
and to die upon a cross,
after having lived deprived of everything,
for he was without the small coin needed
to pay Caesar’s tribute,
and did not even have a place to rest his head.*

*Since it is our aim in the Institute
to follow in the footsteps
of those first Christians,
we have more than enough reason ...
for resolving to embrace this fundamental point
of religious life and perfection.*

*... Since covetousness is among the vices
that do most damage to the Church,
our Institute’s spirit, which is one
of atonement, leads us in some way
to offer to God the compensation for this vice,
by adopting voluntary poverty
as the saints have practised it before us.*

- 1818 (and 1859) -

Poverty

19 We follow a Master who became poor for our sake. "If you wish to be perfect," he said, "go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor... Then come, follow me" (Mt 19:21). In answer to his call, we choose evangelical poverty.

Poor like Jesus

20 Our choice of poverty compels us to enter into a closer communion with Jesus and with the poor, to contest the excesses of power and wealth and to proclaim the coming of a new world freed from selfishness and open to sharing.

With his poor

When faced with the demands of our mission and the needs to be met, we may feel weak and helpless. It is then that we can learn from the poor, especially making our own their patience, hope and solidarity.

21 The Spirit prompted the first Christians to share everything. Under the influence of that same Spirit, we hold all things in common. Our members adopt a simple lifestyle, remembering that it is essential for our religious institute to give collective witness to evangelical detachment.

Collective witness

We are to avoid all luxury, all appearance of luxury, all immoderate gain and accumula-

tion of possessions. Subject to the common law of labour, and each in his own way contributing to the support of the community and its apostolate, we gladly accept the fact of not having at our disposal the comforts we might like.

The vow

22 By our vow of poverty, we commit ourselves to a life of voluntary poverty. We renounce the right to use and to dispose lawfully, on our own authority, of anything of monetary value.

All we acquire either through our personal industry or through the work of the Institute belongs to the community. Likewise, anything we receive as a pension, title to which has been acquired after first religious commitment, or as a subsidy, or from insurance and other benefits, excepting what comes to us by way of inheritance, belongs to the Congregation.

R 22a. Since the community's possessions may be considered the patrimony of the poor, they will be administered carefully. The community, however, placing its trust in divine Providence, will not hesitate to make use of what it has, even of what is necessary for its sustenance, to benefit God's poor.

R 22b. Each Province will determine how the goods of its communities are to be admin-

istered and how the day-to-day needs of the members in their life and apostolate are to be met.

- R 22c.** The houses and Provinces will be solicitous in sharing their resources with Oblates working in poorer areas and in missions with fewer material goods.

23 Before his first commitment, a candidate entrusts the administration of his property and possessions to a person, or persons, of his choice; and he freely determines how they and their revenue will be used. Prior to making perpetual vows, each Oblate will make a civilly valid will disposing of his present and future possessions.

Personal
patrimony

Any change in these arrangements, as well as any other decision concerning an Oblate's personal patrimony, requires the permission of the Major Superior. In an emergency, a will can be modified with the permission of the local Superior.

With the permission of the Superior General, a perpetually professed Oblate may divest himself of his present and future possessions.

- R 23a.** If, after making first commitment, an Oblate acquires property by way of inheritance,

*The saints regard this vow
as the most important and essential of all ...
By the vow of obedience
more is offered to God than by the other vows ...
The closer something approaches
the end for which it was made,
the more perfect it is;
and since it is obedience which brings
the religious more closely in union
with the purpose of his Institute,
it is also the most perfect of the vows.
Obedience is the most meritorious of the virtues; it is
the bond of union
in every well-ordered society;
indeed, the continuance
of even the best constituted bodies
depends of its faithful observance.
To produce such great good, however,
it must be the kind of obedience
which the saints have practised and prescribed for
others in the various Institutes
with which they have enriched the Church.
... Obedience in our Institute
will be prompt, humble, complete.*

*In following the directives of superiors
let our members keep
before their eyes God himself,
for it is out of love for him that they obey
and to him alone that they submit
in the person of their superiors.*

- 1826 (and 1818) -

he will freely appoint an administrator and will determine who will use such property and its income.

In determining how his personal patrimony is to be used, an Oblate may stipulate that any income produced therefrom may be added regularly to the capital.

All such arrangements are null if an Oblate leaves the Congregation. A clause to this effect will be added to the document.

- R 23b.** The Superior General may delegate to the other Major Superiors of the Congregation, with the consent of their respective Councils, authority to permit an Oblate to divest himself, in whole or in part, of his patrimonial property.

Obedience

24 Christ's food was "to do the will of the one who sent him" (Jn 4:34). He "became obedient unto death, even death on the cross" (Phil 2:8). Called to follow Jesus, we too listen attentively for the Father's voice so that we may spend ourselves without reserve to accomplish his plan of salvation.

Attentive to the
Father's will

25 By obedience, we become the servants of all. Challenging the spirit of domination, we stand as a sign of that new world wherein persons recognize their close interdependence. Religious obedience is our way of making real the freedom of the Gospel, in common submission to God's will (cf. Gal 5:13).

Our life is governed by the demands of our apostolic mission and by the calls of the Spirit already dwelling in those to whom we are sent. Our work makes us dependent on others in many ways; it requires real detachment from our own will and a deep sense of the Church.

26 As individuals and as a community, we have the responsibility to seek the will of God. Decisions which express this will are best reached after community discernment and prayer.

In the Superior, we will see a sign of our unity in Christ Jesus; through faith, we accept the authority he has been given. We will give our loyal support once a decision has been made and, in a spirit of cooperation and initiative, we will devote our talents, our activity, our very lives, to our apostolic mission in the Church.

Any new undertaking which involves serious commitment on the part of the Congregation should be submitted to the competent religious Superior before proposing it to ecclesiastical or secular authorities.

Likewise, before an Oblate accepts any new or additional tasks offered by ecclesiastical superiors or by others, he will ask permission from his own Superior.

In order to publish writings dealing with questions of religion or morals, an Oblate needs, besides the permission of the local Ordinary if required by universal law, also the permission of the Provincial or the Superior of the Delegation.

R 26a. In major decisions and in matters concerning the life and mission of the whole community, there will be a process of discernment conducive to consensus.

R 26b. Superiors will consult those who are to be appointed to new responsibilities, giving them an opportunity to express their own views. While respecting the requirements of the common good, they will take an individual's personal gifts and callings into consideration before a decision is made.

27 By our vow of obedience, we assume the obligation to obey the Holy Father and our lawful Superiors in any matter per-

taining directly or indirectly to the observance of the Constitutions and Rules. The vow binds gravely when we receive from our Superior an order expressly given in the name of obedience.

Rule of life

28 Members will conform their lives and their missionary activities to the Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation. They will make them the object of their reflection in prayer and fraternal sharing.

Perseverance

A sign of fidelity

29 Jesus “always loved those who were his own in the world,” and to the very end “he showed how perfect his love was” (Jn 13:1). His Spirit inspires all Christians to constancy in their love. The same Spirit develops in us a close attachment to the Congregation. Our perseverance is thus a sign of Christ’s fidelity to the Father.

We will help each other find joy and fulfillment in our community life and in our apostolate, supporting one another in our resolution to be faithful to the Congregation, whatever the circumstances which could provoke its dispersal or tempt us to withdraw from it.

30 Although the determination to persevere is already included in the three vows made and received in the Congregation, we add a vow of perseverance, thereby publicly attesting our attachment to our religious family and our definitive commitment to its mission.

*The missionaries ought,
as far as the weakness
of human nature allows,
to imitate in everything
the example of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the chief founder of the Society,
and that of his Apostles, our first fathers.*

*In imitation of these great models,
one portion of their life will be given over
to prayer, interior recollection and contemplation
in the privacy of God's house,
wherein they will dwell together in common.*

*The other portion will be entirely consecrated
to outside works requiring
the most active zeal such as missions,
preaching, confessions, catechizing,
directing young people,
visiting the sick and prisoners,
giving spiritual retreats
and other similar exercises.*

*However, their chief concern will be,
as much when out on missions as when in the house,
to make progress in the paths of ecclesiastical and
religious perfection; they will especially cultivate the
virtues of humility, obedience, poverty, self-denial,
the spirit of mortification, the spirit of faith, purity
of intention, and others; in a word, they will strive
to become other Christs, radiating everywhere the
fragrance of his lovable virtues.*

SECTION TWO

Living in Faith

31 We achieve unity in our life only in and through Jesus Christ. Our ministry involves us in a variety of tasks, yet each act in life is an occasion for personal encounter with the Lord, who through us gives himself to others and through others gives himself to us.

Unity of life

While maintaining within ourselves an atmosphere of silence and inner peace, we seek his presence in the hearts of the people and in the events of daily life as well as in the Word of God, in the sacraments and in prayer. We are pilgrims, walking with Jesus in faith, hope and love.

32 It is as missionaries that we worship, in the various ways the Spirit suggests to us. We come before him bearing with us the daily pressures of our anxiety for those to whom he sends us (cf. 2 Cor 11:28). Our life in all its dimensions is a prayer that, in us and through us, God's kingdom come.

Our life a prayer

33 The Eucharist, source and summit of the Church's life, is at the heart of our life and action. We will live such lives as to be able worthily to celebrate it every day. As we

Spiritual resources

participate in its celebration with all our being, we offer ourselves with Jesus the Saviour; we are renewed in the mystery of our cooperation with him, drawing the bonds of our apostolic community ever closer and opening the horizons of our zeal to all the world. In gratitude for this great Eucharistic gift, we will seek the Lord often in his sacramental presence.

The Word of God nourishes our spiritual life and apostolate. We will not only study it diligently but also develop a listening heart, so that we may come to a deeper knowledge of the Saviour whom we love and wish to reveal to the world. This immersion in God's Word will enable us to understand better the events of history in the light of faith.

The Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of the Church, the spouse of Christ. In it, we praise the Father for his wonderful works and invoke his blessing on our mission. Each community will ordinarily celebrate part of the Hours in common. Where possible, the faithful will be invited to join us in this public prayer of the Church.

In the prolonged silent prayer we make each day, we let ourselves be moulded by the Lord and find in him the inspiration of our conduct. Following our tradition, we devote an hour each day to mental prayer, part of which is

spent together in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Examination of conscience is important in helping us become aware of the ways in which the Lord calls and is present to us throughout the day. In this examen, we evaluate the faithfulness of our response to him. Charged with proclaiming the joy of God's pardon to the world and acknowledging our own sinfulness, we will have frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- R 33a.** New forms of personal and community prayer can help Oblates encounter the Lord; they will welcome them with discernment and accept the challenges they present.
- R 33b.** Each member is invited to seek the counsel and support of a spiritual director in order to discern God's action in his life and to grow through his personal and apostolic experiences and difficulties.
- R 33c.** Living conditions which favour inner recollection and a personal rhythm of life which permits regular and even daily prayer are indispensable for the spiritual growth of an apostolic man. Each Oblate, with the help of his Superior or spiritual director, will give due attention to these

aspects of his life, since both effectiveness in ministry and progress in religious life depend on them.

Suffering and
penance

34 Faith moves us to accept for love of the crucified Lord our personal sufferings, the various trials of the ministry and the daily demands of community life (cf. 2 Cor 12:10). Moreover, we will heed the invitation of the Lord when he calls us to practice other forms of voluntary penance.

Times of
renewal

35 To put ourselves increasingly at the service of God in his people, we will set aside special times each month and each year for deeper personal and community prayer, for reflection and renewal. One week each year will be spent in retreat. Fraternal gatherings and an exchange on apostolic experiences could well precede or follow the retreat.

In union
with Mary

36 With Mary Immaculate, the faithful handmaid of the Lord, and under the guidance of the Spirit, we enter into closer union with Jesus Christ. We will contemplate with her the mysteries of the Incarnate Word, especially in praying the rosary.

SECTION THREE

The Apostolic Community

37 We fulfil our mission in and through the community to which we belong. Our communities, therefore, are apostolic in character.

Community
and Mission

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 out to proclaim God’s reign.

R 37a. 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.

Obedience and
community

*Those of the Society who are most advanced
in years and highest in dignity
ought to be models of every virtue,
but above all of obedience,
the chief bond of our unity
and essential principle
of our continued existence.*

- 1821 -

Fraternal
charity

*They will bear with one another
in much patience and meekness,
and strive to outdo one another
in rendering service
and joyfully practising charity.*

*Each will avoid whatever may wound
his brothers and will gladly yield
to the wishes of others,
so that the peace of God
and the charity of Christ
may abide in them.*

*They will love each other
and show mutual respect
and deference for one another.*

- 1826 -

In order to live more intensely the mission of evangelization according to the Oblate charism, some lay people gather in associations. In concert with the General Administration, Provinces and Delegations will foster the development of such associations, will assure that they faithfully reflect the Oblate charism, will contribute to the formation of the laity by giving them access to the sources of the charism, and will specify the relations between the Congregation and the associations. In this regard, the General Administration takes the initiatives that it judges opportune to promote communication between Provinces and Delegations and a common outlook in the Congregation. As an initial step, each unit will submit to the Superior General for approval its criteria for the recognition of associations.

- R 37b.** Faithful to Oblate tradition, the communities will have their heart set on promoting the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate for the formation of lay people and participation in Oblate spirituality and apostolate.
- R 37c.** Several religious and secular institutes have links to the Congregation because of their origin or because of their spirituality. Each Province or Delegation will seek to strengthen those spiritual bonds, and, if possible, to establish concrete forms of

apostolic cooperation, with all due respect for the autonomy of these institutes.

Fraternal
interdependence

38 Obedience and charity bind us together, priests and Brothers, keeping us interdependent in our lives, and missionary activity, even when, dispersed for the sake of the Gospel, we can benefit only occasionally from life in common.

Each community will adopt a program of life and prayer best suited to its purpose and apostolate. Once set up, such a program is entrusted to the vigilance of the Superior; regular meetings will be held to praise and thank the Lord, to assess the community's life, to renew its spirit and strengthen its unity.

R 38a. Any new forms of community living, developed in response to special missionary needs, will begin in dialogue and be periodically reviewed at the local and provincial levels.

Fraternal
sharing

39 A spirit of simplicity and joyfulness marks our communities. In sharing what we are and what we have with one another, we find acceptance and support. Each of us offers his friendship and places his God-given talents at the service of all. This enriches our spiritual life, our intellectual development and our apostolic activity.

In humility and with the strength of charity, we express our responsibility for each other in fraternal correction and forgiveness.

R 39a. Apostolic works and the demands of authentic religious life will be the determining factors in the design and furnishing of our houses, as well as in the community's lifestyle and means of support.

R 39b. The community will provide its members with opportunities for recreation, rest and relaxation. Important events in the Oblate family and in the life of the community members will be celebrated in a simple and cordial way.

Communities will welcome any Oblates who come to visit. They will be especially hospitable to missionaries returning temporarily or permanently to their Province of origin.

40 Whatever the demands of our ministry, one of the more intense moments in the life of an apostolic community is the time spent praying together. One in spirit with those who are absent, we turn to the Lord to praise him, seek his will, beg forgiveness and ask for the strength to serve him better.

Together
in prayer

41 Our communities seek to radiate the warmth of the Gospel to those around us. Our houses, therefore, while reserving certain sections to the community, are characterized by a special sense of hospitality.

Oblate
hospitality

Were anyone tempted to regard these Rules as too severe for our human nature, we beseech him in the Lord to consider

- 1. that our ministry will be forever fruitless unless we fervently strive for our own spiritual advancement;*
- 2. that we shall never attain the high purpose of our vocation without the help of these observances, which have been deemed indispensable by all the fathers of the spiritual life, and especially by the holy founders of religious orders;*
- 3. that since missions and retreats necessarily cast us into the world's milieu for three fourths of the year, in order to busy ourselves there mainly and almost exclusively with the conversion of sinners, we run the risk of forgetting our own needs, if we do not, at least in the brief intervals of this perilous ministry, return to the precise observance of the Rule.*

If then, we have at heart our highest happiness and do not wish to risk being ourselves cast away after we have preached to others, so far from experiencing repugnance at submitting ourselves to such an excellent observance, let us rather sincerely regret that the duties laid on us by charity remove us for such long periods and so frequently from the corps of our communities where it reigns, and deprive us, against our desire and for a great part of our life, of the benefits of its salutary influence.

- 1825 -

R 41a. Oblate houses and hearts are open to all who seek help and counsel. Priests and religious are always welcome; and other evangelical workers will be received so that they may share the bread of friendship, faith, reflection and prayer. At the same time, the community will also respect its members' needs and their right to privacy.

42 Our members in distress, those who are sick or the aged among us, contribute greatly to the coming of God's Kingdom. We will be particularly concerned for them and will surround them with all the affection that binds us together as members of the same family.

Care and
concern

43 We will keep alive the memory of our deceased and not fail to pray for them, faithfully offering the suffrages prescribed on their behalf (cf. Appendix).

Remembering
our deceased

44 If an Oblate wants to leave the Congregation or if, for a serious reason, the Congregation is obliged to dissociate itself from certain members, it will do so only after all means of correction and conciliation have been exhausted. In such instances, it will act in great charity and in accordance with the canonical norms, respecting all the demands of equity.

Separation

*Whoever wishes to become one of us
must have an ardent desire
for his own perfection,
and be enflamed with love
for our Lord Jesus Christ and his Church
and a burning zeal for the salvation of souls.*

*He must free his heart
from every disorderly affection
for things on earth,
and from excessive attachment
to parents and native land;
he must have no desire for money,
but will rather look upon riches
as so much rubbish so as to seek
no gain other than Jesus Christ;
his desire must be to commit himself
to the exclusive service of God
and of the Church,
whether in the Missions
or in the other ministries
of the Congregation.*

*Finally, he must have
the will to persevere unto death
in fidelity and obedience
to the Rules of the Institute.*

PART TWO

FORMATION

45 Jesus personally formed the disciples he had chosen, initiating them into “the mystery of the Kingdom of God” (Mk 4:11). As a preparation for their mission he had them share in his ministry; to confirm their zeal he sent them his Spirit.

Gospel
origin

This same Spirit forms Christ in those who endeavour to follow in the Apostles’ footsteps. As they enter more deeply into the mystery of the Saviour and his Church, he moves them to dedicate themselves to the evangelization of the poor.

Chapter One

A Community Process

46 The goal of the formation process is that each of us become an apostolic man, capable of living the Oblate charism. Inspired by the example of Mary, we live in creative and ongoing fidelity our personal commitment to Jesus Christ, while serving the Church and God’s Kingdom.

Basic aim

47 Formation is a process which aims at the integral growth of a person and lasts a lifetime. It enables us to accept ourselves as we are and develop into the persons we are called to be. Formation involves us in an ever-renewed conversion to the Gospel and a readiness to learn and to change in response to new demands.

R 47a. The proclamation of the Word to all peoples requires a deep rooting of the faith in their respective cultures. While formation opens the Oblate to an appreciation of all cultures, it will especially help him to be formed in and through the authentic values of the people among whom he lives and works.

48 Oblate formation takes place in the context of an apostolic community. We are all involved in a process of mutual evangelization, supporting one another in a healing and empowering way. Together, we create an atmosphere of freedom and mutual trust in which we call each other to an ever deeper commitment.

49 Formation is vital to the life and mission of the Congregation and is, therefore, entrusted to the care and vigilance of the Superior General. In the Province, it is the Provincial's special responsibility; but to

be effective, formation requires the collaboration of all, individuals and communities. Each of us, moreover, is the principal agent of his own development; throughout life's various stages, we are called to respond generously to the promptings of the Spirit.

- R 49a.** The Superior General in Council establishes the general norms for Oblate formation and designates a member of the Council to be responsible for formation in the Congregation. The appointee will assist Oblate educators, provincial authorities and regional conferences for formation. He will promote an exchange of ideas and experiences at the regional level. From time to time, he will also sponsor discussions on specific themes of interest to the whole Congregation.
- R 49b.** A General Formation Committee consisting of at least one Oblate from each Region and presided over by the person in charge of formation at the general level, meets periodically to study questions relating to vocations and formation and to make recommendations to the Superior General and his Council.
- R 49c.** The Provincial in council appoints those responsible for formation. When necessary he specifies their various responsibilities; he will not easily disband a well-functioning team.

R 49d. A formation committee helps the Provincial. Among other activities, the committee will prepare and keep up to date a provincial Formation Directory which clearly presents principles and provides for organization, methods and concrete programs. The Directory should take into account the cultures, educational systems and pastoral needs of the country, the directives of the respective episcopal conferences, and also the missionary tasks for which the candidates prepare themselves. It will be submitted to the Superior General for approval.

R 49e. For better understanding and mutual enrichment, there will be constant contact and cooperation among initial and ongoing formation teams and Oblates engaged in other ministries.

The formation personnel in a Province will meet regularly to ensure unity in formation and better coordination between the various stages. Regional meetings may be arranged from time to time, with the agreement and encouragement of the Provincials concerned.

Provinces will cooperate with each other regarding common formation programs and the sharing of personnel.

Initial Formation

50 The purpose of initial formation is to develop gradually those whom Jesus calls to total discipleship in the Congregation, until they are mature religious, capable of carrying on the Oblate mission. This requires an assimilation in faith of all the dimensions of our vocation, especially of Gospel poverty, celibate love and availability for missionary service.

Growth and maturity

51 As disciples of the same Lord, the formation personnel along with those in formation make up one community. While remaining close to the candidates, the formators constitute a nucleus at the heart of the formation community. They have a specific responsibility to the Church and the Congregation as well as to the candidates.

Formation team

Oblate formators are attentive to the ways grace moves those who are in formation. In a challenging and encouraging way, they accompany them in their integral development as persons, in their spiritual growth and in the ongoing discernment of their Oblate vocation.

*United in charity
and being one mind
they will, as is only just,
assist the Superior in the progress
of the undertaking
by an identity of aim and action,
fearing that by following
their own personal views
they may make mistakes
and hinder the general good.*

*They will labour without ceasing
to form Christ in the clerics,
doing so with the assistance
of his Immaculate Mother, the Virgin Mary,
to whose protection
they will teach their students
to have confident recourse in everything.*

- 1853 -

- R 51a.** Sound judgment, an understanding of persons, a community spirit and apostolic zeal must characterize Oblate formation personnel. They should be noted for a life of deep faith and prayer and for their love of the Congregation. The living tradition of the Church and the needs of the world today will guide them in their work. Even though otherwise qualified, they should be competent in spiritual theology and the art of direction. Appropriate involvement in pastoral ministry will provide an apostolic orientation in the formation they impart. Every Province will assure the adequate preparation of its formation personnel.
- R 51b.** Before admitting a candidate to the novitiate or to religious commitment, or when deciding to present him for Orders, the Provincial will give careful consideration to the recommendations of the formation team.
- R 51c.** During their first formation, aspirants and young Oblates are encouraged to keep in close contact with the cultural values of the milieu from which they came. This will permit them to see themselves in the light of their heritage and to deepen their understanding of their Oblate missionary vocation.

SECTION ONE

Discovering and Fostering Vocations

Christ calls
through us

52 Jesus never ceases to call people to follow him and to proclaim the Kingdom. Some are drawn to answer that call through the joy and generosity of our lives. We must lose no opportunity to let people see how urgent are the needs of the Church and the world and come to know the way in which our Congregation responds to those needs. We will also pray and have others pray that the Lord send labourers into his harvest.

“Come
and see”

53 Christian families, youth groups and Christian communities, whether parish or other, provide a favourable environment for the growth of vocations. Many young people discover there the person of Jesus and feel the attraction of his message. There, too, they begin to exercise their gifts for leadership and ministry. It is primarily in such settings, then, that we ought to help youth discover their vocation and to accompany them in their spiritual journey. Our houses will welcome those who wish to “come and see” and thus experience at firsthand what Oblate life is like. 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.

- R 53a.** The apostolate of vocations concerns all Oblates individually and as a group. In cooperation with pontifical and diocesan works, members of the Congregation will foster vocations, whether Oblate or other. In each Province a vocation director or a vocation team will coordinate collective efforts.
- R 53b.** Where minor seminaries or residences for youth are considered useful for awakening or nurturing vocations, they will be established or maintained.

54 Candidates showing signs of an Oblate vocation will benefit from an appropriate program, prior to the novitiate, in an Oblate community. The goals of such an experience are to help them achieve the personal and Christian maturity necessary for a fruitful novitiate and to assess their suitability for our way of life.

Prenovitiate
experience

- R 54a.** The Pre-novitiate is a time in which the Congregation will ascertain the candidate's readiness for the novitiate. The Pre-novitiate will help pre-novices to discern and purify their motives for entering religious life. The program will also offer them an experience of Oblate life in its mission to evangelize the poor. Formators at this level will assess the pre-novice's capacity to live and work in a religious community.

- R 54b.** The Pre-novitiate is the first stage of initial formation. Its director is appointed by the Major Superior in Council and confirmed by the Superior General in Council. He will work with a qualified team of formators. The program is established by the Provincial according to the norms for formation. Its length is not to be less than six months. All candidates must go through such a program.
- R 54c.** In addition to canonical requirements for novitiate, candidates should give proof of maturity consistent with their age and have a satisfactory knowledge of Christian teaching. They should show signs of a constancy of faith and Christian life, of love for the poor and an aptitude for community living.

SECTION TWO

The Novitiate

55 The novitiate is the candidate's time of initiation into Oblate religious life and leads to his public commitment in the Congregation. The Provincial admits candidates to the novitiate. Under the guidance of the Novice Master, the novice comes to grasp the meaning of religious consecration. He can thus discern the Lord's call and, in prayer, make himself ready to respond.

56 The novice, led by the Spirit living within him, develops his personal relationship with Jesus and gradually enters into the mystery of Salvation through liturgy and prayer. He becomes accustomed to listen to the Lord in Scripture, to meet him in the Eucharist and to recognize him in other persons and in events. He comes also to contemplate God at work in the life and mission of the Founder, as well as in the Congregation's history and traditions. Opportunities for pastoral experience in an Oblate setting help him realize the demands of a missionary vocation and the unity of apostolic religious life.

R 56a. Life in community, with its joys and tensions, its spirit of charity and mutual support, will help novices identify with the Oblate family and will initiate them into the self-denial which is part of apostolic religious life.

R 56b. Novices should adopt a simple style of life that will make them sensitive to the needs of people, especially the poor.

57 The Novice Master is in charge of formation in the novitiate. He must be an Oblate in perpetual vows. He is appointed by the Provincial in Council, and this appointment must be approved by the Superior General in Council.

R 57a. The Novice Master is helped by qualified assistants who work as a team with him. They will be freed from all other ministry which could impede them from fulfilling their responsibilities. The Novice Master answers directly to the Provincial in everything that concerns the novices.

Length of
novitiate

58 In order to be valid, the novitiate must last twelve months. These are spent in the novitiate community.

The Major Superior can authorize one or more supplementary periods in the active apostolate outside of the novitiate community in order to complete the novices' formation. In any case, the novitiate cannot last longer than two years. Absences from the novitiate house will be judged according to the Church's common law.

R 58a. An authentic document, dated and signed by the novice and the person who presided at his admission, will attest to the beginning of the novitiate.

R 58b. The location of the novitiate is determined by the Provincial in Council and approved by the Superior General in Council. A written decree from the Superior General in Council is required for the establishing, the transfer and the suppression of a novitiate.

SECTION THREE

Religious Commitment

59 Novitiate formation ends with a free and faith-filled commitment in the Oblate Congregation. The novice, having experienced the Father's love in Jesus, dedicates his life to making that love visible. He entrusts his fidelity to the one whose cross he shares, whose promises are his hope.

A visible sign
of love

R 59a. If, at the end of the novitiate, there still remains some doubt about a novice's suitability, the Provincial may prolong the period of novitiate, but not for more than six months.

For a just cause, the Provincial can permit the anticipation of first commitment, but not beyond fifteen days.

60 Temporary commitment is made by annual vows according to the norms prescribed by the Rules.

Commitment

After a period lasting at least three years, and ordinarily not more than six, an Oblate may request admission to perpetual vows. In certain cases, the Major Superior can prolong the time of temporary commitment but not so that it lasts longer than nine years. Within these limits, and according to the Church's

common law, an Oblate can ask to make perpetual vows when he feels ready.

- R 60a.** Temporary vows are made for one year at a time. Annual vows are to be understood as extending until the date of the subsequent profession which, at the discretion of the Superiors, may be anticipated or deferred but not by more than three months. If, however, the profession is deferred, a religious who does not wish to renew his vows may lawfully leave at the end of twelve months. Perpetual profession may be made only after the completion of three full years of temporary vows, but can, for a just cause, be anticipated or deferred by a period of up to three months.
- R 60b.** An Oblate who, during the time of his temporary profession, asks to depart from the Congregation, can be granted an indult to leave by the Superior General in Council.
- R 60c.** If the period of temporary commitment is to be extended beyond six years, the Provincial determines how long it is to last, after having heard the opinion of the formation personnel and considered the legitimate desires of the Oblate concerned. A member who feels unjustly excluded from renewal of temporary commitment

may appeal to the Superior General in Council.

- R 60d.** Preparation for first commitment is made by a retreat of at least five days duration. A shorter retreat may serve to prepare for renewal of temporary commitment. Perpetual Oblation is preceded by a more intense period of spiritual preparation.

61 The Provincial in Council admits to vows, whether temporary or perpetual. Admission to perpetual vows requires for validity the confirmation of the Superior General in Council.

Admission

Commitment in the Congregation is received by the Superior General in virtue of his office or by his delegate as determined in the Rules.

- R 61a.** The following may receive vows in the name of the Congregation, as delegates of the Superior General: Major Superiors, local Superiors and their respective substitutes (cf. CC 77, 84; R 83e), and, by explicit delegation from one of the above any Oblate who is perpetually professed, or, exceptionally, a priest who is not an Oblate.

62 The form used to take vows is the following:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Saint Eugene de Mazenod and all my brothers here assembled, and before you, Father (N.N.), (delegate of the) Superior General, and holding in my regard the place of God, I, (N.N.) profess, promise to God and vow chastity, poverty, and obedience for life (for one year).

I also vow perseverance until death (for one year) in the holy Institute and Society of the Missionary Oblates of the most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary. So help me God. Amen.

If a candidate, in agreement with his Superior, prefers to express his vows differently, the following essential elements must be kept:

Before you, Father (N.N.), (delegate of the) Superior General, I, (N.N.), vow chastity, poverty and obedience for life (for one year). I also vow perseverance until death (for one year) in the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

63 The Oblate cross which is received at perpetual profession is a constant reminder of the love of the Saviour who wishes to draw all hearts to himself and sends us out as his co-workers.

The Oblate
cross

64 The Oblate habit is the same as the clerical dress of the diocese in which we live. When we wear a cassock, our only distinctive sign is the Oblate cross.

The religious
habit

The Oblate cross

They will have no other distinguishing mark except that which is proper to their ministry, namely the image of the Crucified Lord.

This crucifix will serve as the credentials of their embassy to the different peoples to whom they are sent.

It will be a perpetual reminder to the missionaries themselves of the humility, patience, charity, modesty and of all the other virtues with which they are to carry out their most holy and sublime ministry.

- 1818 -

Servants of the Church

It is important for the good of the Church and for providing our Congregation with the means of attaining the end which it has in view, not to admit any among his sons except men who are able with the help of God's grace to serve and comfort their Mother by their labors and good example.

- 1825 -

SECTION FOUR

Formation after Novitiate

65 Whether preparing for priestly ministry as scholastics or for service as Brothers, new Oblates will live out their consecration in such a way that it permeates all aspects and activities of their daily life. Helped by the formation team and their spiritual advisors, they will gradually become men of God, missionaries rooted in Christ, who are ready to give themselves totally through their perpetual Oblation. During this period, the Oblate charism and traditions are studied and lived.

Growing in the
Oblate charism

Initial formation culminates in the first obedience, given by the Superior General.

- R 65a.** Spiritual formation aims at maturity in faith based on a personal decision for Christ. The meditation of God's Word and a methodical study of our Christian heritage, adapted to the Oblate's capacities and to the needs of his work and ministry, lead him, in this extended period of formation, to know, express and share his faith.
- R 65b.** Character formation should lead the new Oblate to come to a realistic assessment of himself, to assume responsibility, and to relate in a mature way to his brothers and to those in authority. It should promote leader-

ship qualities and a sense of daring and creativity. Such formation should, moreover, enable him to face with love, peace and joy the renunciation inherent in religious commitment.

- R 65c.** Through their work and through suitable pastoral experience, even for extended periods of time, the new Oblates will develop a sense of service. They will have an opportunity to work with the poor. Capable supervisors will initiate them into the ministry and show them how to reflect on their experience in the light of the Gospel.
- R 65d.** To provide for a more effective preparation, an Oblate may request an orientation to a specific pastoral ministry or missionary field. He should, nevertheless, be open to serve elsewhere or in other ministries. Such particular orientation is permitted by the Superior General or by the Provincial in agreement with the Superior General.
- R 65e.** In freedom and full awareness of their responsibility, Oblates in formation present themselves for perpetual Oblation and, in the case of scholastics, for admission to Orders. This is done in writing.
- R 65f.** A perpetually professed religious of another institute who transfers to the Oblate

Congregation shall undergo a probation period of at least three years before being admitted to perpetual profession. The manner of such probation shall be determined by the Superior General.

R 65g. Major Superiors have the authority to admit scholastics and Brothers to the ministries, such as those of lector and acolyte. They may personally install them in these same ministries or may delegate another priest to do so.

It pertains to the Provincial in Council to approve candidates for Orders. The Provincial or, as his delegate by virtue of the Rules, the Superior of the scholasticate, issues dimissorial letters for ordination.

R 65h. During the first years after their initial formation, Oblates will receive guidance and supervision from other Oblates more experienced. This is a time when they need the support of a community which, in turn, they enrich.

R 65i. To establish a post-novitiate formation community, the approval of the Superior General in Council is required.

*Under the protection
of the most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary
are formed holy priests
who, filled with the Holy Spirit
and striving to walk in the footsteps
of the divine Shepherd,
feed with watchful
and constant care
the sheep that have been led back to him.*

- 1853 -

Scholastics

66 The years in the scholasticate give the required training and education to those who prepare for the priesthood. Their studies are based on a solid formation in philosophy and theology. They will cultivate those skills needed for an effective ministry of the Word.

Wherever these studies are pursued, it is important that scholastics live in an Oblate community and develop a missionary outlook. They will, moreover, be led to appreciate the gift of the priesthood through which they are to share in a unique way in Christ's own ministry of priest, prophet and shepherd.

R 66a. Studies are centred on Christ the Saviour. Firm roots in the Scriptures, the living tradition of the Church and the teaching of the Magisterium will enable the scholastics to reflect critically on the major trends of their time and the values of their culture. They will come to appreciate convictions and experiences other than their own, especially those of the other Christian traditions and the great world religions.

R 66b. From a personal and coherent faith vision, scholastics will be able to present

Christ's Gospel in such a way that it reaches and touches the hearts of their contemporaries. Above all, they will interiorise in prayer what they study and begin to live what they learn, so that they will be credible signs of the message they are to preach.

- R 66c.** Since the means of social communication profoundly influence attitudes and values, Oblates should understand how public opinion is formed and ought to develop their talents in the field of communications. They can thereby help to make Gospel values present and powerful in society.
- R 66d.** The Provincial, always respecting the norms of the Church's common law, may permit a scholastic to interrupt his studies for a certain period, apart from the period of pastoral initiation (cf. R 65c) in order to confirm his vocation or to deepen it through a sufficiently lengthy experience in a missionary situation or in other employment.
- R 66e.** The Superior of the scholasticate and the members of the formation team are appointed by the Provincial in Council; their appointment requires the approval of the Superior General in Council. Together they are responsible for the formation of the scholastics.

R 66f. At the end of the formal scholastic training, Oblates take up their ministry as priests. If a scholastic discerns that he is not called to the priesthood but intends to remain an Oblate, he asks the Superior General for an obedience to begin his mission as a Brother.

Brothers

67 During the years after the novitiate, the Brother grows in appreciation of his special vocation. With this in mind, professional training prepares him for his specific role. His doctrinal and pastoral education is adapted to his work and ministry. Thus, in his own community as well as outside it, the Brother can give witness of solid faith and of service that is competent and selfless.

In witness
and service

R 67a. In their prayer life, Brothers will seek a personal and growing knowledge of the Incarnate Word so that they may encounter him in the lives of those who toil, especially among the working poor.

R 67b. The Provincial will arrange to have a planned program for the Brother's Christian, religious and professional formation. A deeper religious formation gives his consecration its full apostolic effectiveness.

- R 67c.** If a Brother in perpetual vows discerns that, in response to apostolic needs, the Lord is calling him to the permanent diaconate or to the priesthood, the Provincial in Council may admit him as a candidate after having been authorized to do so by the Superior General in Council.

Chapter Three

Ongoing Formation

Answering
new needs

68 God is ever at work in the world; his life-giving Word seeks to transform mankind, to build his People. We are instruments of that Word. We have thus to be open and flexible, learning how to respond better to new needs, how to find answers to new questions, discerning all the while the movement of the Spirit who renews the face of the earth (cf. Ps 104: 30).

- R 68a.** The ultimate success of ongoing formation depends on the individual's sincere desire and will. For this reason, during the years of initial formation, formators will show young Oblates how to learn from life experience and help them develop a positive attitude toward continuing their formation once they are engaged in the ministry.

69 Ongoing formation encompasses all aspects of our development. It renews and develops our spiritual life and its inner resources and favours our growth in emotional and affective maturity. It increases our pastoral skills. It enables us to be critically aware of the integration of our life and mission at all stages of our development.

R 69a. Ongoing formation is extensive in scope and varied in method. Besides personal prayer and reflection, it includes methodical study, periodic community exchange and discussions, special renewal or study sessions. It may also entail specialized studies or academic work toward a degree.

Specialized studies undertaken with the Provincial's permission will take into account the Province's missionary priorities and be coordinated with the plans of others. The Oblate's progress in these studies should be objectively evaluated.

R 69b. An adequate formation should be assured when an Oblate receives an assignment for which he has not been trained. This refers especially to those ministries where a sensitivity to another culture and a knowledge of the language, history and pastoral situation of a people is necessary. Ministry with the poor or minority groups also requires an understanding of their socio-economic conditions and of

the social teachings of the Church. Special assistance should be given to returning missionaries to enable them to readapt to their own country and culture.

70 One of the foremost responsibilities of Superiors at all levels is to develop in the community a spirit that fosters ongoing formation. They should encourage common projects as well as individual efforts. Each Oblate, however, in dialogue with his community and his Provincial, has the primary responsibility for his own ongoing formation.

R 70a. Each Province should have a plan for the ongoing formation of its members and for the development of resource persons.

R 70b. Each Provincial usually appoints a Director of ongoing formation whose task is to develop and implement suitable programs. He should be able to relate well to the various groups in the Province and must have both personal interest and pastoral concern for his Oblate brothers.

R 70c. When feasible, Provinces will cooperate in ongoing formation efforts. They will share available resources, Oblate or other. In consultation with the Provincials, the Superior General will decide whether it is opportune to organize special study or renewal sessions at the general level.

Such initiatives serve to strengthen Oblate unity and permit members to benefit from the variety of talent and experience in the Congregation.

PART THREE

ORGANIZATION

The Spirit of Government

71 Jesus is the source and model of authority in the Church. Just as he washed his disciples' feet, so too those in charge among us are called to serve and not to be served. Their service coordinates and leads our efforts to evangelize the poor. Among us, they foster a way of life based on faith and on a deeply shared love of Christ.

Authority
as service

72 United as brothers in one apostolic community, we are all equal before God our Father, who distributes charisms and ministries so that we can serve his Church and its mission. Our organizational structures, accordingly, are set up in function of that mission.

Structures
and mission

Following the guidelines of the Constitutions and Rules, those in authority will make

sure that the structures are flexible enough to evolve with our lived experience.

R 72a. In addition to the spiritual characteristics of an authentic missionary body centred on Jesus Christ in the service of the poor, our governing structures are grounded in a number of values, most notably the following:

- respect for the human dignity of the persons involved;
- fidelity to the charism and mission of the Congregation;
- effective leadership and forms of mutual accountability at all levels;
- solidarity and subsidiarity;
- prudent assignment of persons, time and finances.

Coresponsibility

73 Good government within the Congregation demands that we participate appropriately in it through responsible collaboration. Such participation is to be encouraged at all levels.

All of us are coresponsible for the community's life and apostolate. As a body, therefore, we discern the Spirit's call and seek to achieve consensus in important matters, loyally supporting the decisions taken. Such

shared decision-making can best take place in a collegial and trust-filled atmosphere.

74 Inasmuch as Superiors are stewards of the Lord, they are accountable at each level of government to Congregational authorities; they will also enable the community they serve to participate as much as possible in decision-making and to collaborate in carrying out decisions taken.

Accountability

Chapter One

Structures of the Congregation

SECTION ONE

Administrative Structures

75 The Congregation has four levels of organization: local, provincial, regional and general. While the aim of the regional level is coordination and collaboration in a given geographical area, the other three levels are governmental.

Unity in diversity

The governmental process presupposes living apostolic communities, fully recognized and respected in their relative autonomy. Each level should be in close contact with the others, providing support, coordination, ser-

vice and leadership. Unity of heart and mind is maintained by effective communication at all levels and with each Oblate.

Levels of
government

76 The Congregation's vitality and effectiveness depend largely on the local community. At this level, our missionary presence is expressed by our living of the Gospel, and by proclaiming and revealing it to the world.

Local communities are normally grouped into Provinces or Delegations and Missions which live and carry out their specific apostolate in collaboration with the local Churches and in close contact with one another, especially in the same Region.

The Provinces, Delegations and Missions together make up the Congregation, which is united and animated by the Chapter and by the Superior General and General Council, who, in the spirit of the Founder, ensure that the Congregation remains faithful to the demands of religious life and its mission, and guarantee our availability for the needs of the Church everywhere.

Community
bonds

77 Members of the Congregation live community in different ways: in a canonically established house or in a duly constituted house with a local Superior or in a district community entrusted to a local Su-

perior or exceptionally in an autonomous residence under the care of a Director. Those who, because of the mission, live alone are normally to be assigned to a district community or to a house.

Whatever is stated in the Constitutions and Rules about Superiors applies also to Directors saving exceptions foreseen by the Church's common law or by the particular statute of the residence.

R 77a. A district is a local community, wherein members live either together in small residential units, or alone, within a specified geographic area, under the authority of its own Superior.

R 77b. A residence, gathering a small number of Oblates, can be formed as part of a district community or attached to a house, or, in exceptional circumstances, it may be autonomous.

78 A Province is an autonomous unit of the Congregation grouping several local communities of Oblates at the service of the Church within a determined territory.

Provinces

79 In response to an evolving situation within a Province or a Mission, several Oblate communities may be grouped into a Delegation enjoying a certain autonomy as defined in its particular statutes.

Delegations

80 To provide for an ongoing missionary outreach and to answer emerging needs in the Church, a new foundation, known as a Mission, may be established after appropriate consultations.

SECTION TWO

Superiors: General Norms

81 Our Superiors are a sign of the Lord's loving and guiding presence in our midst. They call us to live up to our Oblate vocation and provide us with the support we need. In a spirit of coresponsibility, they lead the community, making decisions, supporting initiatives and implementing policies, according to the spirit and norms of the Constitutions and Rules. Superiors must know how to delegate authority as well as assign responsibility.

82 Superiors, and all among us in authority, are called to service as men of faith and prayer. In humility and true obedience, they will seek enlightenment from God and from their brothers' counsel. They should manifest the following qualities:

- a well-defined identity enlightened by the Oblate charism;

- a deep love for the Church, for the Congregation, and for the poor;
- a sensitivity to persons, an ability to listen, an openness to everyone, and a respect for each person's rights;
- a capacity for leadership and an ability to animate a community so that it can share in a climate of mutual trust and acceptance;
- a spirit of discernment and a capacity for making decisions once consultation has been carried out;
- an apostolic spirit, fully committed to evangelization, that can challenge the community, by periodic reviews and evaluations, to respond to the needs of the mission;
- a sense of unity that respects legitimate diversity and enables them to coordinate their own community activities and to cooperate with others in the apostolate.

83 An Oblate appointed or elected Superior, Vicar or replacement of a Superior, must have finished his first formation and received his first obedience, completed the required period after perpetual profession, and be ordained.

To be appointed local Superior, an Oblate will have been professed in perpetual vows

in the Congregation for at least one year; to be appointed or elected Superior of a Province or a Delegation, he must have completed three years of perpetual vows; to be elected Superior General, he must have completed five years of perpetual vows.

R 83a. An Oblate Brother who has completed at least one year of perpetual vows in the Congregation may, with the necessary indult, be appointed Superior of a local community.

R 83b. The appointment, confirmation, or prorogation in office of any Superior should be made in writing. His rights and duties begin on the day he officially takes office; they cease on the day his successor officially replaces him.

R 83c. The Superior's role is so important that suitable ongoing formation is necessary. That is why Superiors will be called by the Major Superior to meet from time to time. This will permit them to exchange experiences, deepen their understanding of their task, help them evaluate their effectiveness, and learn appropriate methods for animation and dialogue.

R 83d. Except in the case provided in Rule 106b, matters requiring the approval, permission or confirmation of a higher authority do not take effect until such approval,

permission or confirmation is obtained, preferably in writing.

R 83e. Unless a higher authority determines otherwise, when a Superior is absent or hindered from exercising his office, or when the post becomes vacant, he is replaced by his Vicar if there is one, or by a Councillor in the order of appointment, or by the person legitimately designated as his replacement. Otherwise, in a local community he is replaced by the Oblate who is senior by oblation.

R 83f. The Oblate replacing a Superior has the same powers as the latter for the management of ordinary matters and for business which cannot be delayed. He will exercise his authority in keeping with the decisions and known policies of the Superior, whom he will keep informed.

84 In our Congregation, the Major Superiors are the Superior General, the Vicar General, the Provincials, the Vicars Provincial and the Superiors of Delegations.

Major
Superiors

85 On the occasion of their election, appointment or taking up office, and in the presence of the Chapter or person who has appointed them (or confirmed their election) or his delegate, the Superior General,

Profession
of Faith

Provincials, Superiors of Delegations and local Superiors are to make the Profession of Faith approved by the Apostolic See.

86 Superiors are assisted by a Council which expresses in its own way the members' concern for their community and its common good. Matters to be considered in Council are our mission as Oblates, our religious life, and temporal affairs. The Superior and Council will be attentive to the needs of the community and of its members.

When the expression "Superior General in Council" or "Provincial or Delegation Superior in Council" is used, it means the Superior General or Provincial or Delegation Superior with the consent of the Council.

R 86a. When the vote of the Council is required by the Church's common law or by the Constitutions and Rules, the Councillors will be convoked and will meet to discuss and vote on the matter.

R 86b. In those instances where the consent of the Council is required, meetings of the Superior and Council are normally held with all the members present. However, in exceptional cases, presence by other means (such as telephone conferencing) is sufficient, provided all those participating can take an active part in the discussion.

Nevertheless, in cases where a secret vote is required by law or requested by one of its members, as well as in cases relating to admission to vows and orders, dismissals, and other instances specifically foreseen in the Church's common law and in the Constitutions and Rules, physical presence of at least a majority of the Councillors is required. Only those who are physically present shall vote in such instances.

- R 86c. In those instances where a consultative vote is required, if the situation is urgent and unforeseen, the Councillors who are absent can give their vote in writing or by any other appropriate means.
- R 86d. In those instances where a collegial vote is prescribed, only those who are physically present vote.
- R 86e. Minutes of each Council meeting will be kept and, where appropriate, made available to the Major Superior concerned as determined in the respective Directory.

87 The Superior General in Council can prolong the powers of a Provincial, Delegation or Mission Superior for a short period or appoint a temporary administrator. After hearing the party concerned, the Superior General in Council can remove a Provincial, Delegation or Mission Superior before his term is expired.

Extending a term or
accepting a resignation

The Provincial in Council can do likewise in the case of a local Superior or of the Superior of a Mission, if it depends on the Province. For the removal of a Superior before his term has expired, confirmation from the Superior General is required.

Treasurers

88 At each governmental level financial administration is entrusted to Treasurers under the direction of the respective Superior.

R 88a. The Treasurer will attend all council meetings, unless otherwise specified by the respective superior. His opinion, and, where applicable, the opinion of the finance committee, will be recorded when financial questions are discussed, although the Treasurer has no deliberative vote unless he is also a Councillor.

R 88b. The ministry of the Treasurer of a Province or Delegation constitutes the primary ministry of the Oblate holding the office.

Due process

89 Before taking any action which involves the personal rights of one or more of his brother Oblates, the Superior will always provide a hearing for the party or parties concerned. An Oblate who feels an injustice has been done to him by a Superior may have recourse to higher authority; but he will com-

ply with the Superior's decision in the meantime, unless there is a suspensive effect provided by the Church's common law.

R 89a. The procedure established by the Superior General in Council for the examination of a situation where an Oblate feels his rights are being jeopardized shall be followed in such instances. If necessary, this procedure may be adapted by mutual agreement of the parties involved.

SECTION THREE

Voting Rights and Participation

90 All Oblates in perpetual vows enjoy active and passive voice, saving exceptions foreseen in the Church's common law or in the Constitutions and Rules.

Voting
rights

R 90a. The Provincial in Council will draw up the electoral procedures for the Province in conformity with the provisions of C103 in the form of a Directory. These procedures must give every voter the opportunity to cast his vote individually and secretly. The requisite majority in each case will be calculated according to the number of valid votes cast.

- R 90b.** Oblates in temporary vows have a consultative voice in cases determined by particular norms: e.g. in the appointment of a Provincial, Provincial Councillors or a Superior.
- R 90c.** Besides voting, participation in government includes consultation, decision-making, and evaluation.

Chapter Two

The Local Community

Nature and role

Community
and mission

91 Local communities are the living cells of the Congregation. They are the primary units of our missionary presence where life and mission find their support and expression.

They help all Oblates become more prayerful and reflective and live the Gospel fully, thereby freeing them for ever-greater fidelity to their calling within a common project and in the framework of the priorities of the Province.

It is of the nature of a local community to be a prophetic sign that offers grounds for hope to the world in its search for integrity and harmony.

Every Oblate has the right and duty to belong to a local community and to participate in its life and mission.

R 91a. The local community is a place of fraternal charity and apostolic zeal.

This comprises the following elements:

- attention to its members, helping each one develop his strengths and gifts;
- support in moments of weakness, trial, and disappointment;
- commitment and accountability for each other and to each other;
- sharing of life, prayer, mission and material goods;
- hospitality, as an expression of our family spirit;
- involvement with the local Church;
- collaboration with the laity.

Structures and functioning

92 The local community normally consists of at least three Oblates. It is constituted by the Provincial or Delegation Superior in Council in accordance with the norms of the Church's common law. These same

The local
community

norms will be respected should a community wish to change its apostolic goals or when a local community is suppressed.

- R 92a. It pertains to the Superior General in Council to constitute a local community directly under him and to appoint its Superior and Council.
- R 92b. District communities and residences are governed by their particular statute determined by the Major Superior in Council.
- R 92c. Living together in community has, from the time of the Founder, been our ideal. However, because of the mission, Major Superiors can allow an Oblate to live alone. In this case, the Oblate will make every effort to participate in the life of the district community or of the house to which he is attached. The situation of Oblates living alone is to be considered as temporary.
- R 92d. The suppression of a canonically established house is reserved to the Superior General in Council at the request of the Provincial in Council. The suppression of a constituted house, which has not been canonically established, pertains to the Provincial in Council, as does the suppression or modification of a district community or residence.

93 The local Superior animates and directs the community in its religious life, furthers the apostolate, and upholds the best interests of the members. At the service of his brothers, the Superior brings the community together to evaluate its experience, to give itself objectives for its common life and apostolic projects, and to ensure their implementation. He invites their collaboration, and maintains close liaison with the Provincial as well as fraternal contact with other communities of the Province.

R 93a. Since the Superior's charge includes concern for his brother Oblates' well being and personal growth, he will be open and available to all and will not hesitate, if need be, to raise questions of a personal nature in an atmosphere of respect and confidence.

Superiors will manifest special concern for members who are isolated or who live alone for reasons of ministry (cf. C38).

R 93b. The Superior assures regular community meetings. These special moments of building community enable the members to evaluate and support their Oblate life and ministry.

The local Superior should be blameless and upright in all his conduct.

He should be conspicuous for the virtues of humility and obedience.

He should be gifted with prudence and ability, so that he may rule wisely and manage affairs well.

He should be well acquainted with the sacred sciences and the humanities.

He should be of kind disposition, knowing how to temper the austerity required by the spirit of discipline with an appropriate mildness that is free from weakness.

Above all things, he should be a man of prayer, who, during his intimate prayerful converse, takes care to plead with God not only for his own sanctification, but also for the progress and perfection of all those entrusted to his care.

94 The Superior of a local community is appointed for three years by the Provincial in Council. He may be reappointed for a second and exceptionally for a third consecutive term.

R 94a. The permission of the Superior General in Council is required for the appointment of the Superior of a local community for a fourth consecutive term.

R 94b. Before appointing a Superior, the Provincial will seek the views of the community concerned regarding the current situation and the qualities needed for leadership of the group. He will invite suggestions about a suitable person for the office and consult the candidate chosen before making the appointment (cf. R 26b).

95 The Provincial in Council, after consulting the local community, appoints at least two assistants who constitute the Superior's Council. A local Treasurer will also be appointed in the same way.

The members of the local Council may be elected by the community, if the Province so determines. The election requires the confirmation of the Provincial in Council.

In the case of a small community, the Provincial in Council may permit all the mem-

bers of the community to function as a local Council.

R 95a. The local Council is regularly convened by the Superior to assist him in animating the life and mission of the community. The following matters also pertain to it:

- to discuss community questions and matters relating to ministry;
- to address financial issues, when necessary, and to give or withhold its consent according to the norms established by the Provincial in Council;
- to present members for vows in those cases not pertaining to the formation personnel.

R 95b. In important matters affecting the entire community, the Superior will seek the opinion of all the members before making a decision with his Council. The community will be kept informed of decisions taken in Council.

The Province, Delegation and Mission

SECTION ONE

The Province

Nature and role

96 The Congregation is divided into Provinces to establish closer bonds among local communities and to ensure the stability of the apostolic works.

Apostolic
goals

Each Province is in its own way a true apostolic community with its priorities and goals which, to be attained, require the participation of all. Local communities and their members will seek to be in solidarity with one another and mutually responsible for the common mission.

97 Normally, a Province has attained and is able to maintain a satisfactory level of self-sufficiency. This entails sufficient personnel, suitable vocation and formation programs, as well as a long-term financial stability.

Criteria

R 97a. A Province must demonstrate a history of being able to assume responsibility

for effective functioning of government and administration. This implies a sense of identity, a stated missionary vision, adequate leadership potential, a respect for cultural and ethnic diversity, and normally, the ability to communicate in a common language. The Province is also to demonstrate that these characteristics are going to continue into the foreseeable future.

98 It pertains to the Superior General in Council to establish Provinces, to change their boundaries, and to suppress or unite existing Provinces. Before any restructuring actions, the Superior General will consult those concerned. It also pertains to the Superior General in Council to evaluate periodically their Oblate life, missionary activity and stability.

R 98a. As a general principle, Province territories are not to overlap.

R 98b. A Province must have at least sixty members in order to assure a proper functioning and stability. If the number falls below sixty, the Superior General will initiate a dialogue with the Province leadership in order to address the situation and provide for the future. Exceptions to this norm will be decided by the Superior General in Council.

R 98c. Normally, the suppression of a Province takes place only within the framework of a restructuring process.

R 98d. In the restructuring process, efforts will be made to ensure sensitivity to diversity and a certain level of autonomy among the areas of the new province.

99 The Provincial Superiors share in the Superior General's responsibility and concern for the whole Congregation. They will be in regular communication with him and cultivate relationships with other Provinces, especially those of their own Region.

Concern for the
Congregation

100 The Provincial Superior is called to the service of authority. His responsibilities embrace both the specific mission of the Congregation within the Province and the religious apostolic life of its communities and members. His personal authority extends to all persons, communities, and works of the Province, as determined in the Constitutions and Rules.

101 In his animation of the Province, the Provincial relies first of all on the members of his Council and, with them, he develops his action plans. He works closely with the Superiors of local communities and those in charge of formation.

Animation

*The Provincials ought always
to bear in mind the importance
of the charge entrusted to them...
Let them watch over faithfulness to the Rule.
As models to all their subordinates,
especially in obedience and charity,
let them support the superiors with kindness, come
to the aid of their subjects
with goodness, and love all
with sincere affection, so that,
in the field entrusted to their care,
the kingdom of Christ
may make more rapid progress.*

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Structures and functioning

102 After consulting individually the members of the Province, the Superior General in Council appoints the Provincial for three years. He may be reappointed for a second term and, exceptionally, for a third.

Appointment of
Provincials

R.102a. The office of Provincial constitutes in itself a full-time apostolic service. Except in very rare cases, it is incompatible with any other important commitment.

R 102b. A simpler form of consultation may take place after the first three-year term. However, if there is question of a third term, a more extensive consultation will take place.

R 102c. The selection of candidates for the office of the Provincial Superior should take place in a context of discernment. The specific modalities of the process shall be determined in the Provincial Directory.

103 A Province may choose to elect its Provincial. The election procedure may be authorized by the Superior General in Council if two thirds of the valid votes cast by the voters of the Province favour election. Only Oblates in perpetual vows may take

Election of
Provincials

part in this consultation, and it must take place by secret, individual ballot.

Ways of
electing

104 Once authorized by the Superior General in Council, the election of the Provincial takes place by secret, individual and direct vote of the perpetually professed Oblates of the Province.

R 104a. The voting takes place either in an electoral assembly or by mail. In either case, for validity, the election must be confirmed by the Superior General in Council.

R 104b. If the voting takes place in assembly, the Provincial convokes all those who may vote. Two thirds of the electors must be present if the election is to be valid; electors unable to attend may, however, vote by letter on the first ballot.

R 104c. If the voting takes place by mail, the ballots are to be sent to the Provincial in sealed envelopes. For the validity of the election, more than half the Oblates with active voice must have cast a vote.

R 104d. Both ways require that, to be elected on the first or second ballot, the candidate elected receive an absolute majority of the valid votes cast. If a third ballot is necessary, electors may vote for only one of the two candidates who received

the most votes on the second ballot. If there is a tied vote on the third ballot, the Oblate who is senior by perpetual oblation is elected.

With the approval of the Superior General in Council, the Provincial in Council or a provincial assembly can require a greater majority, for example, a two-thirds majority.

The counting of the votes is done by the Provincial or his delegate, with the help of two tellers.

105 Visitation is an integral part of the Provincial Superior's animation ministry.

He will provide for the ordinary visitation of the Province at least once during his term of office, evaluating the situation, identifying challenges and making any necessary corrections. A visitation is a special time of renewal for individuals and groups. Each Oblate will welcome the Provincial as a brother among brothers.

The Provincial will also maintain frequent contacts with the local communities and their members, visiting them as often as possible, listening to, supporting, and encouraging them.

R 105a. The Provincial will draft a report of his visitation and share it with the local community involved, with the Provin-

cial Council, as well as with the Superior General.

106 The Provincial is assisted by a Council of at least three members. They share in the government of the Province by their advice to the Provincial, and by their vote as required by the Church's common law and by the Constitutions and Rules.

R 106a. Councillors are appointed by the Superior General in Council, after consultation of the Province. A Council is appointed whenever a Provincial is appointed or re-appointed to office for another term.

The Superior General in Council may allow a Province to elect the Councillors if two thirds of the valid votes cast by the voters of the Province favour election. The same procedures as for the election of the Provincial will be followed. Elections of Councillors require the confirmation of the Superior General in Council.

In either case, if individual Councillors are to represent particular sectors of the Province, the specific modes of representation are determined in the Provincial Directory.

R 106b. In urgent cases which demand immediate action and for which approval is customarily granted by the Superior General, the Provincial can proceed on his own

authority with the consent of his Council, according to the norms of the Church's common law. He will then inform the Superior General of the action taken.

This procedure cannot be used for the confirmation of a candidate's admission to perpetual vows.

R 106c. An extraordinary consultative Provincial Council may be convened as an important means of collaboration in the animation of the Province. The composition of an extraordinary Provincial Council is to be determined in the Province Directory.

R 106d. In a grave and urgent case the Provincial in Council is empowered to act in the administration of a local community in order to do something usually done by the local Superior, or to correct or annul any of his acts or decisions.

107 For the better government of the Province, the Provincial in Council can designate one or more permanent Vicars Provincial. A Vicar Provincial has the same powers as the Provincial for ordinary affairs either of the Province or of the special sector entrusted to him, saving matters reserved to the Provincial by law or by the Provincial's decision.

**Permanent
Vicars Provincial**

R 107a. The appointment of a Vicar Provincial is made by the Provincial in Council and is to be confirmed by the Superior General in Council.

R 107b. A permanent Vicar Provincial is not appointed for a specific time; however, his mandate ends at the same time as that of the Provincial who appointed him.

The Vicar Provincial will exercise his authority in accordance with the decisions and policies of the Provincial and will keep him informed in all matters of importance.

If a member of the Council is named permanent Vicar Provincial, he continues to serve as Councillor. If someone not a member of the Council is named permanent Vicar Provincial, his functions in relation to the Council are determined by the Provincial in Council and approved by the Superior General in Council.

108 For greater participation in the life and mission of the Province, the Provincial in Council will:

- set up consultative committees, determining their composition, functions, and terms of reference;
- organize regular meetings with the local Superiors of the Province;

- according to needs and possibilities, organize a congress or a similar gathering of the Province, at least once during his term of office, in order to promote a common vision and determine common principles for mission.
- R 108a.** Province meetings provide an opportunity for the Provincial to report on the implementation of policies and programs and to invite comments. Seeking the opinions and suggestions of all members, he will foster, as far as possible, an open discussion of the various questions raised. Such mutual and confident cooperation will promote unity in the Province and the progress of the mission.
- R 108b.** A general meeting of Province members, or their elected representatives, may propose that certain matters be decided upon by the Provincial and his Council acting as a collegial body. To be binding, such proposals require the approval of the Superior General in Council.
- R 108c.** Changes in provincial government structures may be proposed by members of the Province or their elected representatives in a general Province meeting or by the Provincial in Council. To be binding, the proposals require the approval of the Superior General in Council.

R 108d. After appropriate consultation with the members, each Province will develop a Provincial Directory which determines specific applications of the Constitutions and Rules, as well as approved procedures. The text is submitted to the Superior General in Council for approval before it is promulgated. This Directory shall be revised periodically.

The Provincial
Treasurer

109 The Provincial Treasurer is appointed by the Provincial in Council; this appointment requires the confirmation of the Superior General in Council.

R 109a. The Treasurer's mandate lasts until a new provincial administration takes office. At that time, he may be replaced or reappointed in his duties. Usually he should not be asked to serve more than twelve years. If he is replaced, he continues in office until his successor takes over.

SECTION TWO

The Delegation

Nature and role

Delegation

110 A Delegation is a grouping of several local communities, with juridical personality.

It is known as a Provincial Delegation if it depends on a Province or on a group of Provinces and as a General Delegation if it depends on the Central Government.

In all cases, the Delegation will have its necessary autonomy, while retaining its administrative links with the bodies on which it depends.

Structures and functioning

111 A Provincial Delegation is established with its particular statutes by the Provincial Superior in Council after appropriate consultation. It may be set up either within the territory of the Province or outside it. In either case, the confirmation of the Superior General in Council is required. The Provincial in Council appoints its Superior and Council subject to confirmation by the Superior General in Council.

The Provincial
Delegation

When a group of Provinces wishes to assume responsibility for a Delegation, it pertains to the Superior General in Council, upon recommendation of the Provincials concerned, to establish it with its particular statutes and appoint its Superior and Council. One of the sponsoring Provincials shall be designated as the liaison Provincial with the Delegation.

112 A General Delegation is established with its particular statutes by the Superior General in Council after appropriate consultation. Likewise, the Superior General in Council appoints its Superior and Council.

R 112a. A General Delegation may be established:

- when a Mission meets the requirements for autonomy but cannot be established as a Provincial Delegation; or
- when a Province no longer fulfils the necessary conditions to continue as a Province but it is not judged opportune either to unite it to another Province or Delegation, or to include it in a broader restructuring or to establish it as a Provincial Delegation.

113 The government of a Delegation is entrusted to a Major Superior, assisted by a Council of at least two members. He has the same authority as a Provincial Superior in his Province, except in those matters which have been specifically reserved to the Provincial Superior or to the Superior General.

114 The Constitutions and Rules 102 to 109 relating to structures and functioning of Provinces apply with appropriate modification to Delegations and will be adapted to each Delegation in its particular statutes.

R 114a. The particular statutes of the Delegation will also determine among other things:

- the area of responsibility of the Superior of the Delegation and his participation if any in the deliberations of the Council of the Province responsible for the Delegation;
- the responsibilities for the development of local vocations and for first formation of persons wishing to join the Congregation and the call to vows and to Orders;
- the financial competence of the Delegation;
- forms of accountability;
- the Delegation's rights in relation to the ownership and administration of temporal goods;
- procedures for presenting requests to the Superior General in Council.

R 114b. The statutes shall be revised periodically.

115 While participating in the life of the Region and in order to develop its own identity each Delegation will elaborate a missionary plan taking into account the needs of the people who are being served, the pastoral plan of the local Church, the general thrust of the Region, and the policies of the Congregation.

R 115a. Faithful to its vision and missionary thrust the members of the Delegation make it a point to share in the local culture and mission of the Church where they have been sent.

R 115b. General contracts with the diocesan bishops will be negotiated by the Delegation Superior, in cooperation with the sponsoring Provincial Superior, and require the approval of the Superior General in Council.

R 115c. Normally, requests to the Superior General in Council relating to the Delegation will be forwarded directly only after appropriate communication with the sponsoring or the liaison Provincial Superior.

116 The Delegation Superior in Council appoints the Delegation Treasurer. To be effective, this appointment requires confirmation of the liaison Provincial Superior in Council; the Superior General is to be

informed of the appointment. In the case of a General Delegation, to be effective, the appointment is to be confirmed by the Superior General in Council.

SECTION THREE

The Mission

Nature and role

117 A Mission is established by the Superior General in Council in response to the call of a local Church addressing a perceived missionary need. In establishing a Mission, the missionary plan of the Region involved, as well as that of the Congregation as a whole, must be taken into consideration.

Establishment

R 117a. When a new Mission is being considered, there is appropriate dialogue between the Central Government of the Congregation, the Conference of the Region, the leadership of the Province or Provinces involved, and the local Church authorities.

R 117b. Normally, Missions are constituted in territories where there is no other Oblate presence.

R 117c. A Mission is attached to a Province, or to a group of Provinces or it may come under the immediate authority of the Superior General.

Structures and functioning

Government

118 A Mission is comprised of at least three members and gives the testimony of an apostolic community. It has a Superior, assisted by a Council of at least two members. The Superior is appointed by the competent Major Superior and is a member of the Conference of the Region where the Mission is situated. The needed support in personnel and finances is provided for a Mission by the Oblate entity upon which it depends.

R 118a. The particular statutes approved by the competent Major Superior and confirmed by the Superior General in Council provide the faculties necessary for the Superior of a Mission to pursue his role effectively and relate responsibly with the ecclesial authorities of the area.

R 118b. The statutes provide for appropriate accountability; they also define financial competency, and address issues related to the particular situation of a Mission.

Chapter Four
The Region

Nature and role

119 To foster animation and coordination among its members and units, the Congregation groups Provinces, Delegations and Missions into Regions. The Regions profit from their collective experience and develop common approaches to Oblate life and mission.

Regions

The Region as such is not a governmental structure with juridical personality.

120 The General Chapter determines the number of Regions. The composition of the Regions, taking geographical and cultural situations into account, is decided by the Superior General in Council, after consultation with the Oblate units concerned.

Number and composition

R 120a. As a general rule, the Region is international in its composition. This favours a broader missionary consciousness within the Congregation.

121 The Conference of the Region is composed of the Provincial, Delegation and Mission Superiors of the territory and is

Regional Conference

the principal animation body for the life and activity of the Region.

Structures and functioning

Flexible
structures

122 Each Region gives itself the flexible structures it needs to function properly. On occasion and where appropriate, it participates in structures of collaboration and sharing with other Regions.

R 122a. Regions derive their life more from the base than from structures. They are therefore to a great extent self-empowering and diversified.

Officers

123 The Conference of the Region selects its own officers from among its membership. The president carries out the duties entrusted to him by the Conference. As president, he has no authority within the Provinces, Delegations and Missions. Other officers are chosen by the Conference according to the needs and situation of the Region.

The General Councillor for the Region serves as liaison with the Central Government. He is invited to the meetings of the Conference.

R 123a. Each Region will establish the type of secretariat it needs to coordinate its activities and support its ongoing anima-

tion. The personnel of the secretariat will be chosen by the members of the Conference and work closely with its president. Each Region will have an executive secretary, other than the conference president, whose responsibility is to support the work of the Conference and further its activities.

R 123b. Where appropriate, sub-Regions may be established by the Conference of the Region to facilitate communication, collaboration, and coordination.

R 123c. Meeting periodically, the Conference coordinates certain joint projects in areas such as mission, justice and peace, first and ongoing formation. Committees and task forces may be established for this purpose.

R 123d. Details regarding the functioning of the Regions and their accountability to various governmental levels are spelled out in the Congregation's Administrative Directory. In application of this directory, each Region shall develop a Regional Administrative Directory, approved by the Conference of the Region, and confirmed by the Superior General in Council.

R 123e. For membership on various General Committees, the Regional Conferences will propose the names of competent Ob-

lates to the Superior General who, from this list, will appoint members to appropriate committees as needed.

R 123f. An Oblate Brother representing his region will participate in the meetings of the Regional Conference.

Chapter Five

General Government

General level **124** The general level of government includes the General Chapter and the General Administration. In the spirit of the Founder, these ensure that the Congregation remains faithful to its mission and to the demands of religious life. They guarantee our availability for the needs of the entire Church.

SECTION ONE

The General Chapter

Nature and role

Spirit and purpose **125** The General Chapter is the highest authority within the Congregation. It meets regularly to strengthen the bonds of unity and to express the members' par-

ticipation in the life and mission of the Congregation.

United around Christ, the Oblate family shares the lived experience of its communities as well as the challenges and hopes of its ministry. The Chapter is a privileged time of community reflection and conversion. Together, in union with the Church, we discern God's will in the urgent needs of our times and thank the Lord for the work of salvation which he accomplishes through us.

126 The General Chapter elects the Superior General and his Council, articulates our missionary vision, determines general policy for the Congregation, and makes whatever decisions are required. If need be, it also makes changes in the Rules and proposes to the Holy See modifications in the Constitutions.

Role
and tasks

R 126a. During the Chapter, the Superior General presents a report on the state of the Congregation and on its financial situation; the report is then examined by the Chapter.

R 126b. The Chapter establishes its program, taking into account the topics submitted. It also determines the rules of procedure to be followed.

R 126c. Saving the particular prescriptions for the election of the Superior General and the Vicar General (cf. CC 136 and 142), Chapter elections follow the norms of the Church's common law. In all Chapter elections, the requisite majority will be calculated according to the number of valid votes cast.

Structures and functioning

Convocation

127 The Superior General convokes the General Chapter every six years and presides at it.

For serious reasons and acting collegially with the Council, he may convoke a Chapter at other times as well. In such a case, however, the Chapter considers only the matters for which it was convoked and normally holds no elections.

R 127a. The Superior General in Council fixes the place and opening date of the Chapter. The date of a regular Chapter may be anticipated or postponed, but not beyond six months.

R 127b. At least two years before a Chapter, the Superior General in plenary session of the Council will appoint a Commissioner and the other members of the Precapit-

ular Commission to make the necessary preparations for the Chapter.

R 127c. After consulting the Provincials, the Superior General will propose topics for the Chapter's agenda.

128 The members of the General Chapter are the Superior General, the members of the General Council, the Treasurer General, the Procurator to the Holy See, the Superiors of Oblate Units (Provinces, Delegations and Missions) which have at least 60 members at the time of the convocation of the Chapter, the elected delegates and the Oblates invited by the Superior General according to the Rules.

Capitulars

In the composition of the General Chapter, the number of members elected by the Congregation must constitute the majority of the members.

All remain members of the Chapter for its entire duration, even if replaced in office during the course of the Chapter.

R 128a. Elected delegates will be determined on the following basis:

1. The elected delegates will be one for each eighty members of a Region.

2. The Oblates who are members of a Delegation or a Mission are counted only with the Region to which the Delegation or Mission belongs.
3. The Conference of the Region will determine the electoral units, the number of delegates and alternates to be elected in each electoral unit, and the necessary procedures for their election. The procedures will assure proportionate representation and the right to cast a direct and secret vote to each Oblate with active voice. At least one of the elected delegates of each region must be an Oblate Brother.
4. The Conference of the Region will submit for the approval of the Superior General in Council the eventual composition of electoral units, as well as the procedures for election, no more than six months after the convocation of the Chapter (Cf. 128b).
5. Members of the General House community and other Oblates attached to it will constitute one electoral unit and will elect one delegate to the Chapter.
6. The Superior General, after consulting the Council in plenary session, may invite up to two other Oblates to the Chapter. The invited capitulars have full voting rights in all capitular acts.

R 128b. The total number of Oblates of each Region, on which the number of elected del-

legates will be based, is fixed on the date of convocation.

- R 128c.** Capitulars may not normally relinquish their right and duty to attend the Chapter. For serious reasons and with the consent of the Superior General, a Superior eligible by right according to C 128 to attend the Chapter may choose in Council another Oblate to replace him, and an elected delegate may yield his place to the alternate who then replaces him for the duration of the Chapter.
- R 128d.** The Superior General will take the necessary measures to bring to the attention of all Oblates, as soon as possible, the acts and decisions of the Chapter.
- R 128e.** Between Chapters, the Superior General in Council in plenary session will call at least one meeting of the Provincials with the Central Government. After consulting the Provincials, he will determine details of convocation and the agenda of the meeting. The principal purpose of such a meeting is to evaluate the extent to which decisions taken in Chapter have been carried out, to encourage further implementation of such decisions, and to provide for the remote preparation of the next Chapter.

SECTION TWO

The General Administration

Nature and role

- 129** The General Administration comprises the Central Government and the General Services.
- 130** The Central Government is made up of the Superior General, the General Council and the General Officers, and is responsible for carrying out the policies and directives of the General Chapter as well as for assuring the animation necessary for a united missionary body. They constitute the Central Government community and work closely together as a team.
- 131** Called to the service of authority by the Chapter, the Superior General and Council exercise their responsibilities in a spirit of collegiality. Their first concern is the Oblates' fidelity as a Congregation to the missionary thrust which is our Spirit-given heritage from the Founder.

Exercising their leadership throughout the Congregation and open to the needs of the Church and the world, they identify basic issues and help discern common objectives;

they oversee the development and sharing of resources, promote an exchange of experiences and information, and foster interdependence.

132 The General Administration maintains General Services for its effective functioning and for the good of the whole Institute.

General services

Structures and functioning

The Superior General

133 The Superior General is the Congregation's living bond of unity. The example of his life, his apostolic zeal and the affection he holds for all Oblates stir the faith and charity of communities to ever greater efforts in response to the Church's needs.

Living bond of unity

As the successor of St. Eugene de Mazenod, the Superior General will continually keep alive the missionary zeal at the heart of our charism, helping to break new ground at the service of evangelization.

134 Responsible for building up the whole Congregation, for animating its religious life and leading it in its mission, the Superior General will constantly seek from God the wisdom and sound judge-

Virtues

ment, the strength of will and the firmness of character which the office demands.

He will be open and understanding, patient and sensitive, welcoming with unfailing kindness all who have recourse to him. He will correct with gentleness. In a word, he will consider himself at once the common father and brother of all Oblates.

His authority

135 The Superior General's authority extends to all Provinces, Delegations, Missions, local communities and works of the Congregation, as well as to all its members.

Election and mandate

136 The Superior General is elected by the General Chapter for a six-year term. He may be re-elected for a second term, but not for a third consecutive one.

There will be a maximum of five ballots. On the first three ballots, a two-thirds majority of the valid votes cast is required for this election. On the fourth and subsequent ballot, an absolute majority suffices.

On the fifth ballot, only the names of the two who received the highest number of votes on the fourth ballot will be retained, and the two candidates do not vote. If there was a tied vote on the fourth ballot, the name of the Oblate who is senior by perpetual oblation is

retained. Likewise, if on the fifth ballot there is a tie, the Oblate who is senior by perpetual oblation is elected.

R 136a. The election of the Superior General and Council will be preceded by an appropriate discernment process agreed upon by the General Chapter.

It is desirable that he be outstanding for his love of God and of the Church, his zeal for the salvation of souls, his attachment to the Society equal to any trial, his wisdom, prudence, sagacity and keenness of mind, his strength of character and fortitude and courage enabling him to continue the good already begun in spite of obstacles and contradictions, recommendable, finally, and respected, whether within or without the Congregation, for his accumulated virtues.

The Superior General will consider his office not so much as an honour which distinguishes him from others but rather as a burden requiring from him graver duties, greater cares, and more eminent virtues.

Let him govern wisely, distribute offices prudently, bear each man's failings patiently, listen to everyone with kindness, correct with gentleness, always charitably coming to each person's aid, responding eagerly to all needs, spiritual or temporal, counting himself at once the common father and the brother of all.

137 It pertains to the Superior General to give the first obedience to an Oblate for a given Province. When he judges it opportune for the good of the Congregation or of the individual, he may transfer a member from one Province to another.

R 137a. When assigning an Oblate to a Province, the Superior General may indicate that the assignment is for a specific Delegation or Mission. Prior to such an appointment, an understanding should be reached between the Superior General and the Provincial concerned.

R 137b. The Superior General will consult the Provincials and the Oblate concerned before giving a first obedience or making a transfer from one Province to another. Unit superiors will ask the Superior General for approval before allowing an Oblate to live outside the Province's geographic territory if the stay exceeds one year. If the stay is for the purpose of higher studies, only notification is required.

R 137c. To promote better cooperation between Provinces and further the unity of the Congregation, he may likewise call Oblates to Rome for studies and formation or for a particular service to the Congregation. Their stay should give them a greater sense of the Church and of the Congregation's worldwide dimensions.

138 Visitation is an integral part of the Superior General's animation ministry. This ministry can be carried out in a variety of ways: fraternal visits, ordinary visitations, and special visitations.

R 138a. During his term of office, the Superior General will aim at paying a fraternal visit to the Provinces and Delegations. The purpose of this visitation is to support and encourage the members.

R 138b. Personally or through an Oblate designated by him, he will provide for the ordinary visitation of a Province or Delegation - evaluating the situation, identifying challenges, and correcting irregularities when necessary. Carried out periodically, such a visitation is a special time of renewal for groups and individuals. For this reason the entire Province or Delegation is responsible for its careful preparation and successful outcome.

R 138c. When necessary or useful, he will also provide for special visitations. These can be carried out personally or through one or more delegates. A special visitation can pertain to works of the Congregation, specific categories of members, or to particular situations that have to be addressed.

139 Should the office of Superior General become vacant, or should the Superior General become permanently unable to exercise his office, the Vicar General assumes his duties. Acting collegially with the Council in plenary session, he determines whether a General Chapter should be convoked for the purpose of electing a Superior General and Council, or whether he should complete the term.

R 139a. If a Superior General resigns when the Chapter is not in session, the resignation is submitted to the Holy See.

R 139b. The determination that a Superior General is so disabled that he must be replaced is made by the members of the General Council in plenary session and acting collegially; its findings are submitted to the Holy See for verification.

The General Council

140 The General Council is composed of the Vicar General, the Assistants General, and the General Councillors. They assist the Superior General in the government and administration of the Congregation.

R 140a. There will be two Assistants General and one General Councillor for each Region.

Election

141 The members of the General Council are elected from among those perpetually professed, according to what is prescribed elsewhere in the Constitutions and Rules.

A new General Council is elected by the General Chapter after it has elected a Superior General. The members of the General Council remain in office until the election of their successors.

R 141a. In the choice of candidates, efforts will be made to reflect the international character of the Congregation.

Vicar General's
election

142 To assist the Superior General in his charge, a Vicar General is elected for a six-year term.

On the first two ballots, an absolute majority is required for this election. On the third ballot, only the names of the two candidates receiving the most votes on the second ballot shall be retained, and the two candidates do not vote. If there was a tied vote on the second ballot, the name of the Oblate who is senior by perpetual oblation is retained. Likewise, if on the third ballot there is a tie,

the Oblate who is senior by perpetual oblation is elected.

143 The Vicar General has ordinary authority for the conduct of regular business. The manner in which this authority is to be exercised will be determined with the Superior General.

Vicar General's
authority

Acting as a moderator within the General Administration, the Vicar General shall coordinate its executive functioning and services.

R 143a. Should the office of the Vicar General become vacant, or should the Vicar General complete the term of a Superior General who is deceased, has resigned or is permanently unable to exercise his office, a new Vicar General or a Pro-Vicar General is elected for the unexpired term. The election is made by the Superior General or Vicar General, as the case may be, and the General Council acting collegially.

R 143b. If the Superior General and the Vicar General are both absent or hindered from exercising their office, the Assistant General who is senior by election will replace them as Pro-Vicar General.

144 The Assistants General, together with the Vicar General, ensure a continuous presence of the Council to assist the Superior General in the fulfilment of his

The Assistants
General

office, particularly in areas such as the animation of mission, first and ongoing formation, the coordination of visitations, and the responsible stewardship of temporal goods. The Assistants General are also available to assume special responsibilities as assigned by the Superior General.

R 144a. The responsibility of coordination of associations will be assigned to the Vicar General or to one of the Assistants General.

145 As members of the General Administration and of the Central Government community, the General Councillors have their residence in Rome. Their time, however, is divided between their duties at the centre and their responsibilities in the Regions. They can thus be an effective liaison and provide the General Administration with accurate information concerning Oblate life in the Regions.

R 145a. A General Councillor is elected by the Chapter for each Region of the Congregation.

A slate of at least two candidates, prepared during the Chapter by a secret ballot of the capitulars of the Region concerned, is presented to the Chapter. In presenting their candidates, they may, if they wish, indicate their preference. Each capitular, however, may vote for any other eligible Oblate of his choice.

R 145b. In the Regions, the General Councillors support the Major Superiors and their initiatives. As liaison between Provinces, Delegations and Missions, they foster the sharing of experiences and, when possible, promote interprovincial projects and services. They help their brother Oblates rise to the demands of their life and mission by communicating a global view of the Congregation's priorities.

R 145c. For a better government of the Region and of the Units of which it is composed, the Superior General in Council may delegate a General Councillor with governmental power for determined actions, to be specified in his Council, within one or several Regions and Units, with the exception of whatever may be reserved by law or by a specific act of the same Superior General.

Plenary Sessions and Ordinary Sessions

146 The Superior General will submit matters concerning general policy to the General Council, inviting suggestions and proposals. He requires the advice or consent of the Council in those matters determined by the Church's common law or by the Constitutions and Rules.

R 146a. Plenary sessions of the Council are held at least twice yearly. All the members of the Council are convoked to deliberate with the Superior General on major items of business, as determined by the Constitutions and Rules, by the Chapter or by the Superior General in Council. Major items of business are:

- the determination of the time and place of the General Chapter and of the principal questions to be placed on its agenda;
- the determination of the composition of the Regions, the establishment or suppression of Provinces and General Delegations, or the confirmation or the suppression of a Provincial Delegation, the acceptance of a new Mission;
- the appointment of Provincials and of their Councillors, or their confirmation in the case of an election by the Province;
- the appointment of planning or research committees for specific areas, such as formation or finances;
- the allocation of Congregational funds;

- the examination and approval of the financial reports of the General Administration, and the examination of the financial reports of the Congregation;
- the appointment of General Officers, of Directors of Services, of the Chapter Commissioner and members of the Precapitular Commission;
- the election of the Vicar General, the Pro-Vicar General, an Assistant General or a General Councillor.

R 146b. Ordinary sessions of the Council deal with the day-to-day business of the Congregation. The Superior General or his replacement meets with at least two members of the Council for such sessions. If necessary to constitute a quorum in an urgent and unforeseen case, the person presiding may ask a General Officer to take part in the Council with the right to vote.

In cases demanding immediate action, the Council may decide in ordinary sessions matters that are normally reserved for plenary sessions.

Except for cases determined in Rule 146a, whenever there is mention of the General Council, the matter may be decided in ordinary session.

R 146c. The Superior General will invite the Treasurer General or the Procurator General to Council meetings, depending on the nature of the questions being discussed in council; their role is consultative.

R 146d. The Superior General in Council is empowered to act in a grave and urgent case concerning the administration of a Province, Delegation, Mission, or local community either to do something that is usually done by the Provincial or local Superior or to correct or annul their acts or decisions.

Acting as a Collegial Body

Collegial
body

147 Besides what is stated elsewhere in the Constitutions and Rules, the Superior General and his Council in plenary session will act as a collegial body in those precise instances determined by the General Chapter.

R 147a. In the case of a vacancy between Chapters, the Superior General and his Council acting collegially will elect an Assistant General or General Councillor, as the case may be. In the latter instance, there is a previous consultation with the Provincials and Superiors of Delegations in the Region.

148 The Central Government also comprises certain General Offices which are necessary or useful for the whole Institute. They are the General Secretariat and the General Finance Office. It pertains to the Superior General in Council in plenary session to establish, when necessary, other General Offices.

R 148a. The Superior General in Council in plenary session appoints the General Officers. The General Officers are members of the Central Government community. Their term of office corresponds to that of the Council under whose administration they were appointed. When a new Council takes office, the General Officers remain in charge until they are reappointed in office or replaced; in either case, this action is taken within one year. For serious reasons the Superior General in Council, after hearing the party concerned, may request the resignation of a General Officer before his term is completed.

R 148b. The Secretary General is a General Officer. He serves as secretary and notary of the Congregation and of the General Council. He sees to the preparation of dossiers for the meetings of the Council, he also makes certain that official documents of the Con-

gregation as well as acts of the Council are properly preserved and, if need be, communicated to the parties concerned. He also supervises the work of the General Secretariat and collaborates closely with the General Archivist.

- R 148c.** The Treasurer General is a General Officer. Under the direction of the Superior General and Council, he administers the common property and possessions of the Congregation. He also exercises a role of animation in regard to the responsible stewardship of temporal goods and the ongoing formation of Provincial Treasurers.

General Services and Other Services

Nature and functions

149 The General Administration also includes General Services necessary or useful for the whole Institute. It pertains to the Superior General in Council in plenary session to establish or discontinue General Services.

- R 149a.** Among the General Services are the Procuration to the Holy See, the Postulation, the Oblate Communications Service; the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Service; the General Archives and the General Service of Oblate Studies. Each General Service is under the direction or supervision of an Oblate appoint-

ed for a specific term of office by the Superior General in Council in plenary session.

- R 149b.** The Procurator General, under the direction of the Superior General, represents the Congregation in its official relations with the Holy See.
- R 149c.** The Postulator General, in accordance with the mind of the Superior General, diffuses a wider knowledge of Oblates who have enriched the Congregation's history with an outstanding witness of their holiness; and he especially promotes, according to the Church's common law, the causes of those who are a special source of inspiration not only for the Congregation but for the whole Church.
- R 149d.** Through different means of communication, the Oblate Communications Service provides for an exchange and sharing of information throughout the Congregation and beyond and fosters the use of media in ministry.
- R 149e.** The roles of the Directors of other General Services are described in the General Administration Handbook.
- R 149f.** The services, committees, and co-ordination needed to respond to other particular

needs of the Congregation in the field of missions, formation, Oblate history and spirituality, communications and finance will also be provided for.

Chapter Six

Temporal Goods

Property and
sharing

150 Since we are a missionary Congregation, the temporal goods of our Institute are, above all, at the service of the mission.

R 150a. While meeting the members' needs, through the income generated, we will look for ways to share what we have with others, especially with the poor.

R 150b. Since the placement of the Congregation's funds is not unrelated to issues of justice, particular care should be taken that our investments do not support enterprises which exploit the poor or damage the environment, but rather those which benefit them in some way.

Right to own
property

151 The Congregation as such, Provinces, Delegations, and canonically established houses, have the right to acquire, retain, administer and alienate property in accordance with the Church's common law.

In the case of established houses, however, this right is limited; the limits are fixed by the Provincial in Council.

R 151a. The special statute of Missions, district communities, and residences will determine whether they have the right to acquire, retain, administer, and alienate property.

R 151b. Without prejudice to the canonical norms concerning property, titles to Oblate property and other assets are to be vested in civilly recognized Oblate corporations or in some other manner which, according to the laws of the country, assures their safety for the Congregation.

152 In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, each Province or Delegation will strive to provide for its own needs in financial matters.

Subsidiarity

153 Superiors and Treasurers will manage Oblate goods in a spirit of stewardship and in conformity with the Church's common law and the Constitutions and Rules.

Managing Oblate goods

R 153a. In fulfilment of their office, the Superiors and Treasurers will be guided by the norms of their respective Financial Directories.

154 The Treasurer, under the direction of the competent Superior, carries out the acts of ordinary administration, after the Superior in Council has approved the annual budget.

R 154a. The Treasurer prepares the budget and periodic reports and presents them to the competent Superior.

155 For acts of extraordinary administration which exceed the purpose and the manner of ordinary administration, as well as to incur debts or obligations or to alienate Oblate property, the consent of the competent Superior in Council is required.

R 155a. The General Finance Directory shall list those acts considered to be acts of extraordinary administration in the Congregation; Provincial and Delegation Directories can spell out in more details acts which, within the Province or Delegation, are also considered to be acts of extraordinary administration.

156 All Oblates, at whatever level, require the explicit consent of their Major Superior in Council to accept the administration of non-Oblate ecclesiastical works or property. If such administration is accepted, contracts are drawn up in due and

proper form. The nihil obstat of the Major Superior is required for acts of extraordinary administration relating to this work or property.

The administration of non-ecclesiastical goods, except for the patrimonies of Oblates, will not be accepted unless there are serious reasons and then with the consent of the Major Superior in Council. Administration will always be conducted in accordance with the laws of the country.

157 A Finance Committee is to be established at the Congregational, Provincial, and Delegation levels, and to be kept duly informed.

Finance
Committee

The Local Level

158 The Provincial in Council, or the Superior of the Delegation in Council, sets the financial competency of local Superiors and their Councils, and determines which assets can be managed by individual Oblates and by local Superiors and their Councils. He also sets the contributions which local communities are to make to the Province or Delegation. This contribution is to be made even in cases where there is financial dependence.

Financial
competency

R 158a. While respecting the rights of established houses and the intentions of benefactors and donors, the Provincial and the Superior of the Delegation shall provide for fraternal sharing of financial resources among the local communities of the Province or Delegation.

R 158b. Likewise, while respecting the rights of established houses and the intentions of benefactors and donors, the temporal goods of each local community are held in common according to directives fixed by the Provincial in Council.

R 158c. The local Treasurer, under the direction of the Superior administers the community's property. In bookkeeping as well as in bank accounts, there must be a clear distinction between the funds and property belonging to a parish, diocese or other organization and those belonging to the Oblates.

The same principles apply to those members of the Congregation who are entrusted with the collection and disbursement of funds.

The Provincial and Delegation Levels

159 After consulting the persons concerned, the Superior General in Council determines the limits of financial competency of Provincial and Delegation

authorities and determines the amount which each Province or Delegation contributes annually to the support of the General Administration.

160 The Provincial or Delegation Treasurer, under the direction of the Major Superior, will prudently provide for the needs of the Province or Delegation, its communities, and its members in a spirit of charity, moderation, and detachment.

The Provincial
Treasurer

R 160a. For acts of extraordinary administration, the Treasurer requires the permission of the Provincial or Delegation Superior, who obtains the consent of his Council and, if necessary, of the Superior General in Council.

He will respect the financial autonomy of the local community. The Provincial or Delegation Superior may, however, delegate him to assist local communities in financial matters.

R 160b. An Assistant Treasurer or, at least, someone who will be kept fully informed of the financial situation and of the various operations of the Treasurer's office, will be appointed by the Provincial or Delegation Superior.

161 The norms relating to the financial administration of Delegations and Missions will be further determined in their statutes.

Delegations
and Missions

The General Level

162 The Superior General in Council determines the financial policy of the Congregation in line with the indications given by the General Chapter.

In administering the funds of the Congregation whose management pertains to the General Administration, the Superior General personally may incur or authorize extraordinary expenses up to the maximum amount determined by the Superior General in Council. To spend more than that amount, to incur debts or obligations, to perform acts of extraordinary administration, or to alienate otherwise Oblate property, the Superior General must have the consent of his Council. The other applicable norms of the Church's common law must also be observed.

The Superior General must also obtain the consent of his Council to authorize a Provincial or Delegation Superior to perform acts of extraordinary administration or to make expenditures exceeding the latter's competency.

R 162a. In addition to an animation role in regard to the responsible stewardship of temporal goods, the Treasurer General conducts the ordinary business of the General Administration and prepares its annual bud-

get. He receives an annual consolidated report from each Province and Delegation and gives his analysis to the Superior General and Council. He also receives a copy of the budget approved by the Major Superior in Council of each Province and Delegation in order to provide a more accurate analysis of the financial report.

With the appropriate adaptations, he assumes at the general level the same responsibilities as the Provincial Treasurer exercises at the provincial level.

- R 162b.** A General Finance Committee helps the Superior General and Council determine the financial policy of the Congregation and presents whatever recommendations it judges opportune. The committee is composed of the Treasurer General, his assistant and four qualified Oblates appointed by the Superior General in Council from a list of candidates proposed by each Regional Conference. Persons other than Oblates may be invited by the Treasurer General as advisers on specific issues considered by the General Finance Committee.

*We urgently exhort, in the Lord,
each and every member of the Congregation,
as very dear sons in Christ,
to renew themselves by God's grace
in the spirit of their vocation;
to unceasingly undertake,
under the aegis of our most loving
Immaculate Mother, even more important
and effective works for the greater glory of God
and for the salvation
of the most abandoned souls.
Mindful of these words,
(which marvellously sum up our entire Rule),
"all united in the bonds of the most intimate
charity under the direction of the superiors,"
may they form but one heart and one soul.*

- 1850 -

Fidelity to the Constitutions and Rules

- 163** The Constitutions and Rules set out a privileged means for each Oblate to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. They are inspired by the charism lived by the Founder and his first companions; also, they have received the approval of the Church. Thus, they allow each Oblate to evaluate the quality of his response to his vocation and to become a saint. In the footsteps of Jesus Christ
- 164** A two-thirds majority of the General Chapter is required for the modification or authentic interpretation of an article of the Constitutions, to be submitted to the Holy See for approval. Modification of Constitutions
- 165** An absolute majority is required for the approval or modifications of the Rules. Modification of Rules
- R 165a.** Any change in existing Rules which is approved by the Chapter is immediately effective.
- 166** The General Chapter and the Superior General may dispense individuals and communities from disciplinary prescriptions of the Constitutions and Rules for an indefinite period; other Major Superiors may do the same for a limited period for those under their jurisdiction. Superiors Dispensations

of local communities may occasionally dispense individuals or the community itself. Nevertheless, neither the General Chapter nor Superiors can dispense from constitutive laws, especially those which pertain to the structures and government of the Congregation, unless an exception is expressly stated.

Directories

167 The Superior General in Council promulgates specialized directories applicable to all or certain parts of the Congregation. These directories concern formation, financial administration, general administration, and similar matters.

R 167a. The General Norms for Oblate Formation are promulgated by the Superior General in Council in cooperation with the General Formation Committee.

R 167b. The General Finance Directory is promulgated by the Superior General in Council in cooperation with the General Finance Committee.

Creative fidelity

168 Each Oblate through his obligation assumes responsibility for the common heritage of the Congregation, expressed in the Constitutions and Rules and our family tradition. He is exhorted to let himself be guided by these norms in creative fidelity to the legacy bequeathed by St. Eugene de Mazenod.

APPENDIX

Suffrages for the Deceased (cf. C 43)

Decree of 1980 General Chapter revised by 1992 General Chapter

1. When an Oblate dies, the Superior General shall be notified at once; he in turn will inform the entire Congregation so that the deceased can be remembered in our community and personal prayer and in the celebration of the Eucharist.
2. Each Oblate priest shall celebrate one Mass and each Brother attend Mass upon the death of the Superior General or of a former Superior General, or of any member, novices included, of the Province to which he belongs. It is recommended that this Mass be a community celebration.
3. Oblates not attached to a particular Province but living under the direct authority of the Superior General have the same obligations and the same rights in the matter of suffrages as the members of the Province in whose territory they reside.
4. The Superior General shall celebrate one Mass for each deceased Oblate or novice.

5. Once each month every Oblate priest shall celebrate Mass, and each Brother attend Mass, for all deceased Oblates.
6. In each house or residence, a community Mass shall be celebrated at the death of the Pope or of the Bishop of the local diocese.
7. Every Oblate or novice may celebrate, or have celebrated, five Masses for a deceased father or mother, and three Masses for a deceased sister or brother. The Provincial shall arrange to have the same suffrages applied for these relatives of a deceased Oblate.

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EXCERPTS FROM THE CONSTITUTIONS BY THE FOUNDER

Part One

- 6. Co-workers with the Saviour:**
CC-RR 1818, Première partie, chap. 1, § 3, N.B.
- 8 To preach Christ crucified:**
CC-RR 1826, Première partie, chap. 3, § 1, art. 5;
(CC-RR 1928: art. 98)
- With Jesus on the Cross:**
CC-RR 1826, Deuxième partie, chap. 2, § 3, art.
1; (CC-RR 1928: art. 263)
- 14 Simplicity in preaching:**
CC-RR 1818, Première partie, chap. 3, § 1; (CC-
RR 1928: art. 97)
- The ministry of Reconciliation:**
CC-RR 1826 (and 1818), Première partie, chap.
3, § 2, art. 1; (CC-RR 1928: art. 118)
- 22 Apostolic poverty:**
CC-RR 1818, Deuxième partie, chap. 1, § 1 and
1859 (Résumé pour les Frères);
(CC-RR 1928: art. 176)
- 26 The vow of obedience:**
CC-RR 1826 (and 1818), Deuxième partie, chap.
1, § 3; (CC-RR 1928: art. 222)
- 32 To become another Jesus Christ:**
CC-RR 1818, Deuxième partie, chap. 1; (CC-RR
1928: art. 287-290)

- 38 Obedience and community:**
CC-RR **1821** (and 1825), Deuxième partie, chap. 1, § 3, art. 7; (CC-RR 1928: art. 233)

Fraternal charity:

CC-RR **1826** (and 1853), Troisième partie, chap. 3, § 2, art. 17-19; (CC-RR 1928: art. 714-716)

- 42 Community life and the apostolate:**
CC-RR **1825**, Deuxième partie, chap. 2, § 1, art. 8, N.B.; (CC-RR 1928: art. 253, N.B.)

Part Two

- 44 The Oblate ideal:**
CC-RR 1826 and **1853**, Troisième partie, chap. 2, § 1, art. 19; (CC-RR 1928: art. 697)

- 50 Formation team:**
CC-RR **1853**, Première partie, chap. 3, § 1, art. 14-15; (CC-RR 1928: art. 61-62)

- 62 The Oblate cross:**
CC-RR **1818**, Deuxième partie, chap. 1; (CC-RR 1928: art. 309)

Servants of the Church:

CC-RR **1825** (and 1853), Troisième partie, chap. 2, § 1, art. 1; (CC-RR 1928: art. 682)

- 66 Scholastics:**
CC-RR **1853**, Première partie, chap. 3, § 1, art. 1; (CC-RR 1928: art. 48)

Part Three

- 90 The local Superior:**
CC-RR 1825, Troisième partie, chap. 1, § 7, art. 5; (CC-RR 1928: art. 583-584)
- 96 The Provincial:**
CC-RR 1853, Troisième partie, chap. 1, § 7, art. 33; (CC-RR 1928: art. 548)
- 124 The Superior General:**
CC-RR 1825, Troisième partie, chap. 1, § 2, art. 5-6; (CC-RR 1928: art. 433)
- 146 Cor unum et anima una:**
Letter convoking the 1850 General Chapter;
(CC-RR 1928: art. 291)

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

for Superiors and Councils

THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

I - WITH HIS COUNCIL ACTING COLLEGIALLY

The Superior General, or the Vicar General, and his Council, in Plenary Session, act as a Collegial Body:

1. To elect a Vicar General or Pro-Vicar General (R 143a);
2. To elect an Assistant General or General Councilor (R 147a);
3. To convoke an extraordinary General Chapter (C 127);
4. To convoke a Chapter for the purpose of electing the Superior General and his Council (C 139);
5. To determine if the Superior General is so disabled that he must be replaced: its findings are submitted to the Holy See for verification (R 139b);
6. To dismiss a professed member, observing the canonical prescriptions and obtaining the confirmation of the Holy See (C 44; can. 699);
7. In the other areas determined by the General Chapter (C 147).

II - WITH HIS COUNCIL IN A PLENARY OR AN ORDINARY SESSION

PRINCIPLES

A. In Plenary Session

The Superior General and his Council decide in plenary session:

1. All matters in which they act as a Collegial Body (cf. above), except n^o 7;
2. Major items of business, as determined by the Constitutions and Rules, the Chapter, or the Superior General in Council (C 147; R 146a).

B. In Ordinary Session

The Superior General and his Council decide in ordinary session (C 86):

1. All matters which require the intervention of the Council but no further precision is indicated (R 146b);
2. Cases which require immediate action, even if they pertain to matters ordinarily reserved to plenary sessions (R 146b);
3. Cases where common law requires the intervention of the Council, even if not mentioned in the Constitutions and Rules.

APPLICATIONS

The consent of the Council is required in the following cases:

A. Concerning the General Chapter

1. To determine the place and date of the Chapter and the principal questions to be proposed for its agenda (plenary session) – (RR 127a, 127b, 127c, 146a);
2. To appoint the Commissioner of the Chapter and the other members of the Precapitular Commission (plenary session) – (RR 127b, 146a);
3. To approve the composition of the electoral units as well as the procedures for election before the election of the delegates to the Chapter and alternates (R 128a);
4. To convoke a Meeting of Provincials between Chapters (128e).

B. Concerning the General Administration

1. To appoint the General Officers (plenary session) – (R 148a);
2. To ask for the resignation of a General Officer (R 148a);
3. To designate a member of the Council to be responsible for formation (R 49a);
4. To establish or discontinue General Services (plenary session) – (C 149);

5. To appoint the Directors of General Services (plenary session) – (R 149a);
6. To designate the members of the General Formation Committee (plenary session) – (R 146a);
7. To appoint the members of the General Finance Committee (R 162b);
8. To determine the composition of Regions (plenary session) – (C 120; R 146a);
9. To confirm a Regional Administrative Directory after approval by the Conference of the Region (R 123d);
10. To delegate a General Councilor with governmental power for determined actions, to be specified in his Council, within one or several Regions and Units (R 145c);
11. To establish a General Delegation, determine its statute, appoint its Superior and Council (plenary session) – (C 112; R 146a);
12. To accept a new Mission under the immediate authority of the Superior General (plenary session) – (RR 117c, 146a);
13. To establish a local community directly under the Superior General, appoint its Superior and Council (R 92a);
14. Promulgate specialized Directories applicable to all or certain parts of the Congregation (C 167);
15. To approve the general norms for Oblate formation (RR 49a; 167a);

16. To approve the General Finance Directory (R 167b);
17. To determine the financial policy of the Congregation in line with the indications given by the General Chapter (C 162; R 146a);
18. To determine the maximum amount the Superior General personally may spend or the extraordinary expenses he may authorize (C 162);
19. To incur debts or obligations, perform acts of extraordinary administration, or alienate Oblate property for more than the amount authorized for the Superior General acting alone (C 162);
20. To approve expenditures from the funds of the Congregation which are under the direct control of the General Administration when the amount in question exceeds what is within the competence of the Superior General alone (C 162);
21. To approve the incurring of debts or obligations or the alienation of property, where there is question of possessions or funds under the direct control of the General Administration (C 162);
22. To allocate funds for the missions and review financial requests by Provinces and Delegations (plenary session) (R 146a);
23. To examine and approve the financial report of the General Administration (plenary session) (R 146a);
24. To allow the General Treasurer, or others at the General level, to accept the administration of

non-Oblate enterprises or ecclesiastical property not belonging to the Institute (C 156).

C. Concerning the Provinces

1. To appoint a Provincial or confirm his election by the Province (Plenary Session) (CC 102-103; R 146a);
2. To prolong the powers of a Provincial for a short time, or appoint a temporary Administrator for a Province (C 87);
3. To remove a Provincial from office before his term has expired (C 87);
4. To appoint the Provincial Councillors or confirm their election by the Province (plenary session) – (RR 106a, 146a);
5. To confirm the appointment of a Vicar Provincial (R 107a);
6. To confirm the appointment of the Provincial Treasurer (C 109);
7. To confirm the appointment of a Pre-Novitiate Director (R 54b);
8. To confirm the appointment of the Superior and the members of the formation team for the scholasticate community (R 66e);
9. To confirm the appointment of a Novice Master (C 57);
10. To approve the establishment of a novitiate (R 58b);

11. To approve the establishment of a post-novitiate formation community (R 65i);
12. To approve by a written decree the place of a novitiate, to transfer or suppress it (R 58b; can. 647, §1);
13. To allow exceptionally a candidate to make his novitiate in a house of the Congregation other than an established novitiate (R 58b; can. 647, §2);
14. To confirm the admission of candidates to perpetual vows (C 61);
15. To decide the case of a member who, feeling unjustly excluded from the renewal of temporary commitment, has recourse to the Superior General in Council (R 60c);
16. To allow a Brother to prepare for admission to the permanent diaconate or to the priesthood (R 67c);
17. To grant, at their own request, an indult to leave the Institute to members in temporary vows, according to the norms of the Church's common law (R 60b; can. 688, §2);
18. To establish a Province or suppress it, to unite existing Provinces or change their boundaries (Plenary Session) (C 98; R 146a);
19. To allow exceptions to the norm regarding the proper functioning and stability of a province (R 98b);
20. To confirm the erection of a Provincial Delegation and approve its particular statute (C 111);

21. To allow the members of a Province to elect the Provincial or the Provincial Council (C 103; R 106a);
22. To approve the Provincial Directory (R 108d);
23. To approve changes in the structures of a Province (R 108c);
24. To confirm the proposal of a Province asking that certain matters be decided by the Provincial and Council acting collegially (R 108b);
25. To authorize the reappointment of a local Superior for a fourth term (R 94a);
26. To suppress a canonically established house (R 92d);
27. To accept a new Mission attached to a Province or to a group of Provinces (plenary session) and approve a general contract between a Province and the local Ordinary (C 117; RR 7e, 117c, 146a);
28. To allow a Province take charge of a major seminary or educational institution, to accept a parish in perpetuity, or to undertake some work which is not customary among us, as also to relinquish any of the above (R 7e);
29. To determine the limits of financial competency of Provincial and Delegation authorities and the amount which each Province or Delegation contributes annually to the support of the General Administration (C 159);
30. To approve expenditures, alienations, the contracting of debts or obligations on the part of

the Provinces and houses, when the amount involved exceeds that allowed to the Provincial in Council (C 162);

Note: For alienations, debts or obligations which exceed the amount approved by the Holy See for each country, recourse to the Holy See is also required (can. 638, §3).

31. In a grave and urgent case to intervene in the administration of a Province or house in order to do something usually done by Provincials or local Superiors, or to correct or annul any of their acts or decisions (R 146d);
32. To establish a procedure for the examination of a situation where an Oblate feels his rights are being jeopardized (R 89a).

III - THE CONSENT OF THE COUNCIL IS NOT REQUIRED FOR THE FOLLOWING CASES

1. To give approval for criteria used by a unit for recognition of its associations of the laity (R 37a);
2. To give approval to a unit's superior for an Oblate to live outside a Province's geographic territory if the stay exceeds one year (R 137b);
3. To give the first obedience, transfer a member from one Province to another or call Oblates to Rome (C 137; R 137c);
4. To invite up to two Oblates as members of the General Chapter (R 128a);

5. To allow an Oblate in formation to orient himself towards a specific pastoral ministry or missionary field (R 65d);
6. To confirm the decision of a Provincial removing a local Superior from office before the expiration of his term (C 87);
7. To authorize a Provincial in Council to choose another Oblate to replace him at the Chapter (R 128c);
8. To authorize an elected delegate to the Chapter to yield his place to the alternate (R 128c);
9. To dispense individuals and communities from disciplinary prescriptions of the Constitutions and Rules for an indefinite period (C 166);
10. To approve the Provincial Directory of Formation (R 49d);
11. To delegate to other Major Superiors, with the consent of their Council, the authorization to allow an Oblate to renounce his patrimony, in whole or in part (R 23b; can. 137, §1; 596; 668, §4).

THE PROVINCIAL

A. Besides other cases mentioned in the Church's common law, the Provincial, with the consent of his council, is empowered:

1. To appoint one or more permanent Vicars Provincial (C 107) subject to confirmation by the Superior General in Council (R 107a);

2. To appoint the Superior of a Provincial Delegation, subject to confirmation by the Superior General in Council (C 111);
3. To appoint the Provincial Treasurer, with the confirmation of the Superior General in Council (C 109);
4. To appoint the Superior of a local community or the Director of a residence (C 94);
5. To prolong the powers of a local Superior or of the Superior of a Mission for a short time or appoint a temporary Administrator (C 87);
6. To remove a local Superior before his term has expired, with the confirmation of the Superior General (C 87);
7. To appoint the local Council or confirm the election of the same (C 95);
8. To appoint the local treasurer (C 95);
9. To appoint the members of the formation team (R 49c) and the Novice Master (C 57). The appointment of the Pre-Novitiate Director, the Novice Master, and the Superior and the formation team for scholastics is to be submitted for the approval of the Superior General in Council (C 57; RR 54b, 66e);
10. To choose another Oblate with the consent of the Superior General to replace him at the General Chapter if he himself cannot attend (R 128c);
11. To admit candidates to vows whether temporary or perpetual. Admission to perpetual vows re-

quires the confirmation of the Superior General in Council (C 61);

12. To present candidates for promotion to Orders (R 65g);
13. To admit a Brother as a candidate for permanent diaconate or priesthood and in due time present him for ordination; his admission as a candidate requires the approval of the Superior General in Council (R 67c);
14. By delegation of the Superior General, to allow an Oblate to renounce his patrimony, in whole or in part (R 23b; can. 137, §1; 596; 668, §4);
15. To grant an Oblate, for reasons of ill-health, studies or ministry pursued in the name of the Congregation, to live outside a community for as long as needed, or up to a year for another just reason (can. 665, §1);
16. To allow an Oblate to live outside the territory of the province for more than one year, with approval by the Superior General (R 137b), *Note:* if the absence is for reason of study, only notification of the Superior General is needed (R 137b);
17. To declare the *ipso facto* dismissal of a professed Oblate in the cases indicated in the Church's common law (can. 694, §2);
18. To establish a Provincial Delegation and determine its statute. The confirmation of the Superior General is required (C 111);

19. To constitute a local community (C 92); approve the particular statute for a district or residence (R 92b);
20. To change the composition of a district, suppress a residence, propose to the Superior General the suppression of a canonically established house (R 92d);
21. To determine the location of a novitiate (can. 647, §1), with the approval of the Superior General in Council (R 58b). The establishment of a post-novitiate formation community also requires the approval of the Superior General in Council (R 65i);
22. In a grave and urgent case, to intervene personally in the administration of a local community in order to do something usually done by the local Superior or to correct or annul any of his acts and decisions (R 106d);
23. To draw up the electoral procedures for the Province (R 90a);
24. To propose changes in provincial government structures to be submitted to the approval of the Superior General in Council (R 108c);
25. To set up Provincial Committees and organize various Province meetings, determining their composition, functions and terms of reference (C 108), for example, the formation committee (R 49d), the finance committee (C 157), etc.;
26. To organize regular meetings with the local Superiors of the Province or a congress of the Province (C 108);

27. To act as a Collegial Body for decisions on certain matters proposed by a general meeting of the Province (R 108b);
28. To approve the Provincial Directory (R 108d) and the Provincial Directory for Formation (R 49d). Both texts are to be submitted to the Superior General for his approval (RR 49d, 108d);
29. To accept parishes in perpetuity or the other works mentioned in Rule 7e; the confirmation of the Superior General in Council is required (R 7e). Contracts are to be drawn up in due and proper form for the administration of non-Ob-late ecclesiastical goods (C 156);
30. To determine what funds can be handled by local houses or individuals (C 158); determine the financial competency of local Superiors, acting with or without their Council, and establish the amount which local communities are to contribute to the Provincial funds (C 158);
31. To fix the limits of the rights of canonically established houses concerning the administration of temporal goods (C 151);
32. In the management of the temporalities of the Province, to authorize extraordinary expenditures, alienations, incurring of debts or obligations, when the amount involved exceeds the competency of the Provincial alone (C 155; R 160a); when the amount exceeds the competency of the Provincial in Council, the decision requires the approval of the Superior General

in Council and, if necessary, an indult from the Holy See (C 162).

B. *The Provincial does not require the consent of his Council for the following:*

1. To admit a candidate to the novitiate (C 55; can. 641);
2. To prolong the novitiate (R 59a; can. 653, §2);
3. To allow the anticipation of first profession, but not beyond fifteen days (R 59a; can. 649, §2);
4. To allow the anticipation of the renewal of temporary commitment or the making of perpetual vows, but not beyond the limits established by the Church's common law (R 60a; can. 657);
5. To admit candidates to the ministries and, personally or through a delegated priest, install them in the same (R 65g);
6. To grant dimissorial letters for ordination, either personally or through his delegate (R 65g; can. 1019, §1);
7. To grant permission for undertaking specialized studies (R 69a);
8. To appoint the Director of ongoing formation (R 70b);
9. To appoint an Assistant Provincial Treasurer (R 160b);

10. To transfer members within the Province and to assign the offices or ministries, excepting those cases where the Constitutions and Rules require the intervention of the Council (C 26; R 26b);
11. To grant the *nihil obstat* for acts of extraordinary administration in the case of non-Oblate enterprises or of ecclesiastical property (C 156);
12. To allow an Oblate to change his last will (C 23) or to make changes in the deeds concerning the administration, use and usufruct of his personal patrimony (C 23);
13. To grant permission to an Oblate to publish writings on religious or moral matters (C 26; can. 832);
14. At the request of an Oblate priest or deacon, to institute the required canonical process for obtaining his return to the lay state (Congregation for the Clergy);
15. To initiate the process in the case of formal dismissal, according to the norms of the Church's common law (can. 695, 697);
16. Expel forthwith from the local community a member who is a cause of grave external scandal or of very grave and imminent harm to the Institute, observing the norms of the Church's common law (can. 703);
17. Dispense individuals and communities from disciplinary prescriptions of the Constitutions and Rules for a limited period of time (C 166).

Stampa:

Tipografia Giammarioli, Frascati (RM)

Finito di stampare: febbraio 2019

