

# FAITH SHARING SESSION FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE YEAR OF OBLATE VOCATIONS

**JANUARY 25 2019**

**AMBIENCE:** Prepare a special place in the chapel or another space which indicates the festive nature of this gathering to conclude the Year of Oblate Vocations. Have a poster from the Year of Oblate Vocations, and the prayer card for each participant, the Bible, a candle and the Oblate cross. A print of the icon of the Holy Trinity would be appropriate for the reflection.

**SONG:** Select a familiar vocational hymn to be sung or played.

**INTRODUCTION:** Welcome everyone and highlight the closure of the Year of Oblate Vocations. The key words for this year have been "The joy and generosity of Oblate Life." Let these words be the focus of this faith sharing session.

**OPENING RITE:** After the hymn/song, the Oblate cross is reverently passed from hand to hand in silence, with a moment to contemplate the Crucified One. After everyone has held the Oblate cross, the leader begins,

**L:** We adore you, O Christ and we bless you!

**All:** *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world!*

**L:** Aware of the new life that comes to us through the saving cross of Jesus, let us sign ourselves and say together:

**ALL:** *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**L:** Blessed by the most Holy and Undivided Trinity!

**ALL:** *You are the Source and Ground of all being. You are ever above and beyond us in glorious majesty! You are always personal, intimate and close to us!*



## WORDS FROM THE OBLATE TRADITION

In a letter to Fr. Tempier in 1826, Fr. De Mazenod wrote: "Night and day, I keep thinking of the strenuous work of our Fathers and I cannot but be uneasy. It is impossible for them to stand such a strain... Let us pray fervently that the Father of the family may send more laborers to cultivate the vineyard which he has entrusted to our care." (412 - To Father Tempier, April 13, 1826 - 'VOCATIONS 1)', from the *SELLECTED TEXTS - Related to the OMI Constitutions and Rules*, Rome, 1984, page 464)

In a much later letter of 1855 to Fr. Vandenberghe, the novice master, Bishop De Mazenod, wrote: "Our needs are extremely great. I am pestered from all sides; there is not one mission that does

not require assistance. It is because the field is vast and indefatigable.” (421 - To Father Vandenberghe, master of novices, April 21, 1855 - ‘VOCATIONS 1’), from the **SELLECTED TEXTS** - Related to the OMI Constitutions and Rules, Rome 1984, page 472)

**THE WORD OF GOD: Genesis 15: 1-15** (Before the faith sharing session, invite a participant to prepare to proclaim the text.)

**CONTEMPLATIVE SILENCE:** Quiet time to ponder the Word of God as Mary did, contemplating the icon of the Trinity welcoming us into their midst.

### **SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE OF FAITH:** reflection

Abraham was open to the mystery of God’s visit. He caught sight of the three strangers, and he was immediately available and eager to carry out the vital practices of hospitality so necessary in the desert context. Such hospitality was a sacred duty to travelers who were extremely vulnerable in the arid and treacherous desert regions. We recognize Abraham’s vigilance and his lavish attention to the sojourners, even in the heat of the day. He interrupted his plans and moved into action to give an honored welcome to these strangers, bowing down low to the ground before them, washing their feet, inviting them into his household to rest, and preparing the very best he had for them.



Abraham mingled with them, giving them the precious gift of his presence and enjoying their visit. We might even imagine a conversation among them... The three Guests were pilgrims, identified by their walking sticks. Abraham found joy and happiness in welcoming these visitors and in carrying out the prescriptions of hospitality, sharing with them the fruits of his labor with generosity and joy. When they had dined, Abraham walked with them for a distance to start them on their journey.

- Our Oblate life is characterized by hospitality. Let us share our experience of being welcomed by others, perhaps by the poor. Or, when we ourselves have welcomed others into our Oblate communities.
- Invite a member of the group to share what happened when young people were welcomed into an Oblate community. How did it go? If we have not done this, why not?
- What can we do to have local Oblate communities really show genuine hospitality to others, especially to young people and to the poor?



Let us also consider this woman of faith, Sarah. She was an integral part of the ritual of welcome. She went right to work and prepared the delicious and abundant meal for the pilgrims. Sarah was so spontaneous and joyful, even in the heat of the day and with many other responsibilities on her shoulders. She had a good sense of humor it seems, laughing when she heard the visitor foretell that she would bear a child in her old age! We can imagine what Sarah might have been thinking when the pilgrims mentioned this to Abraham! It reminds us of the simplicity and ambiguity of the desert people, so genuine and true in their responses.

Like Abraham, Sarah was also very open to mystery. The visit of the strangers evoked happiness and delight in her heart. They brought her the promise of womanly fulfillment in bearing offspring for her husband and becoming a mother. Sarah was open to the hope that the visitors announced, and she must have carefully pondered deep within her heart the expectation of the next visit that would come the following year. Her laughter might have been both an exultation of joy in what God can do, the impossible, as well as surprise, mixed with some bewilderment and the fear of being disappointed after so many years of hoping for a child.

Sarah observed the pilgrims from afar, her hands busy with the details of hospitality, silently treasuring the events like Mary, keeping hope alive very deep in her womb. She was a woman of deep reverence and faith before the mystery of the pilgrims.

- What do you learn from Sarah's joy and laughter as we consider this Year of Oblate Vocations?
- Invite the participants to share how they have encountered the mystery of God in their life through seemingly ordinary events.
- Do we laugh at our vocational situation, believing more in our vocational sterility and barrenness than in the power of God to raise up vocations for our Congregation?
- Have you welcomed God in your midst, perhaps unnoticed at first, and then revealed to you? Share about such a visit of the Holy One.

## COMMITMENT

The closure of the Year of Oblate Vocations calls for an ongoing commitment by every Oblate and those who share in the Oblate charism. We will make this year significant by our continued efforts at vocational ministry:

- Vocation ministry is most of all an act of faith based on unceasing and confident **prayer**.
- We must have a proactive approach, making an **invitation** to young men to join us and to lay people in our ministries to become part of the Oblate family.

- We must be committed to the practice of **welcoming** and nourishing the passionate dreams of young people who want to serve, who are filled with joy and generosity for mission.

## INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

Beloved Triune God, you journey into our lives and into our communities. We give thanks for the joy and generosity we have recognized in our Oblate vocation throughout this past year. You are generous and overflow with life and love toward all humanity. You fill us with joy. We lift our prayers to you:

**ALL:** *Holy Trinity, one God, hear us!*

**Participant 1:** That the entire Church may be strengthened by a flourishing of all the vocations and ministries necessary for the proclamation of the Gospel, we pray.

**P. 2:** That nations may be committed to peace, seeking new ways to eliminate violence in our world and to promote dialogue and acts of justice, we pray.

**P. 3:** Recalling our commitment to care for the gift of creation entrusted to us by the Creator, may we act with responsibility and a spirit of stewardship, we pray.

**P. 4:** That young people in the Church may exercise a missionary vocation, reaching out to other youth to engage them in the mission of the Church, we pray.

**P. 5:** For the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, that we may grow in faithfulness to our charism and be authentic witnesses of the Good News, we pray.

**P. 6:** In thanksgiving to God for the young men in first formation in our Congregation and for the concerted effort to provide them with quality formation, we pray.

**L:** Please pray for any other intentions...

**L:** Holy Trinity, may we have eyes and hearts to see your Presence among us and may we welcome you in the stranger, the poor, the migrant, the refugee and in all who suffer. May our lives witness your compassion and mercy, inspiring many young people to embrace a commitment to live the Gospel as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and, in many other forms of association, with the charism of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever.

**ALL:** *Amen.*



**OUR FATHER**

**HAIL MARY**

**PRAYER FOR THE YEAR OF OBLATE VOCATIONS**

**BLESSING**

**HYMN TO OUR LADY**