

LETTER FOR THE FOUNDER'S CANONIZATION

April 10th, 1995 - Letter - Rome

Dear Fellow Oblates,

On December 3, 1995, Pope John Paul II will proclaim the saintliness of Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles and Founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. By this solemn act, the Pope will present Eugene as a model and intercessor for the whole Church. For us Oblates, this is a unique event never to be repeated in our history, a time of communion with the Church of heaven and earth, a graced event, a renewed meeting with our Founder, a call to fully incarnate the charism received through him. With the Canonization and the Year of De Mazenod accompanying it, I expect three very important and complementary things:

- a renewal of our religious and missionary life
- an extension of the Oblate charism far and wide
- a serious increase in vocations

Eugene's call for us to commit ourselves to the paths of holiness becomes more urgent. The cry, "Be saints!", following the approval of the Congregation in 1826 resounds still more strongly now that Eugene is recognized as an authentic model and master of saintliness. This means a more intimate communion with Christ, contemplated as Savior and imitated as Evangelizer. For us, commitment to holiness is also commitment to mission. The ardour of holiness is what gives dynamism to missionary zeal, which must be expressed at local and universal levels. The "sequela Christi" gives us the ability to witness - by our life, in word and deed - that Christ is Savior of all. This dual commitment is achieved in and through community. We are co-responsible for one another in this venture - following Christ and cooperating in his mission of redeeming today's world.

Eugene is presented to all Christians as a model of saintliness. The Canonization should urge us Oblates to work so that all those we meet may grow in their humanity and live according to their Christian vocation, to strive to become saints. The spread of the Oblate charism means to propose the full Christian ideal to everyone, as Eugene usually did with his acquaintances and diocesan faithful; it also means transmitting the pedagogy proposed by Eugene to realize holiness and mission. The Canonization is a call to become holy missionaries and give rise to holiness and missionary concern.

Spreading knowledge of Eugene's example and teaching is possible only if there are authentic and numerous vocations to incarnate the charism which the Spirit transmitted to the Church through him. So this year, each Oblate should try to promote such vocations by means of prayer, example and word.

My dear Fellow Oblates, I entrust Mary and Eugene de Mazenod with these wishes. I entrust them to each community and to every one of you as well.

Fraternally in Christ.