

MESSAGE OF THE 37TH GENERAL CHAPTER

Dear brother Oblates of Mary Immaculate,
Dear brothers and sisters of the Mazenodian Family,

Peace and grace to you all.

1. The 37th General Chapter of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate is a grace and a blessing for the entire Congregation. The 79 capitulars representing 70 countries of the world have met at the Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, Italy from September 14 to October 14, 2022. We thank the Lord for his love. We salute the memory of those who have gone before us to the house of the Father, especially that of our holy Founder Eugene de Mazenod. We thank the Holy Father, Pope Francis, who received us in audience on October 3 and who encouraged us to go forward in our mission.
2. We go back to our respective Units after having experienced the joy of the Gospel. We would like to share our joy and hope with you, our brothers and sisters of the Mazenodian Family, and with all our brothers and sisters in the human family.
3. This letter is an expression of our gratitude, our feelings, our experiences, our hopes, our commitments, and above all the wish to see us more united than ever as a family living the same charism.
4. The General Chapter was a moment of discernment and of questioning for a renewal in our vocation to the mission. Our liturgical celebrations gave us the impetus to live a deep fraternity and to feel the presence of the Spirit. The joy of meeting confreres from other units was visible from the first Eucharist presided by the outgoing Superior General Louis Lougen. In his homily, he invited us to let the Spirit speak in us for our renewal. A “happy adventure” was beginning. It led us, on September 29, 2022, to elect Father Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso as the 14th Superior General, successor of Eugene de Mazenod.
5. The new Superior General was at his mission in Western Sahara when he was elected. He joined us in Nemi. We went with him on pilgrimage to the Holy Father to express our communion with him and with the Church. We too are committed to building a synodal Church with the Holy Father.
6. Pope Francis gave his blessing to the Chapter and to the entire Mazenodian Family. He noted the similarity between the theme of our Chapter and that of the upcoming Jubilee of the Church, “Pilgrims of Hope”, and that it sums up our identity as disciples of Jesus. The encyclical *Laudato Si* is for us an exhortation to be closer to the people and to creation.

7. The Covid 19 pandemic, the wars in the world, climate change, the crisis of faith, etc. are signs that the world is undergoing radical changes. Testimonies from suffering countries such as Ukraine, Canada, Haiti, Sri Lanka, and others point to the concrete situation of our Oblate brothers and lay associates who are in solidarity with the poor. The cries of the poor demand of us a different way of living and a revisiting of the way we do our mission, in the footsteps of St. Eugene. This mission retains its original identity of evangelizing the poor with their many faces (C.5) but in a bolder way.

8. *Pilgrims of hope in communion* was indeed the theme of our General Chapter. The Oblates feel challenged by many of the cries that resound in our world, the voices of the poor and the abandoned reach out to God who is looking at us and calling us to a response. The Church asks us to leave our comfort zones and go to the peripheries. The contribution of our lay associates helped us to see that we are not alone in our missionary field and in living the charism. We are on the way together.

9. We are called to be signs of hope, witnesses, and artisans of the Kingdom in these difficult times for the Church and the world. The General Chapter has given us new energy and a new vision to look forward with joy and confidence and to commit ourselves for a better world.

10. At the end of this 37th General Chapter, we have made some commitments to life and action: We are missionaries, like the disciples of Emmaus, on the road with a burning heart.

a. Following Christ, the first pilgrim and missionary, we commit ourselves to a true personal and communal conversion.

b. We will work to reorganize the structures of the Congregation for a better mission at the service of the poor.

c. We commit ourselves to work united as a body but also as Units and persons, for the protection of our common home.

d. We want to console and support all those who feel abused or offended in their being and in all aspects of their life, and to be reconciled with them. We give the first place to minors and vulnerable adults but also to all those who, through our actions and behavior, have been offended.

e. We make a commitment to go to the aid of the poor with their many faces. They are disfigured by suffering. They are marked by the stigma of war. They are traumatized by abuse and exploitation at work. They are alienated from their own original history. They are scorned in the land of welcome and exile. They are humiliated because of their color, culture, or language.

f. We take the responsibility to do much more to promote justice and peace. The earth belongs to God, but the fruits of the earth belong to all.

g. We commit ourselves to promote the Oblate charism in communion with the lay associates (R 37a).

As Eugene de Mazenod said, “how vast the field that lies before us!”

11. The Virgin Mary, our Mother, the pilgrim of the Visitation, walks with us. On Monday, October 3, 2022, the Holy Father also recommended that we always be accompanied on our pilgrimage by our Mother Mary.

12. May St. Eugene, our Founder, continue to intercede for us and for the poor we serve, and may his intercession renew us each day in the love of Christ, the first missionary and pilgrim.

Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate!

Nemi, Italy, October 14, 2022.

The Capitulars of the 37th General Chapter.