

INTRODUCTION

"We must now understand, more than ever, the need to be a perfect religious in order to be a good missionary. We must be convinced that the most effective way to bring about great fruit in souls is holiness of life and the faithful practice of all the duties of our state". Eugène de Mazenod at the opening of the General Chapter of 1850.

In preparation for the anniversary of the first vows of November 1, 1818, the General Committee of Oblate Brothers has chosen, for this year 2020, some meditations based on the figure of Father Tempier. He is the "second father"¹, the one who played an essential role alongside the Founder.

At the stroke of midnight, on the night of April 8/9, 1870, Father Tempier² died in Paris. On April 8, 2020, at a time of complete isolation, the 150 years since the death of the Congregation's "second lung" went almost unnoticed, fittingly for someone who always lived quietly.

Father Beaudoin, in the introduction to his biography of Father Tempier, writes: *"for more than a hundred years, 'capable hands', even though not very*

¹ Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 74

² Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 10

many, have not been lacking. But an 'interesting biography' of Father Tempier has never appeared, except the obituary written the day after his death by Father Fabre. This is because the 'beautiful materials about his long life' do not exist ..."

To this anniversary of his death, we must add that of his decision to take the vow of poverty in 1820. Two hundred years ago, in November 1820, at the end of the retreat which prepared for the renewal of vows, Father Tempier decided to make a vow of poverty. But it was not until the General Chapter of 1821 that the Founder imposed the vow of poverty on the Congregation.

We sometimes wonder how Father Tempier was able to carry out successfully all his responsibilities. To name just a few, we refer to the tasks described by Father Beaudoin: *"During his superiorship of the major seminary, he was Vicar General of the diocese, Assistant General of the Congregation, superior of several religious communities, the prime collaborator of the Bishop in the construction and financial administration of numerous convents, works, and churches in Marseille, as well as of Oblate houses in France..."*³

³ Conférence on Fr. Tempier by Fr. Michel Courvoisier, « Je ne peux pas y arriver seul ! », Aix 2016, p 47

We have selected a few aspects of this beautiful Oblate figure. For each meditation, we offer an introductory text, one or another reference to the life of Father Tempier, and a time of deeper reflection. We invite you to conclude with a prayer of your choice.

May these few meditations transmit to us the spirit which animated Father Tempier; may they inspire in us the same love for Jesus Christ, the Church, the Congregation and the World.

**** Please note that the footnotes cited in this document are taken from French texts and not from their corresponding English versions.*

1st meditation: childhood and adolescence

Pope Francis, 2013: "To be a Christian is a call of love, a call of friendship".

"The figure of Abraham reminds us that no one is a Christian purely by chance - no one. There is a call by name, with a promise: 'Go forth, I am with you. I am walking beside you'. Jesus also promised on Ascension Day: 'I will be with you all days'. God accompanies humanity, God calls us by name, God promises a posterity. This is the security of the Christian: it is not an accident, it is a call - a call that beckons us onward. To be a Christian is a call of love, of friendship - a call to become

*a child of God, a brother, a sister of Jesus, to become fruitful in the transmission of this call to others, to become an instrument of this call. [...] If there are problems in a Christian's life and difficult times, there is always this security: the Lord has called me, the Lord is with me, the Lord has promised me. God is faithful and cannot deny Himself. He is Faithfulness, itself. Even though every person is a sinner, each must move on with the Lord - going forward with this promise that he has made, with this promise of fruitfulness ... He will never forsake us. This Christian certainty will do us good."*⁴

Father Tempier was born in Saint-Cannat on April 1, 1788, to a family of honest farmers, in which the Catholic faith was lived. He was baptized the day after his birth, with the names of Henri and Francois de Paul.

France quickly went through the painful ordeals of the Revolution, the Terror and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

We know the identities of the first companions of the Founder who, at the risk of their lives, devoted themselves to the preservation of the faith.⁵

⁴ Extract from Pope Francis' morning meditation in the Santa Martha chapel "The call of Abraham", 25 June 2013

⁵ Cf. the clandestine ordinations of Fathers Mie and Maunier.

In Aix, following the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, there was a division between constitutional priests and those who refused to swear to it. The church of Milles, a parish where the Tempier family owned a farm, was conducted by these rebel priests; the church was even closed by decree.

François de Paul and two of his friends, Michel Figuière and Jean Joseph Reynaud, who also became priests, were preparing for First Communion. They could have joined with other children in the cathedral of Aix, which was run by constitutional priests, but their way was quite different. In 1860, Father Tempier confided to the scholastics of Montolivet:

“... on a beautiful morning in 1799 ... in a modest room on one of the beautiful streets of Aix ... they were between ten and twelve years old. There was no singing, no musical accompaniment, perhaps some flowers, and a more spic and span arrangement: that was all that our three friends could offer to God who was coming to visit them. They copiously made up for their poverty, however, by receiving Jesus Christ into hearts, filled with the greatest generosity. Their prayer of thanksgiving was long and fervent. God alone knows what sentiments of love and gratitude these three young hearts expressed to him; we do know, however, what reply God gave to their humble and ardent prayer.”

When the arose from prayer, the three friends, without any prior consultation or mutual confiding in each other, went to their director and urgently requested that he teach them Latin; they wanted to become priests.”⁶

As you read this touching testimony, we invite you to reread an episode from your own childhood or adolescence to discover in it the traces of God's work:

Going further - I look at my life with the eyes of God:

- I choose an event that marked my childhood and my youth.

- I call to mind what good I received from it which leads me to say thank you to the Lord.

- I look at what was a source of sadness or discouragement and I ask the Lord to help me understand why I acted as I did and I ask his forgiveness.

- Through this event in my life, I may ask the Lord's help.

⁶ *François de Paul Henry Tempier, Oblate Writings collection II, 1* Rome 1991, pp 16-17. For further reading: Testimonies, document 1 *Oblate Writings collection II, 1* Rome 1991, pp 229-231.

- I end with the Our Father or a prayer of trust, placing myself in the hands of God

2nd meditation: Formation for the Mission

Our Constitution 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 acts and aspects 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 perpetual Oblation. During this period, the Oblate charism and traditions are studied and lived.*

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

Thanks to the Concordat of 1801, official relations between the French State and the Papacy were reestablished and the Catholic religion regained its freedom in France. The churches were reopened, and little by little the dioceses were reopening their seminaries and minor seminaries. Henry Tempier began his studies at the minor seminary of Aix in 1803. From 1810, he took philosophy courses at the major seminary and from 1811, with the other seminarians, he followed theology courses at the theological faculty of Aix.

Successively, between 1811 and 1814, he received the Tonsure, the Sub-Diaconate and the Diaconate. Tempier's know-how and dedication won him the confidence of Father Abel, founder of the minor seminary of Aix. Up until the years 1813-1814, Tempier occupied the Chair of Humanities. It was in the midst of these duties that he was ordained on March 26, 1814. The Vicars General who administered the diocese appointed him Vicar in the parish of Saint-Césaire d'Arles.

Father Fabre wrote in the obituary: *“Tempier went there immediately and began to exercise the functions of the holy ministry with the fervor that God inspires and blesses in the workers he calls to his vineyard... We still keep, in Arles, the remembrance of this young priest who conducted himself with such maturity...”*⁷

In 1864, as Father Tempier was preparing to celebrate his 50 years of priesthood, in a letter to Father Le Bihan, he wrote, *“Remember me in your prayers ... I will celebrate my fiftieth year of priesthood on this very day. I was ordained a priest on March 26 and said my first mass on the 27th... all this, however, is subject to the will of God ...”*⁸

⁷ Notices nécrologiques II, p 84

⁸ Lettre P. Tempier au P. Le Bihan, collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987, p 176.

After barely a year of ministry in the city of Arles, he received the call to a new vocation, but we will come back to this in the 3rd meditation.

The third call of the 2016 Chapter is: "Formation for Mission": *"As a missionary Congregation, formation is considered from the perspective of mission. The important transformations in the world of today have an impact on the Oblate mission and therefore inevitably on our formation programs. These changes require constant adaptation and updating of the way we form ourselves, so that we are more effective and always up to date with best missionary practices."*⁹

We invite you to reread this entire third part of the document. What have we implemented since the 2016 Chapter?

3rd meditation: The Unexpected Call, The Generous Response.

Extract from the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of Pope Francis, November 2013:

"In the Word of God there constantly appears that dynamic of 'going forth' that God wants to provoke in believers. Abraham accepted the call to go to a new land

⁹ Actes du 36ème Chapitre général (2016). Document du Chapitre N°33

*(cf. Gen 12,1-3). Moses listened to God's call, 'Go, I send you' (Ex 3,10), and led the people out to the promised land (cf. Ex 3, 17). To Jeremiah God said: 'To all those to whom I send you, you will go' (Jr 1, 7). Today, in this 'go' of Jesus, there are the ever-new scenarios and challenges of the evangelizing mission of the Church, and we are all called to this new missionary 'going forth'. Every Christian and every community will discern the path to which the Lord is calling them. But we are all invited to accept this call: to come out of our own comfort and have the courage to reach all the surrounding areas that need the light of the Gospel."*¹⁰

In October 1815, Father Tempier was Vicar of Saint-Césaire church in Arles. We are familiar with the letters exchanged between Father Tempier and our Founder; they comprise the foundations of our Congregation.

Father Tempier was slow to reply: "*Forgive me if I did not reply to your kind letter sooner. You failed to put your signature on it ... May the Good Lord be blessed for having inspired you with the plan to prepare for the poor, for the inhabitants of our countryside ... a house of missionaries who will go and announce the truths of salvation to them...*

"By the grace of God, I feel this desire within me; or if I do not have it, I greatly desire to have it. And with you,

¹⁰ Exhortation apostolique *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pape François, novembre 2013, Chap. 1, I, 20

everything will become even easier. So, count entirely on me..."¹¹

We invite you to reread the Founder's letter to Father Tempier of October 9, 1815 and to write your personal response. You will find this letter in "Selected texts" Rome 1983, pp.12-16

4th meditation: Vows of Reciprocal Obedience.

From our Constitutions 25 and 39

"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."
Constitution 25

¹¹ Lettre de l'abbé Tempier à M. l'abbé de Mazenod du 27 octobre 1815, collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987, pp 9-11.

“In humility and with the strength of charity, we express our responsibility for each other in fraternal correction and forgiveness.” Extract from Constitution 39

The Founder truly counted on Father Tempier: *“I assure you that I consider it very important for the work of God that you be among us; I count on you more than on myself...”*¹² This bond with Eugène de Mazenod was sealed on Maundy Thursday, 1816 by a vow of reciprocal obedience. Unable to get his first collaborators to all agree to bind themselves by vows, the Founder decided to make a personal commitment with Tempier: *“On April 11, 1816, we placed ourselves under the structure of the beautiful repository we had set up on the high altar of the Church of the Mission, and on the night of this holy day, we made our vows with indescribable joy...”*¹³

Father Fabre underlined this event in Father Tempier's obituary: *“It was not an empty ceremony. On both sides it was a great act, one of those acts that influence destinies. The day of eternity alone can reveal to us the number of merits for these two religious that flowed from this source. The one who remained as the first Superior all his life, also knew how to remain the first subject. We do not know to whom to grant the better part: to the Superior who many times obeyed his subject, or to the subject who had the power to command the one whom*

¹² Lettre du Fondateur à l'abbé Tempier du 15 novembre 1815, cf. collection Ecrits Oblats VI, Rome 1882, pp 11-12.

¹³ Leflon tome II, p 49

he respected and loved as the living image of the authority of God. This is perhaps a unique fact in the history of religious congregations; we record it with the humble gratitude that comes from the gifts of God."¹⁴

Father Tempier obeyed the Founder, always and everywhere; but, on the other hand, he had to exercise authority over the Founder, as their vow required. In the summer of 1816, he reminded the Founder of the care of his health during the Barjols mission: *"know, at least, how to take care of yourself. It seems to me that it would be easier to say your office at that time ... So I leave that to your conscience ..."*¹⁵ But it was at the time of the Icosie affair, in 1835, that Father Tempier had to exercise an instance of his calculated anger: *"Do you or do you not want to get out of the awful position in which you find yourself? ... This is the last time, I think, that I will speak to you about all this, because I am tired of it."*¹⁶

The Founder was accustomed to ask someone to correct his faults. At the end of his retreat in 1813, Father de Mazenod had already made this

¹⁴ Notice nécrologique II, 85.

¹⁵ Cf. lettre du P. Tempier au P. de Mazenod du 17 novembre 1818. Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987. p23

¹⁶ Lettre du P. Tempier au P. de Mazenod, 24 août 1835, collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987, pp100-101.

resolution: *"10. To charge Maur¹⁷ to apprise me of my faults in the morning at oraison."*¹⁸

In accord with the Rule of 1818, the Chapter appointed an admonitor, in the person of Father Tempier, who was responsible for supervising the conduct of the Superior General.¹⁹

In his Apostolic Letter for the Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis said: *"To live the present with passion means to become 'experts of communion'".* And in 2015, to the religious of Rome²⁰ he said: *"If we have to say something true, we say it face to face, but with love. Pray before you reproach and then ask the Lord to promote love by the correction. This is a concrete love! A sister cannot afford a love in the clouds. No! Love is concrete."*

It is not a question of going back to the "culp". But this vow of reciprocal obedience between Father Tempier and the Founder is a constitutive act of our Congregation. We invite you to take time to reflect on it, in the community or with your spiritual guide.

¹⁷ Frère Maur est cet ancien religieux qu'Eugène choisit comme domestique dès la fin de son séminaire à Saint-Sulpice, lorsque le P. de Mazenod devient le directeur et celui-ci l'accompagne à Aix, en 1812.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ecrits Spirituels 1812-1856*, Roma 1991.

¹⁹ Règle de 1818, 3^e partie, Chap I, paragraphe 3, l'admoniteur.

²⁰ Discours du Pape François aux religieux de Rome, Salle Paul VI, samedi 16 mai 2015

5th meditation: Vocations and the Formation of Young People

Christ calls through us - Constitution 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 laborers into his harvest."

The formation team: *"United by charity and animated by the same spirit, in proper accord of views and action, will assist the Superior in the progress of the work, lest, relying only on their individual judgment, they be mistaken and harm the common good."*

*They will constantly strive to form Christ in the clerics, with the help of his Immaculate Mother the Virgin Mary, to whose protection they will teach them to have confident recourse in everything."*²¹

Fr. Tempier was interested in recruitment and vocations all his life. He was a true father for the scholastics and seminarians, while being very demanding.

²¹ CC & RR. Texte de 1853 - « l'équipe de formation. »

“Vocations are essential,” he said to Mgr, Arbaud, in a letter of 1825. *“It is in the nature and order of things that the Congregation recruit in the countries in which it is established, if it does not want to be condemned to perish ... lest a Congregation be condemned to be chained in some way within its cradle, without ever being able to extend its branches”*²²

Father Tempier was above all an outspoken witness by his life and the life of his community.

The novice, Collin, testifies to this, *“I love my brothers ... I get excited about the practice of virtue through the admirable examples they give me ...”* ²³*“Your absence leaves a ‘je ne sais quoi’, a void which can only be filled by you. Not everyone has the skill, the tact, to lead a community.”*²⁴

In 1820, while he was master of novices at Laus, Father Tempier wrote, *“I am ever more delighted with the community. They all grieve me by stripping everything they have in their rooms... this being necessary ... to put everything in common. Brother*

²² Lettre du P. Tempier à Mgr Arbaud, évêque de Gap, lettre du 16 novembre 1825, collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987. p65.

²³ Lettre de Collin au Fondateur de décembre 1820, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 38.

²⁴ Lettre de Collin au P. Tempier du 1^e novembre 1821, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 41.

Ignatius²⁵ wants to be totally engaged as a full part of the family.”²⁶

When he was Superior of the major seminary, he knew how to create an atmosphere of collaboration and fraternal charity. The seminarian, Dassy, who wanted to join the Congregation, could write that what attracted him to religious life, despite its harshness, was *“this union, this charity that all the members of a religious community cherish - and especially your community which leads you to place others ahead of you. What always strikes me is this peace of soul, this unalterable joy, which becomes a sharing among those who have only God for their father and Mary for their mother.”²⁷*

The atmosphere that reigned in the novitiate at Laus encouraged novice Marcou to write to seminarian Guibert. Upon receiving this letter from his friend, Guibert decided to enter the Congregation. “Oh! my dear friend, if I were not afraid of appearing suspect, I would tell you about the happiness that we enjoy in our holy house; I would tell you about

²⁵ Ignace Voitot est le premier novice coadjuteur de la Congrégation.

²⁶ Lettre du P. Tempier au Fondateur du 9 décembre 1820, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 39.

²⁷ Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 57

the spirit of our institute [...] in a word that we have only one heart and one soul ...”²⁸

Father Tempier understood and helped young people in formation; he has a “discernment of souls,” says Fr. Fabre in the obituary. In 1823, Father Bourrelier would speak of “the admirable prudence” of Father Tempier that helped him to persevere in his vocation. Or Father Gardidier in 1858, *“I am writing to this good father who has done me so much good and whom I love and venerate likemy real father ...”* All this being said, Father Tempier was, above all, a true educator: *“I will not lack charity or goodness, but I will be exacting for the accomplishment of their duties,”* he wrote to the Founder, when the latter had sent him scholastics for the seminary, in 1835.²⁹

We invite you to take time of prayer for Oblate vocations, for Oblates in first formation and their formators, to reflect on our witness, as those who call. We can also reconsider the CC&RR on Formation.

²⁸ Lettre de Marcou à Guibert, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 38.

²⁹ Collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987, pp.150, 153-156

6th meditation: The Community.

Community life and apostolate: *“If anyone was tempted to regard these rules as too painful for our nature, we implore him in the Lord to consider...*

1. that our ministry would be forever fruitless, if we did not apply ourselves earnestly to our spiritual advancement.

2. that we will never reach the height of our vocation without the help of these observances which were regarded as indispensable by all the fathers of the spiritual life and especially by the holy founders of Orders;

3. that the missions and retreats which, during three quarters of the year, cast us inevitably into the midst of the world, to occupy ourselves there mainly and almost exclusively with the conversion of sinners, we would run the risk of forgetting our own needs, if we did not submit to the Rule of an precise discipline, at least in the short periods of this dangerous ministry.

So if we have our supreme happiness at heart and do not want to risk being condemned ourselves, after having preached to others, far from feeling the slightest reluctance to submit to this excellent observance, let us sincerely regret that the duties that charity imposes on us distance us, so long and so often, from the corps of our communities, where that observance holds sway, and so

deprives us, in spite of ourselves, of the benefit of its salutary influence, in a large part of our life."³⁰

Father Fabre said in Father Tempier's obituary, *"Very often, we have heard elite souls loudly proclaim the graces which came about with each visit of Father Tempier to a community ... even though Father Tempier was not their superior, these communities kept for him a true cult of gratitude and devotion..."*³¹

The Founder truly counted on Father Tempier who discovered, from the outset, the call to a religious life in community, *"I assure you that I consider it very important for the work of God that you be among us; I count on you more than on myself for the regularity of a house which, in my idea and my hopes, should reflect the perfection of the first disciples of the apostles. I base my hopes on this, much more than on eloquent words: have these ever converted anyone? Oh, that you might really do well what is important to do! Why are you not near enough to me so that I can hold you close to my heart to give you a fraternal embrace, which would express better than my letter the feelings that the Good Lord has inspired in me for you! How sweet are the bonds of perfect charity?"*

³⁰ Cf. CC & RR. Texte de 1825 – « Vie communautaire et apostolat. »

³¹ Notices nécrologiques II, 95, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 68

"I feel in my heart, very dear friend and good brother, that you were the man whom God had destined to be my consolation »³²

We could also underline the postscript added by the Founder, at the bottom of his letter of February 1816 to Father Tempier: *"Between us, missionaries, we are what we ought to be, that is to say, we have only one heart, one soul, one thought; it is admirable! Our consolations, like our fatigue, are without measure."³³*

The friendship between the Founder and Father Tempier withstood all trials. Father Fabre in the obituary of Father Tempier, writes, *"The call of our founder deserved to be heard by Father Tempier and Father Tempier deserved to be called by our founder. These two souls were made to understand each other, to come together, to complement each other and to contribute, in the measure of their respective vocations, to the accomplishment of the work of God. This edifice stands, and its dimensions that our eyes can see highlight the merits of its architects."³⁴*

Father Tempier's life was not that "sounding brass," of which Saint Paul speaks in his first letter to the Corinthians.³⁵ The quality of Father Tempier's

³² Lettre de Mazenod à Tempier du 15 novembre et du 13 décembre 1815

³³ Lettre de Mazenod à Tempier du 24 février 1816 de la Mission de Grans

³⁴ Notice nécrologique II, 85, 101-102

³⁵ Cf. I Corinthiens 13, 1

interior life was full of dedication, and such self-forgetting is only possible through deep intimacy with Christ. When the Founder told him, in 1823, that his uncle, Fortuné, wanted to appoint him Vicar General, Father Tempier set out, among the reasons to refuse, that the office of vicar General was a heavy one. He ended with these words: *"We always must have time to pray."*³⁶ Father Yvon Baudouin wrote, *"the virtue that appears most often in Father Tempier is piety, the spirit of prayer"*. We can add this: he was animated by that "charity," so dear to our Founder, which is a central point of our charism.

We invite you to reread section III of our Constitutions: "In Apostolic Community."

Father Fernand JETTE³⁷ comments on Constitution 37: *"This article affirms the missionary character of our community. We are gathered to live together, yes - but in order to work together, like a family in the Lord's vineyard. In principle, we clearly recall this missionary character, "Our communities have an apostolic character. It is in them and through them that we accomplish our mission... And it is because of this, that we ourselves will be missionaries, whatever the work we undertake in obedience, for the mission we receive from the institute."*

³⁶ Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p205

³⁷ Cf. O.M.I. Homme Apostolique, Rome 1992, pp.223-228

And he continues, *“Charity is at the heart of our lives. It is fraternal charity which ‘must sustain the zeal of each one.’ In the Church, the Oblate is a man of charity, a man in whom love fills his whole life.*

The third paragraph, he says, *shows that this missionary community - a “communion of spirit and heart” - rests on Jesus Christ and bears witness to him among men.*

On October 4, Pope Francis published the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*,³⁸ *“addressing all his brothers and sisters, to offer them a way of life to the taste of the Gospel.”* (1). His encyclical does not intend *“to summarize the doctrine on brotherly love ”*, but he wants it to be *“as a modest contribution for reflection, so that ... we are able to respond with a new dream of fraternity and social friendship, which is not confined to words”* (6). The global health crisis has shown *“that no one can be saved alone, that it is only possible to be saved together”* (32) and that the time has really come to *“dream of one and the same humanity, in which we are “all brothers and sisters”* (8).

How do we receive this social encyclical from Pope Francis?

³⁸ Encyclique du pape François « Fratelli tutti »

"What do we bring to the fraternity that the common Father offers us? " (46)

How do our communities mobilize: this "us", so it may be stronger than the sum of small individuals " (78)?

What community involvement does it ask of us?

7th meditation: The Vow of Poverty

As an introduction to this meditation, we reflect on the joy of the Founder and Tempier in their living poverty:

In 1831, commenting on the anniversary of the first day of living in community, he said: *"The table which adorned our refectory was one board next to another, set on two old barrels. We have never had the joy of being so poor since we made a vow to be so ..."*³⁹

During the Rognac Mission in 1819, the missionaries had to find their own straw mattresses. Father Tempier wrote: "I do not believe that Blessed Liguori would have found anything superfluous either in our furniture or in our ordinary resources [...] and we are so happy with our way of life [...] to walk in the footsteps of the saints and to be missionaries once and for all. "

³⁹ Lettre du Fondateur à la communauté de Billens, le 24 janvier 1831

This evangelical ideal would soon be inscribed in the Rule of the Missionaries of Provence. First as a virtue - the rule of 1818 speaks of the spirit of poverty, based on summary of a chapter of the book Practice of Christian Perfection by Rodriguez,⁴⁰ an author that the Founder had assimilated in Saint-Sulpice. The Rule says: *“for the moment, reasons of circumstance have diverted us from this thought (voluntary poverty). We leave it to the General Chapters, which will follow, to perfect this point of our Rule. In the meantime, we will try, without being bound further vow, to understand more fully the spirit of this precious virtue.”* And the paragraph ends with these words, *“Until these Rules can be enforced, in the strict sense, we will exert ourselves to make them familiar in practice. Superiors will test their subjects in this, not by letting them lack what is necessary, but by providing them with the opportunity to feel some privation, and to realize that the poor cannot always be comfortable and have everything they want.”*⁴¹

We know, through the Founder's writings, that he wanted to add the vow of poverty: *“I wondered why to the vows of chastity and obedience that I made previously, I would not add that of poverty...”*⁴²

⁴⁰ Histoire de nos Règles par Consentino, T1, p186-189

⁴¹ Règle de 1818, Bibliothèque Oblate texte 1, Ottawa 1943

⁴² Les écrits spirituels indiquent la retraite de mai 1818 et le Père Cosentino ajoute que nous ne savons pas la date

At the end of the retreat, in early November 1820, Father Tempier made a vow of poverty, on condition that the Founder would approve it. *"I do not know if you will approve of me, my dear Father. I made a vow of poverty at our renewal; I did so on the condition that you ratify it. The good Lord gave me the grace to appreciate this virtue during our retreat, so much so that I would have done myself a real violence not to have made the vow. [...] without even having made the vow, they all want to dispossess themselves of what they have and put everything in common."*⁴³

The Founder did not immediately approve of this initiative, but it influenced the Chapter of 1821 which imposed the vow of poverty in the Congregation: *"The Very Reverend Father General gave various explanations concerning the practice of the vow of poverty... [the] Founder, decided on it, at once, and placed, in the Rules, that the vow of poverty would be obligatory in the society."*⁴⁴

Father Beaudouin says that Father Tempier's poverty caught on among the novices and

à laquelle le Fondateur a prononcé ce vœu. Cf. DVO 'la pauvreté', note N° 36, p 699

⁴³ Lettre du P. Tempier au Fondateur du 23 novembre 1820, collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987. p234

⁴⁴ Cf. Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur I, par J. Pielorz, Etudes Oblates 1968, p27 deuxième Chapitre général, octobre 1821 à Aix-en-Provence.

scholastics and almost caused a shock when he arrived in Marseille as Vicar General in 1823.⁴⁵

To this vow of poverty, we add the spirit of humility and self-sacrifice of Father Tempier. He lived these throughout his life, but in, a very special way, when the successor of our Founder as Bishop of Marseille, Monsignor Cruice, did not recognize the Founder's will. At first, for the sake of conciliation, Fathers Tempier and Fabre signed an initial agreement. But the bishop went so far as to threaten to obtain the dissolution of the Congregation. Father Tempier made a discreet trip to Rome. After the Chapter of 1862, the bishop threatened to close the Oblate houses in France if a new agreement was not signed, stipulating that three Oblate properties should revert to the bishopric of Marseille. For the sake of appeasement, Father Fabre decided to move the scholasticate from Montolivet to Autun and sell it to the diocese.

Father Fabre would write, in the obituary of Father Tempier, *"To leave the native soil, the beautiful sky of Provence and to abandon the tomb where the most beloved of the Fathers rested - and this, at a time when the changes were so painful and new acclimatization so difficult, was not the move away from Montolivet an exile, with its privations, its pains? Yes, and Father Tempier accepted everything. God wrestled with this*

⁴⁵ Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987. P209

*selfless, Jacob-like man, and the self-sacrificing man emerged victorious from the maw. Montolivet was bought, in time, by the diocesan administration of Marseilles. Who was the man who went to complete the formalities, personally surrender the mother house, sign the deed of sale and hand over the keys? Father Tempier."*⁴⁶

Hearing Father Fabre describe this particular moment in Father Tempier's life, we can question our own availability for the Lord's mission.

In this year of the 200th anniversary of the vow of poverty, we suggest that we take the opportunity, on the level of the whole Congregation, to reflect on this vow.

In the meantime, we suggest that you reflect on our community witness, in light of this extract from Father Jetté's commentary on our Constitution 21:; *"The Spirit who animates us is the One who guided the first Christians. He invites us to share everything, to pool everything together. Our life will be simple. We even consider it "essential", for our Institute, "to give a collective witness to evangelical detachment."*⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Notices nécrologiques II, du P. Tempier pp24-25

⁴⁷ Cf. O.M.I. Homme Apostolique, Rome 1992, p157

8th meditation: The Congregation.

Structures and mission: Constitution 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.*

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.”

The General Chapter - Constitution 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’ participation 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.”

Father Tempier contributed to the expansion of the Congregation. First in France, in 1817, he agreed that it be established in Corsica, *“I do not see why we*

would refuse it."⁴⁸ He encouraged the Oblates of Canada, Africa, and Ceylon. As in this letter of 1868 to Father Barret, "... I have always, with great concern, kept informed of your labors, your consolations and your sorrows. Let us continue to work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Even if the fruits are not abundant, God will not take less account of the good that we wanted to do..."⁴⁹

It was he who worked for the establishment of the Oblates in Algeria. He would visit Canada in 1851 and England on his return. Father Honorat thanked the Founder for Father Tempier's visit to Canada, "All our Fathers, I believe, have profited as much as they could want, because he neglected no effort to accomplish all the good that was in his power to do, both in general and for individuals."⁵⁰

Father Albin wrote in 1837, "Oh! We can really see that you are attached, heart and soul, to our Congregation and to the members who are faithful to it."⁵¹

Father Tempier worked on the redaction of the CC & RR, "... pay attention to our Statutes. We do not have

⁴⁸ Lettre de Tempier à Mazenod, collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987, p 14.

⁴⁹ Lettre du P. Tempier au P. Barret du 30 mai 1868, collection Ecrits oblats II,2 Rome 1987, p 117.

⁵⁰ Lettre du P. Honorat au Fondateur du 15 septembre 1851, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p 89.

⁵¹ Lettre du P. Albin au P. Tempier du 3 février 1837, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987. p 91.

*much to take from those of Paris, since they speak of a Society composed of several houses, while ours will never have but one. Give this matter two hours each day. [...] Reread Saint Philip Neri and the petition we submitted to the Vicars General ..."*⁵²

When Brother Ignatius wanted to join the Congregation, it was Father Tempier who undoubtedly composed the first draft of a regulation, or chapter of the Rules, concerning the Brothers.⁵³

What, then, about his work as Treasurer General of the Congregation? *"From the very first days of our existence ... it was to him that he [the Founder] entrusted the administration of the assistance that Providence made available to the small community. Father Tempier exercised these functions of bursar of Divine Providence, of Procurator of the Congregation, all his life."*⁵⁴

Over the years, Father Tempier succeeded in creating a reserve fund as the Founder had asked: *"... my goal has always been to create capital, which could provide for the most pressing needs of life, certainly not with the idea of hoarding, but of supplementing the*

⁵² Lettre de Mazonod à Tempier du 15 décembre 1816

⁵³ Cf. P. J-M Larose, les sources des articles des Règles concernant les frères coadjuteurs, Etudes Oblates 14 (1955), pp.279-283

⁵⁴ Notices nécrologiques II, p97, P. Tempier, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, pp.61-62

donations that all Congregations have in all the countries of the world..."⁵⁵

*"It is said of Father Tempier, that he closely followed the various projects, measuring stick to hand and hand near the wallet."*⁵⁶ He drew up the plans himself and followed the construction of several buildings. Even the civil prefecture recognized his competence, in appointing him to a departmental commission for major works that were to be undertaken in Marseille.⁵⁷

We invite you to reread the third part of our CC & RR, "The Organization of the Congregation." Constitution 72 clearly states, "*the structures of the Congregation have no other purpose than to support the mission.*"

As we reread the life of Father Tempier, we recall that it is the entire Congregation that exercises responsibility for the mission the Church entrusts to us. We can have a wide variety of works - including Oblates who find it impossible to undertake an external ministries due to illness, age, or internal service to the Congregation. It is the whole

⁵⁵ Lettre de Mazenod au P. Tempier du 20 (22) janvier 1826, Lettres aux oblats de France, Vol 7, p. 17.

⁵⁶ Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, pp. 53-55.

community that accomplishes the ministry through the various services of its members.

This might also be an opportunity to write a note, to hear from an oblate from a Province other than mine...

9th mediation: Witness

Pope Francis, May 2014: "What is witness for the Christian."

"Witnessing to Christ is the essence of the Church. Otherwise, it would end up being a sterile "university of religion," impermeable to the action of the Holy Spirit ...

"We are a people who follow God and bear witness - who want to bear witness to Jesus Christ. And this testimony sometimes succeeds in giving life.

"On the other hand, when the Church closes in on itself, it considers itself - let us say - a university of religion with very many beautiful ideas, with very many beautiful temples, with very many beautiful museums, with very many beautiful things, but it does not bear witness, it becomes sterile."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Extrait de l'homélie du pape François à Sainte-Marthe, 6 mai 2014.

Thanks to the testimonies of his contemporaries, we discover who Father Tempier is, and these help us to understand better the spirit which animated him.

Let us first cede the floor to the Founder:

“I wanted, at the beginning of my letter, to tell you, my dear friend, how touched I was by the sentiments you express to me in such an edifying way, in your last letter. I recognized from its first page, the genuine religious, the upright man, the good heart, you so totally are, dear Tempier. I also thank the Good Lord, ceaselessly, for having associated me with you, and I ask him to fill you more and more with his Spirit, to our greatest mutual profit ...

“No one has a greater right to my trust than you, my first companion. You have grasped, from the first day of our union, the spirit which was to animate us and which we were to communicate to others; you did not turn aside, for a single instant, from the path we had resolved to follow; everyone in the Society knows it, and they depend upon you, as they do on me. Is it any surprise, then, since we have a such a distant house, necessary because of our circumstances and its location, that you are charged with managing it?”⁵⁹

In an outsider’s view, Timon David writes: *“he was a venerable man, concealing in somewhat abrupt manners, one of the best hearts that one could meet [...] it is*

⁵⁹ Lettre du P. Mazenod au P. Tempier du 15 août 1822.

impossible to say how many communities in Marseilles owe to him their foundation or establishment. He was a father to everyone [...] It was easy to get along with such a man."⁶⁰

Father Fabre would describe Father Tempier with these words, in the obituary, *"Joy he shared in common, pain he reserved for himself ... under an austere, cold, almost unfeeling exterior, the warm southern nature of Father Tempier concealed a heart of gold, capable of all the heroics of charity ... Never has a man insisted so much on respect for confidences and discretion, in the exercise of the responsibilities with which he was entrusted ... yes, he was pious, that solid, deep piety which takes hold of the soul and puts it in immediate contact with God. He had a taste for holy things. The hours of prayer did not seem too long to him. Father Tempier's life can be summed up in one word: 'dedication, the most absolute dedication'. Constantly effacing himself, always forgetting himself, and thus assuming the highest place, in the full view of everyone ..."*⁶¹

Let us end with this extract from the homily given by Bishop Chalandon, on April 7, 1864, in the Church of the Mission in Aix, on the occasion of the 50 years of the priesthood of Fr. Tempier, *"As long as the Society of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate is directed by the spirit of faith, devotion and zeal which animated*

⁶⁰ Témoignage de l'abbé Timon David sur Tempier, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, pp. 61-62.

⁶¹ Notices nécrologiques II, du P. Tempier.

*your first Father and which always animated, in the green fruitfulness of his old age, the one whom he could call his son no less than his brother, his helper, and his friend - as long as, walking in the footsteps of the Mazenods and the Tempiers, you can say: 'Societas nostra cum patre et filio ejus' (may our Society always be with God the Father and with his Son), the Church on earth and the Church in heaven will have cause to rejoice."*⁶²

At the start of this 9th meditation, we quoted an excerpt from Pope Francis' homily, at St. Martha, on May 6, 2014. He ended with a few questions, questions he directs to us today:

*"How is my witness? Am I a Christian witness to Jesus or am I just a member of this sect? Am I fruitful because I bear witness, or do I remain sterile because I am not able to let the Holy Spirit lead me forward in my Christian vocation?"*⁶³.

You may also write a testimonial about a colleague, to bring to light some aspect of his life.

We hope that these few meditations give you the curiosity to reread the life of Father Tempier.

⁶² Homélie de l'Archevêque d'Aix, le 7 avril 1864, collection Ecrits oblats II,1 Rome 1987, pp. 228-230.

⁶³ Extrait de l'homélie du pape François à Sainte-Marthe, 6 mai 2014

Further, we recommend the two books on Father Tempier, written by Yvon Beaudoin in 1987⁶⁴, the obituary composed by Father Fabre in 1870⁶⁵, the conference, in Aix-en-Provence of Father Michel Courvoisier, on February 17, 2016⁶⁶ or the article on Father Tempier in the historical dictionary.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ François de Paule Henry Tempier, collection Ecrits oblats II, 1 et 2 Rome, 1987.

⁶⁵ Notices Nécrologiques II, circulaire N° 49, pp. 81-118.

⁶⁶ « Je ne peux pas y arriver seul ! », Aix-en-Provence 2016, pp. 44-48.

⁶⁷ Dictionnaire historique des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée, Vol I, Rome 2004, pp. 704-710.

