

Studia 3

Oblatio



Joseph T. LaBelle

TRULY APOSTOLIC MEN

**Apostolic Life in the Early Ministry
of Saint Eugene de Mazenod**



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1. Yvon Beaudoin, *Fernand Jetté. Un guide sage dans un temps de crise*, 2012, 156 p.

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2. Paweł Zając (Ed), *From the French Revolution to the New Evangelization - Eugene de Mazenod and his charism between XVIII and XXI century / De la Révolution française à la nouvelle évangélisation*, 2013, 280 p.

3. Joseph T. LaBelle, *Truly Apostolic Men. Apostolic Life in the Early Ministry of Saint Eugene de Mazenod*, 2014, 204 p.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DES* *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Spiritualità*, a cura di Ermanno Ancilli e del Pontificio Istituto di Spiritualità del Teresianum. 3 vols. Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1990.
- DOV* *Dictionary of Oblate Values*, under the direction of Fabio Ciardi O.M.I. Rome 2000 (in French, *Dictionnaire des valeurs Oblates*.) Rome: Association for Oblate Studies and Research, 1996.
- DS* *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*: Paris, G. Beauchesne et ses fils, 1932-1995, 18 volumes.
- EO* *Écrits Oblats*, collection of selected letters and other documents of Eugene de Mazenod, in 22 volumes; currently available in French and English.
- Ét Obl* *Écrits Oblates*, Oblate journal published from 1942-1973, after which the title was changed to *Vie Oblate Life*. — 5 —
- Missions* *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Missionary Oblate publication. 1862-1971.
- NCE* *New Catholic encyclopedia*, prepared by an editorial staff at the Catholic University of America. New York: McGraw-Hill, c1967-c1996.
- VOL* *Vie Oblate Life*, Oblate publication from 1974 to present, replaced *Études Oblates*.

1818 *Constitutions et Règles de la Société des Missionnaires de Provence, Saint-Laurent-du-Verdon*, 1818 (Oblate archives “Manuscrit I”); page citations refer to the text reprinted in *Missions* 78 (1951), pp. 9-97.

1825 *Constitutions et Règles de la Société des Missionnaires dits de Provence*, 1824-1825 (Oblate archives “Manuscrit IV”). This is the French text which was translated into Latin and presented for pontifical approval; page citations refer to the text found in M. Lesage and W. Woestman, ed. *La Règle de saint Eugène de Mazenod / The Rule of Saint Eugene de Mazenod*, (Ottawa: Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, 1997).

Unless stated otherwise, all New Testament citations refer to the New Revised Standard Version from The New Greek English Interlinear New Testament. (R.K. Brown and P.W. Comfort, tr. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990.

INTRODUCTION

This book is an adaptation of a 2006 doctoral dissertation which considers the presence of what may be termed a “tradition of apostolic life” during the early ministry years (1812-1826) of Bishop Eugene de Mazenod (b.1782 - d.1861), founder of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and subsequent bishop of Marseilles.¹

In the fall of 1815, the thirty-three year-old *abbé* Eugene de Mazenod began to reveal his vision for a new missionary preaching society which would labor in southern France.

Oh! Do not doubt that we will become saints in our Congregation, free but united by bonds of the most tender charity, by exact submission to the Rule we will adopt, etc. We would live poorly, apostolically, etc.²

If presently we are not more numerous, it is that we wish to choose men who have the will and the courage to walk in the footsteps of the apostles.³

In what would become the pontifically approved text of the 1826 Oblate Constitutions and Rules, he wrote about the type of men needed for the task, “zealous priests... priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue - in a word, apostolic men...”⁴

Little direct mention remains of his concept of living “apostolically” beyond a few references and implications from the first years of the missionary society. In recent decades, several Oblate writings have addressed de Mazenod’s particular way of living as an “apostolic man.” Various elements of this life have been explored from a primarily modern-day perspective, such as the centrality of the Eucharist in de Mazenod’s life, his

¹ J. LaBelle, *Apostolic Life in the 1812-1826 Thought and Founding Charism of Eugene de Mazenod, O.M.I.* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Spiritualità, 2006), published in abridged form.

² De Mazenod to Mgr Hilaire Aubert, before October, 1815, in *EO* 6.3.

³ De Mazenod to Tempier, October 19, 1815, in *EO* 6.4.

⁴ Woestman & Lesage, *1825*, 14.

daily meditative practice of *oraison*, etc. But just what did the first Oblates mean when they claimed to follow an apostolic lifestyle as it was perceived in early nineteenth century France? What were some of the essential elements of such a life? To what degree were they affected by the social and pastoral demands of their time? How did their various spiritual practices serve to reinforce and support their prayer and ministry in the midst of their demanding ministerial and religious life? These are some of the deeper questions which must be addressed when seeking to articulate the apostolic dimension of de Mazenod's charism for our present day.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE EARLY APOSTOLIC LIFE TRADITION

In order to consider de Mazenod's appeals to an existing apostolic life tradition, one must dig deeper to find the evolving use of the term throughout the first seventeen centuries of Christian spirituality history. There are several works which explore this in greater detail; for the present study, a very limited summary is offered here.⁵

The earliest Christian understanding relied principally upon the synoptic gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus and "the Twelve." These hand-picked men were prepared by Jesus to proclaim the Good News to all the world, each one sent into the world as his envoy or representative (the original meaning of the term "apostle"). Not merely repeaters of an oral message, these apostles gave personal witness to their belief in Jesus and the reign of God through their imitation of his life which they had personally appropriated. They learned to live in utter dependence upon divine providence through lives of detachment from material and other wants, spiritually grounded in a total filial trust in the mysterious divine plan as was Jesus' own relationship as a trusting Son of his loving Father.

The Christian patristic era (second thru fifth centuries) used the descriptive "apostolic" to indicate one's doctrinal orthodoxy and faithfulness to the

⁵ The original dissertation preceding this book devoted an entire chapter suggesting a credible development of the apostolic life tradition. The following additional works were very helpful in this regard: H. Holstein, "The history of the development of the word 'apostolic.'" *Apostolic Life, being the English version of L'apostolat*, transl. By Ronald Halstead (London: Aquin Press, 1958); M. Vicaire, *The Apostolic Life* (Chicago: Priory Press, 1966); L. DeWailley, "Notes sur l'histoire de l'adjectif 'apostolique.'" in *Mélanges de science religieuse* (November 1948):141-152.

teachings of the first apostles. Thus, Ignatius of Antioch in his *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (16.2) notes that the early martyr had learned from the early apostles and died as “an apostolic and prophetic teacher,” and Tertullian alludes to the disciple-students of the first apostles as “apostolic men” (On the Veiling of Virgins, 2.1). Veneration of the first apostles was extended to extol the ascetical prayer life of the early Christian monastics, and also had its impact upon the communal life of prayer and virtue exemplified by the bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and his common-life clergy; this vision regulated such items as common life, dress, prayer, and shared possessions, and would later emerge as a great influence upon the understanding of the apostolic life and vocation.

The medieval era (sixth to fifteenth centuries) witnessed a growing dispute as to a more precise understanding of the term. The monastic life tradition dominated the discussion and this way of life was proposed as fitting for clergy as well, but its cloistered lifestyle impeded their freedom for responding to growing pastoral needs. By the twelfth century, however, the Rule of Augustine had reemerged and formed the preferred foundation for clerical life, to be observed in common as “canons regular.” Concern for ecclesiastical and clergy reform also led to an expectation that preachers’ lives should return to the more austere and faith-led example of Jesus and the first apostles, chiefly in their adherence to evangelical poverty and obedience. The tradition of itinerant apostolic preaching impressed itself upon the French religious consciousness with the emergence of such figures as Robert d’Arbrissel (d. 1117) and Bernard de Tiron (d. 1117). One result among many communities from the resulting mendicant (“begging”) movement was the thirteenth-century formation of the Order of Preachers and the promotion of Dominic de Guzman as the exemplar medieval “apostolic man.”

Continued desire for Church reform in the early modern era (fifteenth to eighteenth centuries) led to the formation of numerous clerical institutes which addressed the problems of religious ignorance, heterodoxy, and lack of formal priestly formation. This period also witnessed an appreciation for what was termed the “apostolic spirit” - the missionary desire to give selfless witness to the gospel in foreign lands, and also to re-evangelize domestic Christian communities which had grown tepid. Several congregations of active women and non-clerical religious emerged during this time, inspired by a desire to address its many needs. The many male

clerical congregations were also desirous of this, but especially concerned themselves to exemplify what should be a truly “apostolic” priest - selfless, prayerful, virtuous, unencumbered with material goods, free to go wherever religious obedience might call him.

One formidable priestly and pastoral reform congregation, the seventeenth century Society of Saint-Sulpice, had a tremendous influence on French priestly and pastoral reform. Among numerous examples and influences, the Sulpician experience was especially instructive in the priestly formation of the young Eugene de Mazenod, and was a principal resource for his eventual vision of apostolic life and how apostolic men should live.

METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Eugene de Mazenod’s appeal to an apostolic lifestyle suggests that, to a considerable degree, he possessed some sense of the term as it had developed within the preceding tradition of Christian spirituality. This, together with his own individual priestly and ministerial experience, formed the basis of how he and his followers would live their particular missionary vocation. This study follows an essentially historical methodology as it seeks to articulate the basic principles of his emerging sense of apostolic life during the 1812-1826 period, primarily using the collection of de Mazenod’s letters from this period, as well as various letters, study notes, spiritual journals, and the early rules of his missionary society. Composed during the crucial years of 1816 (the year of its foundation), 1818 (during its first years of expansion), and 1825 (in preparation for seeking Roman approbation), these rules were personally edited and approved by de Mazenod; it is a reasonable assumption that they represent his own attitudes concerning the religious life and mission of his religious society. Some excerpts are cited from shortly before and following this period in order to further clarify a few points. Additional writings from various Missionary Oblate publications are also mentioned in cases where they serve to assist in amplifying his thought, while other more general historical and theological works are used to more fully explain some relevant points of spiritual theology and provide additional reading for readers.

The original dissertation made exclusive use of de Mazenod’s writings in their original French language and included non-English citations from other supporting resources. The present publication makes use of

the English-language version of the Oblate-published *Écrits oblats* collection of his writings and other documents. Citations from other references, where possible, are also presented here in English where appropriate; the present author accepts responsibility for any inaccuracies of personal translation. Throughout the book, references are suggested for the reader to further explore the many elements of apostolic life tradition and spiritual theology which comprise the spiritual life of Eugene de Mazenod.

The first chapter of this study illustrates how Eugene de Mazenod was an authentic representative of the apostolic life tradition as it had developed and was evident in late eighteenth century French Catholicism. It is not the intention of this work to deconstruct de Mazenod's particular charism through dismissing it as a mere collection of earlier thought. His vocation to proclaim the gospel through following the way of the apostles was a response to the Spirit which moved him. His own uniquely subjective expression of ministerial and eventually religious life, however, were rooted within the preceding Christian tradition, drawing divine support and inspiration from roots sunk deeply in its soil.

De Mazenod's particular spiritual way of incarnating this apostolic life tradition is the focus of the subsequent chapters, examining his personal lived experience of the apostolic life tradition. Maturity in the spiritual life is understood to reflect one's increasing ability to love unselfishly; these three chapters consider his practices of loving God in prayer and devotion, his manifesting a proper love of self through cultivating a life of practiced virtue, and a maturing sacrificial love of others in community and ministry.

The brief concluding section of this work considers some essential elements of de Mazenod's founding Missionary Oblate charism which emerge from this study, and how they might be more fully appropriated in our post-Vatican II era.

Chapter One

EUGENE DE MAZENOD AS A LIVED EXPRESSION OF THE APOSTOLIC LIFE TRADITION

This chapter offers an overview of the political moment in France of 1812 and a brief recounting of de Mazenod's life until 1826. The following sections consider how Eugene's experience of Jesus and love for the Redeemer had become the orientation of his life, how de Mazenod was concerned to be "one with the Church" and had a deep love for its tradition, and explores his deep desire to address some specific pastoral and reform needs of the time. The final section shows more concretely how Eugene rose to meet them - by embodying the example of the first apostles in their way of imitating Jesus.

FRANCE AND EUGÈNE DE MAZENOD IN 1812

Eugene de Mazenod in 1812 was faced with particular problems which affected French government, society, and Church. These were especially influenced both by historical and political events from the preceding century leading up to the French Revolution, and subsequent related events of the early nineteenth century. For the sake of those unfamiliar with de Mazenod and France of his day, let us first consider the life of the young Eugene preceding his ordained ministry.

A Brief Sketch of France in 1812

The ascent to power of the French Legislative Assembly in 1782 brought with it a desire to effect renewal within the Church in France. In the eyes of many, changes had been needed. Numerous donations from landed individuals had assisted monasteries and other church institutions to realize land holdings of nearly ten percent of French land overall. Many monasteries had also experienced a diminished religious fervor, either from the appointment of non-religious royal appointments who were more

concerned with reaping income from the monasteries than the spiritual life of the residents, or from the decreasing number of religious. The clergy, in their powerful position as the First Estate within French society, suffered from a division between the more privileged “high” clergy, many of whom had less pastoral concern for their flock than for worldly gain, and the “lower” clerics, usually with little formal academic or pastoral preparation, who were often found in the less desired rural parishes.

Beginning in 1789, the French Revolution furthered the nationalization of the Church in France with the eventual imposition of the Constituent Clergy in the fall of 1790, further hastening the subjugation of the church to the new but more secularized constitutional government.⁶ The overall administration of the Church increasingly became a responsibility of the state. Empty or near-empty monasteries were forced to close, and these became classified as “excess” properties which were publically sold. Dioceses were reduced in number from 135 to 83, decreasing the overall pastoral effectiveness.⁷ Bishops would virtually become government-appointed representatives at the diocesan level under a centralized government Ministry of Cult and priests would be akin to local functionaries, each paid a salary determined by the state. Even church-sponsored charitable works would eventually be assumed by the new republican government.

Beginning in the fall of 1791, the state required all clergy to take an oath of allegiance to the new republic and its constitution. A growing separation of church and state in 1792, following the Jacobin installation of a strictly secular and more anti-religious sentiment, resulted in a more

⁶ The nineteenth-century word “Gallicanism” is used to indicate the traditional understanding of relationship between Rome and various French concerns from before the fifteenth century. French theologians, the crown, the *parlement*, and the episcopacy each had an interest in French independence from papal intervention. The 1516 concordat between Francis I and Pope Leo X which had established the king’s prerogative to name certain church appointments, including episcopal ones, was in effect at the time of the Revolution. To read more of the history of Gallicanism, see B. Plongeron, “Au temps des derniers rois: le système gallican”, in vol. 10 of *Histoire du christianisme* (Paris: Desclée, 1997), 25-32; *Catholicisme*, s.v. “Gallicanisme”; *NCE*, s.v. “Gallicanism.”

⁷ H. Jedin, *The Church in the modern world*, English translation ed. by John Dolan, book 7, *The Church between Revolution and Restoration* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 23.

adamant demand that all priests and bishops take the oath under pain of exile, imprisonment, or even death.⁸

The tight control placed upon Church pastoral practices was loosened somewhat during the following years, though it remained under considerable state supervision. Due in large part to his efforts in organizing European nations to lend support to French noble émigrés and resist the spread of revolutionary aims, Pope Pius VI was held sequestered by the French force at Valence from July 1799 until his death one month later.

The Concordat of 1801 between Napoleon and the Church

General Napoleon Bonaparte was appointed First Consul of France in November 1799, with the hope of stabilizing the post-revolutionary government.⁹ Finding himself in an advantageous position following his military victory at Marengo in 1800, Napoleon sent a message to Pius VII suggesting that they mutually seek to resolve the unstable situation of the Church in France. Though the resulting concordat was welcomed by Rome as a move away from excessive French interference in Church affairs, Bonaparte's inclusion of the additional "Organic Articles" reasserted the intention of the government to do so. The amendment essentially formed an imperial body of ecclesiastical law which sought to regulate a wide scope of ecclesial life in such areas as liturgy and clerical dress, effectively providing a further limit to papal authority in France. Judging the new situation as nevertheless beneficial for the stabilization of the faith among French Catholics, the pope accepted the adjoined terms.

While many acclaimed this as a new beginning for the Church in France, the concordat was not universally praised. The agreement called for the replacement of all diocesan bishops in an attempt to realize an end to the division between constituent clergy who had taken an oath of loyalty and the resisting "non-jurist" clergy. Many bishops and clergy saw the overall plan as too concessive, notably among the bishops who had been forced to flee the country; these had shown a great loyalty to Rome but were now in danger of losing their legitimate sees. The plan was likewise unpopular with many clergy and bishops who had taken the constitution-

⁸ Ibid., 29-31.

⁹ For more information on Napoleon's rise to power, see G. Sale, "L'ascesa al potere del generale Bonaparte. Il colpo di Stato del 18 brumaio," *La Civiltà Cattolica* 150, no. 4 (1999): 570-83.

al oath for the noble desire of maintaining Catholicism in France. Other Frenchmen felt betrayed, particularly among the nobility, who had been loyal to the Church during the bloody years of the Revolution. Eugene de Mazenod had shared this sentiment in 1802, noting in an early letter to his father that, in effect, the pope had debased himself in accepting the terms.¹⁰ Later, however, he expressed what seems to echo a sentiment of later historians which rather praised Pius VII for his foresightedness.

How much the more when I can tangibly see that everything that has been done was done for the best and has brought about the good... The evil was so enormous, and the impending disasters were so hopeless, had the head of the Church not hastened to make big sacrifices... What was his goal? To preserve the faith in France.¹¹

The accord ushered in a period of peace and rejuvenation for the Church in France, though Napoleon's assumption of all government control as emperor in 1804 brought increasing conflict.¹² Parish missionary preaching and catechesis were encouraged after 1806 with the founding of such parish mission groups such as the *Missionaries of France*. The emperor promoted the use of his own imperial catechism in place of numerous diocesan ones, intending to portray the aims of the empire as being rooted in divine order, but it was not universally accepted.¹³

A significant issue of tension, however, resulted from Napoleon's annexation of the papal states on May 17, 1809, which led Pius VII to excommunicate those taking part in the action. Napoleon was initially able to keep the news from becoming public, but the involvement of Saint-Sulpice and other Catholic associations in disseminating the information led to the suspension of parish mission preaching and other nonessential pastoral activity. The pope was removed from Rome by French troops in 1809 to Savona until 1812, then to Fontainebleau (near Paris) until his release in 1814. Bonaparte's control over the Church in France was temporarily

¹⁰ De Mazenod to his father, May 28, 1802, in *LM*.

¹¹ De Mazenod to his father, 16 August, 1805, *EO* 14.10.

¹² For some positive and negative results of the accepted Concordat, see J. Leflon, "La crise révolutionnaire: 1789-1846," *Histoire de l'Église*, vol. 20, ed. A. Fliche & V. Martin (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1949), 199-217.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 235-7.

checked when Pius VII withheld his canonical approval of future bishops in accord with the Concordat. Consequently, many French sees became occupied by unpopular and ecclesiastically invalid imperial appointees.

This period also witnessed a resurgent desire among many clergy for the restoration of the French monarchy, with a vision that a healthy relationship between throne and altar held the best hope for the future of France. This attitude would ultimately bear fruit with the restoration of Louis XVIII as king of France in 1814 following Napoleon's abdication. The subsequent years would remain tumultuous, however, with the ongoing clash between ultramontanist sentiment desiring Roman Church primacy and those individuals favoring a resurgence of traditional Gallican ideals and privileges.

But the French Church in 1812 was still in the final years of Napoleonic rule, cautiously daring to look ahead while making its way through a perilous moment. Such was the situation with which Eugene de Mazenod would have to contend during his first years of ordained pastoral ministry.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF EUGENE DE MAZENOD'S ROAD TO APOSTOLIC LIFE (1792-1826)

A difficult road to maturity

Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod was born on August 1, 1782 to Charles Antoine de Mazenod (1745-1820), a noble of the Royal Court of Accounts, and to Marie-Rose-Eugénie Joannis (1760-1851).¹⁴ The pro-

¹⁴ There are a number of biographies which have been written on de Mazenod. The most recent extensive work is the 4-volume work of J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod* (translated from French original) (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961-1970). Other recent works which consider specific periods of his life include R. Moosbrugger, *The Spirituality of Blessed Eugene de Mazenod from 1818 until 1837* (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1981). J. Pierlorz, *The Spiritual Life of Bishop de Mazenod: 1782-1812* (Rome: Association of Oblate Studies and Research, 2000); A. Taché, *La vie spirituelle d'Eugène de Mazenod, fondateur des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée aux origines de la société, 1812-1818 : étude historico-doctrinale* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 2004, 1960); Other biographical works covering portions of de Mazenod's life include the one volume English work by A. Hubenig, *Living in the Spirit's Fire: Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1995), and that of J. Morabito, *"Je serai prêtre": Eugène de Mazenod de Venise à Saint-Sulpice 1794-1811* (Ottawa: Éditions des Études Oblates, 1954).

monarchist family was forced to flee Provence shortly after the outbreak of the French Revolution, and Eugene lived for periods of time as an exile or émigré in Nice (then part of the Kingdom of Sardinia, beginning in April 1791),¹⁵ Turin (from autumn 1791), and Venice (from May 1794). His mother subsequently returned to Provence in October 1795 to secure the family holdings there, leaving Eugene to be raised by his father and two uncles.¹⁶ He would not see her again until his 1802 return to France, after subsequent years in Naples (beginning in January 1798) and Palermo (from January 1799).

One of the notably positive moments of de Mazenod’s childhood and adolescence in exile was his relationship with a priest-mentor, Don Bartolo Zinelli.¹⁷ Besides furnishing him with a notable educational opportunity which helped to fill in the gaps caused by the difficulties of his life situation, this fortuitous relationship laid the firm foundation for a life of Christian piety and at least the thought of a possible future priestly vocation. While de Mazenod’s spiritual ardor would cool somewhat over the next six or seven years, it provided a lasting base upon which the youth could stand until the renewal of spiritual fervor and vocational discernment in young adulthood.

A gradually perceived call to apostolic service

Despite his faith life which never completely disappeared, as well as a sound personal moral code, Eugene in his later adolescence became immersed in the exciting social and material life of the royal court of Pal-

¹⁵ De Mazenod in his later *Mémoires (Missions)* (1866), 114) states that he left Aix on March 31, 1790. The date has been disputed critically among historians, however Pielorz gives a convincing argument for the departure date as given. See J. Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 41, footnote 18.

¹⁶ His father’s virtual financial ruin was due to a combination of personal indebtedness, the revolution, and a business misadventure while abroad; see J. Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 13-19.

¹⁷ Zinelli (1766-1803), native of Venice, described as “a genuine man of God, very attached to the Society, deeply humble, ardent in charity, he was especially distinguished by his zeal,” was a diocesan priest at the time he befriended de Mazenod. Following Eugene’s departure, he entered the Society of the Fathers of the Faith of Jesus which followed the charism of the Society of Jesus until its later restoration, and died in Rome at age 37. From “Zinelli”, in *Historical Dictionary of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate*, vol. 1 (Rome: Association of Oblate Studies and Research, 2008), 799-801.

ermo.¹⁸ His father and uncles had impressed their family nobility upon him throughout his youth, and Eugene spent most of his time in Sicily in pursuit of a nobleman's lifestyle.

Following the Napoleonic amnesty extended to male noble émigrés who had fled, the twenty year old de Mazenod returned to France in 1802. Relenting to his mother's insistence that he return in order to help stabilize the family legal and financial situation, he also sought to reconcile his birthright within the very different, egalitarian structure of Napoleonic France. He considered three arranged marriage possibilities with an eye more to financial gain rather than deep personal affection, following a traditional practice of French nobility. However, the process left Eugene with a growing inner emptiness and boredom with life.

A period of spiritual renewal between 1805 and 1807,¹⁹ together with a period of civil service which addressed the needs of prisoners,²⁰ led to a discernment to pursue the ordained priesthood for the Aix diocese. The needs of the Church in France following the revolution called for men who were prayerful and holy at the expense of being well-prepared academically, and the time of preparation was usually no more than three, and often only two years.²¹ De Mazenod entered Saint-Sulpice in October 1808, a seminary which was well-regarded traditionally and the only one which accommodated sons of nobility, and was ordained on December

¹⁸ He was particularly close to the family of Baldassare Platamone, duke of Cannizzaro and his wife Rosalia Moncada Branciforte, princess of Larderia, and their three children. *Ibid.*, s.v. "Cannizzaro, family."

¹⁹ De Mazenod's period of spiritual growth between 1806-08 includes evidence of a religious conversion stemming from an experience which is akin to what classical spiritual writers would term *compunction*. The exact time of this conversion has been vigorously debated among Oblate scholars. De Mazenod's 1814 retreat notes make the only mention of an episode of spiritual consolation which presumably occurred on Good Friday (March 27), 1807. Various authors have tried to pinpoint this as the actual moment of an interior spiritual conversion; a more inclusive reading of the text, however, suggests that there was at least one additional moment of spiritual consolation during this period (see his retreat notes of 1814 in his 1814 retreat notes, in *EO* 15.130). For purposes of this work, the two-year period gives sufficient accuracy. Pierlorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 143; *idem.*, "Good Friday of 1807 Myth or Reality?" *VOL* 56 (1997):47-78.

²⁰ His Aix prison administration from December 30, 1806 through October 6, 1807 primarily focused upon physical needs and treatment, but Eugene also took the opportunity to encourage the prisoners' return to the practice of their faith. Pierlorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 157.

²¹ Y. Krumenacker, *L'Ecole française de spiritualité*, (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 570.

21, 1811. He remained there as a co-director of the seminary as a result of Napoleon's 1811 dismissal of the Sulpicians, eventually returning to Aix in October 1812 to begin his ministry.

First experiences of ordained ministry (1812-1815)

The direction for Eugene's ordained spiritual life was the Sulpician-inspired goal of priestly perfection as reflected in his 1812 personal rule of life,²² and the completion of all his priestly obligations would be a driving concern during these first years. Very rigorous, neglectful of basic human needs such as adequate sleep and food, the rule had nevertheless been approved by his spiritual director and guided de Mazenod through his first years of ministry. His bishop authorized his long-desired special ministry of preaching and catechesis among children, the materially poor, and other spiritually neglected people, which also included preaching Lenten and other parish missions, hearing confessions, and daily Eucharistic celebration. His overreaching zeal and the demanding personal rule contributed to his contracting typhus in March 1814 while ministering to war prisoners, requiring several months of convalescence.

Following this period, which coincided with the French restoration of the monarchy and full freedom to Catholic ministry, de Mazenod was faced with a vexing question: Could the consuming obligation to foster priestly holiness be reconciled while attending to the great pastoral demands with which he struggled as a diocesan priest, or should he seek it within a more regulated religious institute? This thought accompanied him as he entered his December 1814 annual retreat.²³ After the retreat, he

²² Rule of life for his return to Aix, *EO* 15.107. It is believed to be incomplete; while detailing his daily routine of prayer, devotion, and study, it omits any consideration of ministry other than Mass or confessions. However, de Mazenod's early tendency to have only limited and well-regulated ministry exposure during these early years, as evident in some correspondence of the period, seem to resonate with one element found in his reflection "On frequent Communion", believed to be written in 1812 for a seminarian conference. In it, he notes that his first personal obligation is "to live as if on retreat, an interior retreat I mean, wholly taken up with the Spouse of my soul who deigns to make of it his permanent dwelling" (*EO* 15.102). Krumenacker, 569 notes that the primary concern for a Sulpician-formed cleric in the early nineteenth century was to instill "a collection of behavior, virtues, and duties signifying his holiness and permitting him to differentiate himself from other men."

²³ He wrote to a close friend from his seminary days, "I have little taste for this work; I do not know if I will not have to change my vocation. I yearn sometimes for

considered joining a priest-friend in the newly re-established *Missionaries of France*²⁴ and experienced the briefly chaotic period of the “Hundred Days” of Napoleon’s return. The thought of leaving the demands of ministry in favor of a more interior life would continue until 1818,²⁵ but de Mazenod responded to a self-described “strong push from outside himself and began the process of forming a small missionary society to focus on re-evangelization needs of the Provence region.”²⁶

Towards an organized response as a missionary society

The *Society of the Missionaries of Provence* began with four members in Aix on January 25, 1816.²⁷ Its founding document was a brief general rule for the members;²⁸ a more detailed rule was accepted by the society in October 1818 when it sought to expand beyond the diocese and accept the care of a Marian shrine near Laus. Accepting this rule, the society’s eight members pronounced vows of chastity, obedience, and perseverance on November 1. The *Missionaries of Provence* concerned itself especially with preaching of parish missions to marginalized and rural communities, reform of the clergy, and the catechesis of youth. The missionaries often

solitude; and the religious Orders that limit themselves to the sanctification of the individuals who follow their Rule and attend to that of others only by prayer, begin to offer me certain attractions.” De Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, September 12, 1814, in *EO* 15.128. For more on de Mazenod’s spiritual struggle during this retreat, see A. Taché, *La vie spirituelle...*, 173-207.

²⁴ De Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, letter of 28 October 1814, in *EO* 6:2 states his desire to either imitate the life of the latter’s *Missionnaires de France* locally in Provence, or adopt a more enclosed, “completely regular” religious life. His spiritual director had discouraged him from doing so at that time in a letter dated December 1, 1814. A. Rey, *Histoire de Monseigneur Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 1 (Rome: Maison Générale, 1928), 170.

²⁵ His retreat notes from May 1818 show his still present struggle between ministry and now administrative demands with the need for a more supported interior life; however, he exclaims, “God forbid that I would want to give up the service of neighbor!” *EO* 15.145.

²⁶ Letter to Forbin-Janson, 14 October, 1815, in *EO* 6.5.

²⁷ The association of diocesan priests was provisionally accepted by the Aix diocesan authorities in 1816 pending a trial period and the submission of a more definitive rule; its foundation has become traditionally celebrated on the given date, although the vicars general for the diocese of Aix stated their approval of the Society in a letter dated November 13, 1818; see W. Woestman, *The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate : a clerical religious congregation with brothers* (Ottawa: St. Paul University, 1995), 38.

²⁸ The *Règlement* text may be found in *EO* 13.2.

found themselves in conflict with various diocesan pastors who felt that their authority was being eroded, and their diocesan protection was seen as growing ever more precarious. They also suffered from some internal difficulties, one of which resulted in 1823 when de Mazenod and Tempier accepted positions as diocesan co-vicars general for his uncle Fortuné de Mazenod, the newly appointed bishop of Marseille.²⁹

The small group eventually sought pontifical approbation as a society with simple vows. The name had been changed sometime after March 1825 to the Oblates of Saint Charles (after St. Charles Borromeo) since its ministry focus was no longer limited to Provence; however, it was papally recognized as the Missionary Society of the Oblates of the Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary by Pope Leo XII on February 17, 1826, and the congregation officially accepted the approved rule during their July retreat.³⁰

²⁹ Fortuné de Mazenod (1749-1840), a canon of the Aix cathedral until his exile with Eugene's family, was appointed as bishop of Marseille in 1817 and installed on August 10, 1823 (see Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 64-86 and 184-216). Eugene had been a proponent of his uncle's appointment in the wake of the Restoration and the new Concordat of 1817 which sought to restore papally-authorized episcopal appointments for restructured dioceses. Worthy episcopal candidates were difficult to find because of the policies of the Revolution; Eugene had hoped from as early as 1799 that his canon-uncle would be able to advance in his ecclesiastical career (see Pielorz, "Le Fondateur et la nomination de son oncle à l'évêché de Marseille," *Ét Obl* 16 (1957).152), a hope which was suspended until after the Restoration. After 1816, Eugene was also concerned to find an episcopal protector for his new and unstable missionary society, which gave an additional incentive to pursue his uncle's appointment (see his letter to his father of August 28, 1817, *EO* 13.11). More than seventy years of age and unknown to his new diocese, Fortuné accepted the position on the condition that his nephew, known in the diocese and among the clergy, accept the role of diocesan vicar. The idea, however, was initially abhorrent to Eugene and became a cause for unrest within the Society for several years. See Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 242-56; Woestman, *The Missionary Oblates...*, 39-40.

³⁰ The Latin title of the Congregation is *Societas Missionariorum Oblatorum Sanctissimae et Immaculatae Virginis Mariae*. There are several traditional accounts of how this sudden name change came about. The oldest biography, by T. Rambert (*Vie de Monseigneur Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 2, (Tours: Imprimerie A. Mame et Fils, 1883), 49 states that de Mazenod had learned while in Rome that there already existed a religious society named the Oblates of Saint Charles. Rey, vol. 1, 358-9 asserts that de Mazenod received the sudden idea to change the title during the octave celebration of the Immaculate Conception, and requested it in a papal audience on December 20 as indicated by de Mazenod's personal recounting of the event (P. E. Du-

Having set the stage for de Mazenod's response to the Holy Spirit within him, let us now consider his relationship with God in Jesus and how it motivated him to face the challenge of his day.

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF DE MAZENOD'S APOSTOLIC LIFE

We have noted in the first chapter that the developing tradition of apostolic life included an appreciation for the imitation of Jesus within one's own life. Following the Sulpician vision of apostolic life which envisioned the disciples gathered around Jesus and the apostles,³¹ Eugene was encouraged to develop a close relationship with Jesus and learn his spiritual way as did the first apostolic teachers. Chief among these was his relationship to Jesus, of course; let us examine some of his perceptions of the Savior in de Mazenod's life which, in turn, would shape his loving response.

De Mazenod's Experience of Jesus at the Heart of his Apostolic Life

Eugene's experience of Jesus, his encountering the love of Jesus in his heart, which prompted Eugene to reorient his life as fully as possible. Let us consider some of Eugene's moments of experiencing the Savior in his own life situation.

Early personal experience of Jesus (1806-1808)

It is difficult to piece together de Mazenod's conversion itinerary, but

val (ed.), *Ecrits du fondateur*, edited by P.E. Duval (Rome : Maison générale O.M.I.), 1951-1952), 69). A letter written in Italian from a curial *ponente* dated December 30 mentions that the pope supported the suggested name change "... so to avoid any confusion of name with other congregations..." (ibid., 80). A letter of report to Leo XII from the examining committee dated February 17, 1826 notes of the request that "the founder has requested that for various reasons, the title of protection that had been assumed as *Oblates of Saint Charles* be changed to that of the most holy and immaculate Virgin Mary..." (ibid., 132). In later research, Woestman concluded that de Mazenod probably chose the name with a vision of possibly merging with the Oblates of the Virgin Mary (*The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate...*, 43). In any case, the choice appears to have been more sudden than planned, although the thought had reportedly crossed de Mazenod's mind some years earlier; the more popular title rendered in English as "Oblates of Mary Immaculate" gradually came into regular use. G. Cosentino, *Histoire de nos règles*, vol. 2 (Ottawa: Éditions des Études Oblates, 1955), 88-96.

³¹ J.-J. Olier, *Introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes/Pietas seminarii* (Paris: Le Rameau, 1954), xii.

we are able to glean some components of his relationship with Jesus from an incomplete series of retreat notes of the period.³²

The young Eugene enjoyed a basically intact faith and moral life. While his personal religious ardor had cooled somewhat after his time in Venice, particularly as it had expressed his earlier adolescent attraction to priesthood,³³ he still possessed an effective moral sense that distinguished between right and wrong behavior. His time in Palermo was molding his young adult life, shaped by a social atmosphere which tended to reinforce his aristocrat identity.³⁴ He carried this to France in 1802 and sought to transplant it there, beginning with the little-used though still functional family estate at St.-Laurent-du-Verdon which his mother had recovered from the revolutionary government. De Mazenod attended to the estate management and sought to correct some of the underhandedness which was evident among the workers and tenant farmers, but his aristocratic hauteur and insensitivity to the new French reality impeded his effectiveness and relations with them.³⁵

This setting, together with the ensuing boredom and disenchantment,³⁶ helped to set the stage for a spiritual awakening which coincided with the period of his growth from adolescence into young adulthood. The experience left him with gratitude for his soul having been rescued from his spiritual torpor and personal sinfulness. His 1808 retreat notes reveal the powers of the divine “glance”:

The soul is great... it can be moved simultaneously by a diversity of feelings... It must also be employed in the thanksgiving

³² M. Hughes (“Jesus Christ in the Founder’s Spirituality,” *VOL 55* (1996):387E-431E) considers de Mazenod’s personalization of Christ in discrete stages, while Pielorz (*The Spiritual Life...*, 136-47) approaches his growth period from 1806 through 1811 as an entirety. See also H. Gratton, “La dévotion salvatorienne du Fondateur aux premières années de son sacerdoce,” *Ét Obl* 1(1942):158-171. One must use caution when considering the wording and images of de Mazenod, a student of the Sulpician spiritual system which tended to exaggerate the gravity of sin and personal responsibility.

³³ An October 26, 1801 letter from his sister chides his lessened concern for piety and propriety, quoted in Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 219. Pielorz considers this period in more detail in *The Spiritual Life...*, 123-35.

³⁴ Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 84-94.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁶ He described his disenchantment in a letter of April 12, 1804 to his father, “This country doesn’t agree with me, and this is why I have a repugnance for everything...this repugnance is also due to the fact that it is not in my character to spend my life planting cabbages. I have the feeling that I am not where I should be...” *EO* 14.5.

it owes to this good Father for the signal favors he has generously wished to grant it... for having generously willed to cast a merciful glance upon it, one of his powerful glances that do such great things...³⁷

Years later, his 1814 retreat considers the grace which God had bestowed upon him at this particular time of spiritual laxity.

I looked for happiness outside of God and for too long with resulting unhappiness. How often in my past life had my wounded, tormented heart taken wings for God from whom it had turned away! Can I forget the bitter tears that the sight of the cross brought streaming from my eyes one Good Friday? Indeed they welled up from the heart, there was no checking them...³⁸

We finally note that, for Eugene, there was indeed a turning point which he labels as a “conversion” though he is concerned to continue following the new life which God has granted him:

While as for me, until the time of my conversion, my sole preoccupation was to destroy his work... Since my conversion there has been, it is true, a certain change, but I have nothing to be complacent about in my actions...³⁹

The basic element of Eugene’s new adult life in Christ has been realized. He has experienced the mercy of God through Jesus the Savior, who has pulled him away from his earlier life of emptiness and through grace offered him a new one.

Jesus as a forgiving, loving Savior (1808-1811)

Eugene’s first phase of his adult conversion to Christ formed part of his overall spiritual background as he subsequently discerned a possible vocation to priesthood. This new relationship was only a beginning, as his seminary career at Saint-Sulpice afforded him the environment to deepen in his new relationship with the Savior. Eugene shows in writings after

³⁷ Retreat notes of October 1808, *EO* 14.28.

³⁸ Retreat of 1814, second meditation, *EO* 15.130.

³⁹ First meditation, *ibid.*

1808 that he was aware of the gap existing between God's merciful goodness and his own frailty.

How still imperfect, my God, is my conversion; the root of sin lives on in me; the thoughts and memory of the world are still powerfully at work; the things I have renounced retain their hold on my imagination... My heart, still weak, is quite disturbed by it... Make firm, my God, my inconstancy, wholly change my heart; inspire within me, for my salvation, the same zeal I showed for my damnation.⁴⁰

While recognizing the great gift of God's mercy toward him and that he must refrain from taking this for granted, Eugene expresses his belief in a loving God who will not abandon him in his pursuit. While this appears in a personally binding rule which may have sought to instill this thought among a number of other attitudes and practices, it does show the basic direction in which Eugene's life would tend.

I cannot pretend that I am other than unworthy, and very much unworthy, of living among the saints who form this truly heavenly house... My sins must be always before me so as never to forget I am last of all in the eyes of the just God... Even so these sentiments, just though they are, must not wholly fill my heart, fear of the dreadful judgements of a just God must not so fill it that the trust I must have in his mercy cannot find entrance. ... This God of mercy came among us only to call sinners, it is to them he addresses his gentlest words, he pursues them, holds them to his heart, carries them on his shoulders... I place my trust in you alone, Lord, hear my prayer...⁴¹

This pattern of remorse accompanied by hope is repeated in later writings in which de Mazenod has reflected upon his unworthiness to accept the call to proclaim God's Word:

After all, is the past all I have to turn to? Can I not stand on the

⁴⁰ Prayers from perhaps 1808, in *EO* 14.24. The source is believed to have been written between 1808 and 1814, probably later than his personal seminary rule written in October 1808.

⁴¹ "Resolutions taken during the retreat made upon entering the seminary..." October, 1808, in *EO* 14.28.

present moment with its hopes for the future? ... must I forget that our God wipes away the blemishes of those who return to him with all their heart, and must I renounce the career he has himself laid out for me, because I am not bringing to it all the advantages he had enriched me with? ... No, Lord... I will loudly confess my past iniquities, they will be ever present in my mind, but rendered powerless by penance they can no longer be the hated object attracting your vengeance.⁴²

But who am I, miserable sinner, to want to love the same purity and sanctity! Ah! I am well aware that in the sins of my past I made a quite different choice... may I never forget it!... But you, o my Savior, do you forget it, and keep in mind only your mercies.⁴³

In these examples, we find ample evidence that Eugene had enjoyed the deep gratitude of having been turned around by God's gracious mercy, and he repeatedly reassures himself of God's great ongoing love for those who, like himself, would approach God with a humble and sincere heart. His earlier experience of the Saviour's intervention has become more articulated in terms of his conviction in a loving Redeemer, his sincerity being sustained by regular attitudes of humility and penance.

Jesus - a loving Redeemer to be imitated in apostolic ministry (1812-1818)

The disciple's timeless desire for the imitation of Jesus was also a central theme of French spirituality from the time of Bérulle, further accentuated through the Sulpician masters, and Eugene sought to imitate a select group of Jesus' human attributes and virtues. The humility of his descent into human existence, the poverty expressed in the conditions of his birth, the physical humiliations and sufferings he accepted as a sensitive being, were some of Jesus' human virtues which the Sulpician-trained priest was to make his own.⁴⁴

His love for the Savior was a love for everything about him, including

⁴² Spiritual conference, believed to be March, 1809, in *EO* 14.48.

⁴³ Ordination retreat notes, December, 1811, in *EO* 14.95.

⁴⁴ A later chapter of this study will consider the virtues which were particularly important to Eugene's vision for discipleship.

that greatest expression of Jesus' own love, that of embracing the Cross and all its suffering and abandonment. Jesus' willingness to accept all of this revealed his depth of concern for the salvation of the world, and from his profound fidelity to the Father issued forth the Holy Spirit, becoming the soul of its temple, the Church.⁴⁵

It was Jesus' willingness to accept the Cross, and his utmost glorification of God through obedience in filial love, which gave the impetus to Eugene for his appreciation of the Cross in his own life. Founded on the movements of contrition for his past infidelities and a desire to share in Jesus' self-giving life until the point of martyrdom, de Mazenod made a general resolution at the time of his ordination.

...to be wholly God's and for all... to seek only the cross of [Jesus Christ] and the penance due to my sins, to seize every opportunity that arises to mortify myself... I will not set my heart on any earthly thing; *I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh...*[1 Pt 2:11]⁴⁶

A desire to love as Jesus loved will lead one to love all that he loved; the people of God gathered as Church, was worthy of all respect and personal sacrifice by those who would follow Jesus in his own sufferings for its well being. As Jesus loved the People of God, so de Mazenod and his followers who sought to imitate Jesus through the example of the first apostles, themselves becoming Jesus in their own life, would be concerned for the protection and nourishment of this new Body, the Church. Their particular expression of love for God in Jesus would lead them to follow in the footsteps of the first apostles. This was both a response to God's love in their own lives, but also shaped by addressing the needs of their given historical and social moment. We now briefly consider his response to these.

⁴⁵ He notes in the 1825 Rule preface that "The Church, that glorious inheritance purchased by Christ the Savior at the cost of his own blood, has in our days been cruelly ravaged." 1825, 13.

⁴⁶ General resolutions made at time of ordination in late December, 1811 in *EO* 14.101. De Mazenod's letter contains the scriptural quotation in Latin: *obsecro vos tanquam advenas et peregrinos abstinere vos a carnalibus desideriis.*

Imitating Jesus through Giving Glory to the Father

A foundational element for de Mazenod's vocation was his understood call to glorify God through his life.⁴⁷ We find him using it in a variety of ways.

During his own long struggle to convince his mother of his authentic call to priesthood, he wrote that she should not be overly concerned for his upcoming priestly service, since "every moment of a life I have received only to use for God's greater glory."⁴⁸ This charge is not only for one called to the sacrament of order, however, as Eugene reminded his recently married sister, "Keep in mind that on your conduct hangs God's glory and the honor of virtue."⁴⁹

The concept of "glory of God" is complex and is difficult to specify. Eugene's many experiences with the spiritual sons of Ignatius of Loyola and Jesuit spirituality in France would have exposed him to their particular interpretation.⁵⁰ It was also a popular theme found within the spirituality of Bérulle, the French Oratory and Sulpician tradition.⁵¹

His sense of this glory is more than simply performing good deeds. Glory to God is given when the soul, immersed in God's love for it, lives to be in harmony with God's plan and love which is continually offered, too often rejected.

⁴⁷ J. Pétrin, "Le souci de la Gloire de Dieu," *Ét Obl* 16 (1957): 3-19. It is difficult to be specific as to the sense in which Eugene used this term during this period. It is treated at length within *DS*, vol. 4, s.v. "Gloire de Dieu." One finds him using it in the Ignatian sense as shown above (both as *ad majorem Dei gloriam* shown above, more frequently in the phrase "la gloire du Dieu et le salut des âmes" as, for example, in a letter to his mother in *EO* 15.109. See also R. Motte, "Glory of God," *DOV*, 371-7.

⁴⁸ Letter of October 11, 1809, in *EO* 14.61.

⁴⁹ Letter of December 4, 1808, in *EO* 14.35.

⁵⁰ Note was made earlier in the chapter about the Jesuit predisposition of Bartolome Zinelli; de Mazenod also consulted the well-known Jesuit spiritual director Augustine Magi (1726-1814) during his discernment of priesthood (Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 280-1); and was guided by at least two Jesuit retreat guide books written by the Jesuit writers Mudd (in his retreat of 1808) and F. Nepveau (1639-1708) in 1814. Concerning the *Missionaries of Provence*, one can discern a credible influence of the Ignatian rule within the 1818 *Constitutions & Rules*.

⁵¹ In examining one's vocation to the clerical state, for example, the *Examines* asks "... have we had any other view in mind than to procure His glory, to win souls for Him?" Part one, "Des marques de la vocation a l'état ecclésiastique." L. Tronson, *Examens particuliers sur divers sujets, propres aux ecclésiastiques* (Lyon: Imprimerie de Brunet, 1860), 7.

Blessed, a thousand times blessed, that he, this good Father, notwithstanding my unworthiness, lavished on me all the richness of his mercy. Let me at least make up for lost time by redoubling my love for him. May all my actions, thoughts, etc., be directed to that end. What more glorious occupation than to act in everything and for everything only for God, to love him above all else, to love him all the more as one who has loved him too late. Ah! This is to begin already here below the blessed life of heaven. That is the true way to glorify him as he wants.⁵²

This harmonious co-existence is most completely realized when the disciple is totally surrendered in trusting faith to God's love for it. The principal attitude necessary to do this is that of obedience; it was Jesus' obedience to the Father's plan for him, obedience which cost everything of him and which reached its apex with his death on the cross, which established in creation that reality which is found in the eternal. The virtue of obedience was a key one in de Mazenod's spirituality of imitating Jesus in his life, to be considered later in this work.

The primary way that de Mazenod was to glorify God was through his ministry of priesthood. As a priest, Eugene regarded his priestly vocation as a call to unite himself most closely with the saving mission of Jesus.⁵³ Such a vocation called him to the heights of spiritual perfection, in accordance with his Sulpician priestly formation of the time. For Eugene, the realization of the glory of God would essentially be that his interior disposition become that of Jesus, to be realized through one's imitating him in virtue with the desired end of complete submission to the will of the Father.⁵⁴

⁵² Retreat at Aix seminary, December, 1814, second meditation, in *EO* 15.130.

⁵³ "So much to think about! I a priest, I who was for so long... stubbornly the slave of the devil, the enemy of God... now a minister of that same God, the depository of his graces, the co-adjutor of Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and men." *Ibid.*, third meditation.

⁵⁴ This interpretation was, incidentally, the one followed by Cajetan of Thienne, founder of the first society of clerics regular; it was also accepted by Bérulle and the *Oratoire de Jésus*, forerunners of the Society of Saint-Sulpice. *DS*, s.v. "Gloire de Dieu."

Through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctification of Souls

The early thoughts of a developing ecclesiology

De Mazenod's thought from 1812-1826 concerning the relationship between Jesus and the Church is difficult to ascertain. His writings before entering Saint-Sulpice offer little bearing upon the topic, and his more extensive reflections were developed after 1837 during his years as bishop of Marseille.⁵⁵ While we shall probably find much of the germ of his later ecclesiological reflections within his earlier writings, we must remember that his concepts had only begun to emerge before 1826, gradually maturing as de Mazenod came to accept the fullness of his vocation as bishop. Therefore we must hesitate before rushing to superimpose later thought onto his early history. For now, this study will consider some images of the Church as suggested by its relationship with Jesus.

Prior to 1826, we know that he read at least some works of Jacques-Bégnine Bossuet,⁵⁶ whose ecclesiological thought was very influential upon that time. De Mazenod's limited Saint-Sulpice education had little formal ecclesiology; what there was found itself influenced somewhat by Gallican thought, which de Mazenod stood against.⁵⁷ While de Mazenod was critical of some of Bossuet's thought and style,⁵⁸ we do find that two particular themes of Bossuet will appear in de Mazenod's evolving thought. the Church as a) the Body of Christ, and b) his spouse, the Church our Mother. This latter thought will be more often expressed during these earlier years by the Latin phrase *ecclesia mater*.

⁵⁵ For a more extensive treatment of the topic which includes the period of de Mazenod's episcopacy, see G. Mammana, "Eugène de Mazenod et l'Église", in *VOL* 41 (1982): 3-23 and 249-276.

⁵⁶ Bossuet (1627-1704), noted theologian whose famous "Four Articles," considered semi-Gallican, were required teaching in Saint-Sulpice during de Mazenod's seminary years; see R. Aubert, "Géographie ecclésiologique au XIX siècle," *L'Ecclésiologie au XIX siècle*, vol. 34 of *Unam Sanctam* (Paris. Cerf, 1960), 14. Prior to that, Eugene had read some of his work; see A. Rey, vol. 1, 56.

⁵⁷ One of de Mazenod's teachers was the Sulpician M. Pierre-Denis Boyer, whom de Mazenod considered to have had Gallican sympathies (see Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 351). He rarely mentions Boyer in later reflections upon his former teachers, perhaps due to his disapproval of the teacher's thought. A study of Boyer's *cursus* is given in J. Audinet, "L'enseignement de *ecclesia* à Saint-Sulpice sous le premier empire....," *L'Ecclésiologie au XIX siècle*, vol. 34 of *Unam sanctam*, 115-39.

⁵⁸ Mammana, "Eugène de Mazenod et l'Église":12.

The Church as the Body of Christ

Bossuet's image of the Body of Christ was rooted in the patristic understanding of the concept which sought to express the Church as the new body of the risen and ascended Christ. This earlier tradition had become modified through the medieval period to accentuate the hierarchical nature of the Church and her ordained office, expressing this within a modified concept as the *mystical body of Christ*; Bossuet tended to favor the earlier patristic preference for Augustine of Hippo and a few others, following a tendency of the Bérulle school. We find that de Mazenod's concept, while using the medieval term mystical body, expresses his thought in a way which includes both the senses of unity of the body with Christ as its head, as was found in the thought of Augustine of Hippo.

We find de Mazenod having written during his earlier years:

One of the things that strikes me most in religion is 'catholicity', that communion that exists among children of one same Father who receives on high the intentions they form at the same time in lands so distant, and who truly wills to give them in return a merit shared in common.⁵⁹

Sweet effects of charity among Christians, which brings it about that all the members of the mystical body of which Jesus Christ is head, *caput*, feel and participate in the sufferings as well as the victory that each members suffers or wins. If this marvelous communion is not sufficiently felt, it is because one does not reflect on its excellence, for it takes its origin in the very bosom of the divinity.⁶⁰

De Mazenod gives no detailed theological definition to this sense of *communion* and unity of the Church, sustained by the charity of its members. He does, however, define some terms for the sake of catechism classes which he conducted while at Saint-Sulpice. His prepared presentations included one concerning the Church as communion of saints for classes of children concerning Church membership and sacramental life.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Reflections on catholicity, in "Extract from a 'Miscellaneous' notebook," May 1804, in *EO* 14.7.

⁶⁰ Letter to Emmanuel Gaultier de Claubry, December 23, 1807, in *EO* 14.22.

⁶¹ His "Instruction familière sur le Symbole des apôtres," Aix 1813, as discussed in É Lamirande, "Eugène de Mazenod, catéchiste." *Ét Obl* 16 (1957): 30-5.

Christ as spouse of the Church, her Mother

The image of Church as spouse of Christ has its origin in patristic thought, influenced through Tertullian and notably Augustine of Hippo. The understanding of the Church as both spouse and mother seems to best express de Mazenod's tendency during this early period of his ministry. He does not use the terms interchangeably; rather these are two separate yet related facets of the mysterious communion between God and God's people through the Son.

Eugene, in varied styles, embraced these two senses of the Church. We have noted how he addressed it as "our Lady, the Church" upon his subdiaconate ordination, assuring the protection and loyalty of the small number of ordinands.⁶² There is similar language at the beginning of the original 1825 rule preface in which he wrote of the Church, "This beloved spouse of the Son of God at the present time hardly bears for him but monsters."⁶³ In both cases, it is clear that he is concerned with the concepts of unity among the body of believers, the assertion of hierarchical authority, and even the concept of infallibility (though this doctrine had not yet been officially declared).

To Summarize - A Loving Master Whom Eugene Would Lovingly Serve

Eugene had only a limited academic preparation for an understanding of Jesus within the Trinity, due largely to the shortened seminary preparation of the time during the post-revolutionary years. We do find, though, that his ways of perceiving Jesus included the concepts of the Mystical Body, the Church, which was also the Bride of Christ. These would find expression in his ongoing life of serving Jesus Christ in his New Body and his Beloved Spouse.

An important point to note in Eugene's perception of Jesus was that it was largely informed through his personal experience of the Son of God, inflaming him to expressions of love and gratitude. His language betrays a closeness to the Savior; such a relationship incited him to grow in his love for Jesus, and to love what He loved. Let us consider now how Eugene expressed his love for the Church through his steadfast fidelity to it.

⁶² Conference for ordination to the subdiaconate, Paris, December 23, 1809, in *EO* 14.65.

⁶³ 1825, 13.

DE MAZENOD'S LOVING FIDELITY TO THE CHURCH

Two elements of Eugene's life during this period illustrate well his devotion to the Church and her tradition; in his attitude towards the lingering effects of French Jansenism, and his long-held attitude of ultramontanism or unswerving loyalty to Roman authority.

His Gradually-Developed Stance against Jansenist Thought and Piety

In the years prior to 1812

Eugene was no stranger to the problematic influence of Jansenist piety during his time which were found among societies of France and Italy.⁶⁴ Eugene was aware of its presence from the age of eight when he attended the Aix *Collège Bourbon* for noble male children following the tradition of his paternal family. The solid Jesuit religious formation had been replaced by that of the Priests of the Christian Doctrine; Leflon wrote concerning them that, "Gallican, Jansenistic, enlightened, reformatory and liberal, these educators personified the tendencies of that day,"⁶⁵ and the young pupil could not have missed the disparaging comments of his pro-Roman, traditionally Jesuit-educated family.

Several years later in Venice, the influential P. Zinelli would allow the adolescent to be present at gatherings of Zinelli's priest-friends, during which moments Jansenism and related issues were discussed and criticized.⁶⁶ During this period, someone suggested that a book he was reading contained some Jansenist tendencies; the adolescent Eugene subsequently wrote a personal disclaimer on the leaf-page:

I firmly believe everything the Church commands me to believe, and

⁶⁴ This sixteenth-century movement which preached the impossibility for a creature to realize a good act without God's grace had been officially condemned during the eighteenth century, but left an undesirable influence in French spirituality. French Jansenism, when combined with a growing moral rigorism and spiritual austerity, had a considerable impact upon spiritual writers, religious life, seminary formation, and many cultural expressions. Jansenism and French Catholic spirituality share a common Augustinian understanding of the efficacy of God's grace, and both endorse a level of "annihilation of the self" in striving for union with God. Jansenism, however, pursued these valid theological points to an extreme.

⁶⁵ Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 55.

⁶⁶ "Journal du Fondateur," *Missions* 5 (1866):127.

I detest the Jansenistic and other errors contained in this book. I am writing this so that it may be known that, although this book is in my possession, in no way do I adhere to any maxims contrary to the constant teachings of the holy, catholic, apostolic, Roman Church, which is one and indivisible, and will so be until the end of the world.⁶⁷

The effects of the first two encounters with Jansenist thinking upon de Mazenod's developing attitude are difficult to substantiate. A more revelatory period which exposes his deeper, mature feelings about the issue began to surface some years after his October 1802 return to Aix, following the issuance of the French amnesty to French noble émigrés. Almost three years of seeking to establish himself in a country which was at once old and new had wearied him. His period of religious reawakening between 1805 and 1807 would lead him to discernment of a priestly vocation, but it also witnessed Eugene awakening to the plight of the Church in France.

One of those was the lingering effect of Jansenist thought upon Church life and devotion which was to be found among several proponents in Aix, but for Eugene was encountered through several discussions with a Jansenist-sympathizing cousin of his mother.⁶⁸ Eugene was fond of him and his discussions were apparently not acrimonious, rather, they were discussions in which he sought to respond intelligently and convincingly.⁶⁹ We find that he had read several books during this period which considered the subject in some way, and that he had kept some written reflections on it.⁷⁰ One 1806 writing considers the pro-Jansenist *Oeuvres posthumes* de Mr. l'abbé Racine (Avignon 1759) in which de Mazenod dismisses the sect's

⁶⁷ "Profession of faith, 1794-1797,» *EO* 14.1. The book mentioned is that of M. L'Abbé Fillassier, *Eraste ou l'ami de la jeunesse... Nouvelle édition* (Paris, 1776).

⁶⁸ Roze Joannis (+ 1838), cousin to his mother and administrator of her business affairs due to the absence of her husband. Pielorz (*The Spiritual Life...*, 28 and 156) considers him to have been more a tepid Roman Catholic than an outright Jansenist, but some of his correspondence suggests at least some sympathy towards the movement; see also Rey, vol. 1, 57.

⁶⁹ For instance, read his "Extract from 'Conversation avec un janséniste, sur les convulsions'" of February 17, 1808, in *EO* 14.25.

⁷⁰ Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 156 lists a few of the books which de Mazenod had in his possession during this period, bearing a handwritten date; they included, (1806) *Jansénisme dévoilé* (Avignon, 1759); (18 March 1807) *Vie de M. d'Orléans de la Motte, évêque d'Amiens*; (12 August 1808) *Lettres critiques sur différents points d'histoire et de dogma* (Turin, 1751); (27 August 1808) *Lettres de M. l'évêque de N... au sujet... "Unigenitus Dei Filius"* (Avignon, 1719).

claim to possess religious truth.⁷¹ De Mazenod in some excerpts can give an impression that the movement is little more than a nagging menace to the truth of the Roman faith, as it may have been experienced in its waning years. Nonetheless, one of the goals of his Saint-Sulpice formation was to instill in the seminarian an anti-Jansenist approach to their future ministry.⁷² It is within this area of Jansenist-influenced piety which he will particularly address during his early ministry years.

Personally and pastorally addressing the issue during 1812-1825

We find two notable elements in the spiritual life of Eugene, reinforced by his training at Saint-Sulpice, which stood in marked contrast to the Jansenist practices of the time:

a) *Frequent reception of the Eucharist while maintaining a respectful attitude.* Contrary to accepted practice of the time, de Mazenod engaged in the practice of ‘frequent’ reception of the Eucharist while at Saint Sulpice,⁷³ and encouraged others in his family to do so.⁷⁴ As he prepared for his ordination, he made the intention of celebrating daily Mass, even twice daily if the occasional opportunity presented itself.⁷⁵ Clearly, he had little inhibition towards the practice in comparison to the more popular restrained thought.

He was far from insensitive to the great gift of the sacrament, however, and realized that he should never take it for granted. With a serious attitude of one who has just taken on the duties and privilege of priesthood, he asks himself in an 1812 meditation:

Am I to receive this immaculate Lamb into my heart, a victim offering himself for me, and who in an excess of love did pay in advance and with dreadful torments for the eternal death I have so often merited, to receive him only to subject him to injuries and scorn and

⁷¹ Profession of faith from 1806, in *EO* 14.15.

⁷² Krumenacker, 569.

⁷³ The practice among seminarians was to receive the sacrament perhaps twice each week, according to J. Icard, *Traditions de la Compagnie de Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1886), 228.

⁷⁴ In a July 12, 1809 letter to his sister, he counseled her to communicate weekly: “‘The more you are in the world, the more you need help’ says the Venerable Liguori... So make it a rule to receive holy communion every eight days... with the firm resolve never to omit it...” *EO* 14.57.

⁷⁵ As noted in his 1812 revised personal rule of life, in *EO* 15.109.

think myself quit of every debt of honor, glory, love and gratitude simply because I stop short of dealing him the final blow in a fresh crucifixion?⁷⁶

b) His pastorally sensitive attitude toward the sacrament of confession. Pastoral regard for the practice of confession was particularly affected by the remnants of Jansenist piety, including such severe practices as requiring that a penitent approach the confessor more than once in order to show a firm resolve to avoid certain sins. De Mazenod obviously did not hold to this attitude during his first year of ministry, noting in an 1813 Lenten sermon that

...my brothers our menacing tone is only for the pulpit, in the sacred tribunal our language is quite different, perhaps then we are all too indulgent... the preacher of the Gospel, saddened at the sight of sinners sinking in the frightful mire of their crimes, bogged down with no desire of getting out... inspires them to do to have them return onto the way... then it is with open arms the ministers of Jesus Christ press them close to the hearts and take delight in pouring out balm on all their wounds to ease them... yes, my brothers, come, and you will see with what joy we will help you to take up your yoke that will seem to heavy only for the first few moments of your conversion, for when once you are freed from sin, light will take the place of the deep shadows that reigned in your souls, God will seem so lovable to you, he will fill your hearts with so great a consolation, he will invest you with so great a strength...⁷⁷

Disturbed by the remnants of the older severe attitudes which discouraged individuals from approaching the sacrament and begin a new forgiven life in Christ, de Mazenod initiated a study of the pastoral and parish missionary works of Alphonsus di Liguori and adopted his moral theology for the *Missionaries of Provence* ministry. This approach was not entirely appreciated by local parish clergy who judged it to be too lenient, but de Mazenod and the missionaries were resolute in their attempts to overcome the lingering Jansenist attitudes. The spread of Alphonsus' moral theology and confessional practice throughout all of France was

⁷⁶ Reflections on frequent communion, 1812, in *EO* 15.102.

⁷⁷ Colloquial instruction on confession, March 28, 1813, in *EO* 15.115.

hastened when de Mazenod's society began to include seminary formation as part of their work following 1826.

A Proven Ultramontanist

De Mazenod's attitude concerning the deleterious effects of Jansenism resonated with his persistent support of Roman ecclesiastical primacy of the Roman pontiff, or *ultramontanism*. The shambles left of both society and Church as a result of the revolution and Empire were seen by many to be a combined result of Jansenist and proponents of Gallican-primacy, constitutionalists, and philosophical writers dedicated to the Enlightenment emphasis upon reason. His Mazenod nobility heritage, the difficult life of exile, and his own impressions after having returned to France helped to convince him that the unity provided by royal throne and papal authority was necessary in order to provide a civilized order. This stance was further hardened during his years at Saint-Sulpice and his clandestine activities, such as his participation in maintaining a communications network between Pius VII and the "black cardinals."⁷⁸

Shortly after his return to Aix and the beginning of his priestly ministry there in October 1812, de Mazenod publicly corrected a canon who repeatedly addressed the imperially-appointed bishop Jauffret as "Monseigneur" of Aix, though he lacked pontifical appointment.⁷⁹ Mazenod was satisfied only upon Jauffret's replacement and the suppression of his two canon appointees in 1815, as well as the normalization of numerous other French sees following the Restoration. He expressed his feelings in a letter to a like-minded fellow priest in Rome when he encouraged papal firmness in removing the appointees:

⁷⁸ Saint-Sulpice during 1808-1810 had become a clandestine center of ultramontanism and the struggle against what was termed "Napoleonic caesaro-Papism" in spite of moderate Gallican sympathy there. The Sulpician J-L Emery, revered by de Mazenod although considered to have been a semi-Gallican for the sake of keeping alive the faith in France, enlisted the seminarian in helping to maintain a center of ultramontanist news dissemination. They also helped to maintain a communications network which included Pius VII in Savona and members of the Roman *curia*, the so-called "black cardinals" who had been stripped of their traditional red vestments and relocated to Paris. See Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 350-71.

⁷⁹ G.-J.-A.-J. Jauffret, originally bishop of Metz, nominated by Napoleon as archbishop of Aix without papal approval. The account is found in *ibid.*, 404-5.

at the risk of making a nuisance of myself [again I urge you] to put pressure upon the proper authorities to guard the Holy See from any weakness. The Holy See owes it to Christianity to make an example of all those ignorant Gallicans who, seeing the Church shackled, not only did nothing to free or console her, but even joined forces with the cruel oppressor... They need not be worried about public opinion; public opinion is on the side of justice. People are just as desirous of seeing true principles restored to their high position...⁸⁰

Eugene de Mazenod sought to be a loyal servant of the Church as one concerned for the people of God. Let us now turn to consider the 1812 pastoral situation of the Church in France, and how Eugene sought to address them in Provence.

DE MAZENOD AND THE PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE CHURCH

While the Napoleonic empire had initially been hailed as a new beginning for the Church and society of France, its periods of political instability, armed conflict and conquest, and interference in faith life practice had opened the door to the erosion of both public morality and respect for religion. Church celebration and participation in such normal human moments as birth, marriage, and death had become unnecessary, hence irrelevant for much of society. The frequency of irregular marriages and divorces, in turn, undermined the normally salutary effects of family upon the young. The attempt of the Church to counter the situation had received a blow in 1809 by renewed governmental restriction of Church rights and pastoral labors, hastened by the anti-religious attitude found in the imperial school system.⁸¹ French pastoral needs were further burdened by the existence of only fifty large dioceses which, combined with the acute shortage of priests, made the episcopal ministry very difficult. Society was largely anti-clerical and anti-religious, with many influential professionals openly hostile to it.⁸²

⁸⁰ Letter to Charles de Forbin-Janson, July 19, 1814, quoted in *ibid.*, vol. 2, 9-10.

⁸¹ J. Brugerette, *Le prêtre Français et la société contemporaine* I, vol. 1 (Paris : P. Lethielleux, 1933), 2-7.

⁸² E. Sevrin, *Les missions religieuses en France sous la Restauration*, vol. 1 (Paris: Procure des Prêtres de la Miséricorde, 1948), 22.

Constant Concerns during his Early Ministerial Life

We find that Eugene de Mazenod's initial response to his surrounding need was limited partially by the Napoleonic pastoral decrees, while also acting in further clandestine ways with a forward-looking attitude to a time when full pastoral liberty would be restored. His desire to minister among the rural and other "poor" (those neglected by ordinary Church ministry) would include three areas in particular; the renewal of parish preaching, promotion of the renewal of the priesthood, and the catechetical preparation of children and youth.⁸³ The Council of Trent had addressed a particular concern for these three elements,⁸⁴ and the traditional Sulpician focus upon Tridentine reform would have been concerned to prepare de Mazenod during his seminary training. Indeed, we find that these three items formed the primary concerns for de Mazenod's future ministry and, eventually, that of the society which he would form.

Ministry Focus upon Youth and Children

His seminary years prepared him in the essential ministry of catechesis and gave him the opportunity to exercise this service with young children, beginning in 1809. De Mazenod was conscious of the need and importance of this particular labor, and would include it within his future ministry concerns.

One of his initial ministry endeavors as a priest was to organize a "pious association of Christian youth." Similar in many ways to the revered Congregation of Youth founded by M. Allemand in eighteenth century Marseille which had been banned by Napoleon in 1809, de Mazenod nonetheless sought to create a climate in which wholesome Christian vir-

⁸³ De Mazenod's sense of "the poor" has been debated in recent years, especially following Vatican II. One should note, though, an 1813 Ash Wednesday sermon in which he intentionally addressed the Provençal-speaking farming peasants, beggars, artisans, servant staff, and others who were not reached by regular Church ministry. See "Homily Instructions..." of March 3, 1813, in *EO* 15.114; also see *DOV*, s.v. "Poor."

⁸⁴ Example citations from council sessions concerning preaching are found in the fifth session, document on reform, chapter two (*ibid.*, 26); for reform of life and conduct of clergy in the fourteenth session, decree on reform, introduction (105-106); for catechesis of children in the twenty-third session, document on reform, chapter four (196). *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: translated and introduced by Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O.P.* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1978)

tue and authentic catechesis could be taught.⁸⁵ It was necessary for them to congregate as an innocuous sodality, but the movement thrived; with the Restoration, he was free to develop it further without government restraint.

Attention to the Needs of Priestly Seminary Formation

One of the greatest pastoral challenges during the Concordat years was the acute shortage of priests. Literally thousands had been guillotined, drowned or otherwise killed during the Revolution; others had fled the country, married or for other reasons left the ministry. Virtually no new vocations had been promoted during those years to augment the ageing clerical force, and the meager government-issued stipend offered no enticement for newcomers. An appeal had been issued to all former priests and friars to return to the ministry upon declaring their repentance. A few seminaries which had been closed by the revolution had begun to reopen, such as Saint Sulpice by 1803. They would not bear really substantial fruit until after 1815, and only in 1825 would the total annual number of ordained French clergy surpass the number of annual deaths.⁸⁶ Priestly formation in the later Concordat period was normally of limited depth and scope, given the shortage of teachers and resources, hastily completed within two or sometimes three years due to the enormous pastoral need.

De Mazenod strove to live his priesthood vocation as an authentic imitator of Jesus the High Priest as promoted by the seminary of Saint-Sulpice. The priestly model of de Mazenod's time had originated with the late sixteenth-century thought of Bérulle and further shaped by 1808 through the interpretation of Condren, Olier, and Tronson. This was additionally reinforced by the examples and spiritual counsel of such renewal-minded Sulpician mentors as Jacques-André Emery (1732-1811) and Antoine de Puget Duclaux (1749-1827). Both of these men were inflamed by the desire for renewal of the priesthood; each in his own way helped to direct the flame of the Spirit which burned in the heart of the young de Mazenod.⁸⁷

Eugene's involvement with the secret society of the Saint-Sulpice "Aa"

⁸⁵ *Catholicisme*, s.v. "Allemand, Jean-Joseph."

⁸⁶ A. Latreille, *Histoire du catholicisme en France*, vol. 3 (Paris: Spes, 1962), 256.

⁸⁷ De Mazenod had an especially high regard for both Emery and Duclaux, who in turn were very influential in his priesthood formation; read Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 308-17.

(an abbreviation for the French *association anonyme*)⁸⁸ is a more concrete indicator of his commitment. This small group of elite seminarians would very discretely influence other clerical students during the day in such ways as guiding any wayward conversation into more wholesome topics, encouraging a seminarian's prayer and devotional habits, etc. Eugene was a part of this seminary association between 1809 and 1811, and as a priest formed another branch at the Aix seminary in 1813. His activity in this area, as well as his fidelity to priestly behavior following his ordination, earned for him the reputation as both reformer and a troublesome upstart.⁸⁹

De Mazenod Responds to the Need for Effective Parish Preaching

The Church in France, seeking to reverse the spiritual erosion which had seriously affected her people, recalled the ministry which had served her well in addressing such reform needs in prior centuries - the apostolate of parish missions and journeying missionary priests. The tradition which held stirring memories of Jean-Jacques Olier, Vincent de Paul, Grignon de Montfort and others was deeply rooted in the French soul, extending from the centuries of Norbert of Xanten and Dominic.⁹⁰ Indeed, Napoleon had permitted the practice from 1804 until all such missions were prohibited in 1809.⁹¹ This was reinstated upon the 1814 return of the Catholic Louis XVIII, and numerous diocesan parish mission societies emerged during the period.⁹²

De Mazenod's seminary formation at Saint-Sulpice was influenced by the missionary zeal of its founder and the tradition in which the seminary was rooted. He shared the conviction that parish mission preaching was essential to restoring the faith in France, while having to limit himself to authorized practices until the 1815 Restoration. His friend Forbin-Janson, in a summer 1814 audience with Pius VII, had received similar counsel regarding the need for parish mission activity within France; this served to offer a divine confirmation to both himself and Eugene, leading them to focus their energies within that apostolate.⁹³

⁸⁸ *DS*, s.v. "Congrégations secrètes."

⁸⁹ De Mazenod's *Aa* activity is described in Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 339-49.

⁹⁰ Sevrin, vol. 1, 4.

⁹¹ *Catholicisme*, s.v. "Missions paroissiales."

⁹² *Ibid.*, col. 420.

⁹³ Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 16. Forbin-Janson had traveled to Rome in the summer of 1814 and put himself at the Pope's disposal for a missionary effort in

Eugene de Mazenod's Way of Discipleship before 1814

De Mazenod initially discerned his vocation to be that of a diocesan priest. His vocation journey to Saint Sulpice which was affirmed through spiritual directors, his earnest struggle over those years to free himself interiorly for the life, his joy upon ordination,⁹⁴ all are positive indicators for his initial direction. Furthermore, from the vantage point of his beginning ordained ministry, Eugene's sense of personal vocation has been described as a progressive focus passing through three successive images of Jesus as *priest, apostle, and victim*.⁹⁵

As priest

The Sulpician model of priesthood, embodying the sacrificial vocation of Jesus as High Priest through assuming his earthly virtues and attitudes, also held that one's living to fullness of this vocation depended upon one's completion of all the required duties of ministerial priesthood. Drawing close to Jesus through a conscientiously and precisely correct Eucharistic celebration; recitation of all the hours of the Divine Office; personal self-examination for sin and frequent recourse to the sacrament of Penance; ongoing study and reflection upon the Word of God; these identify some of the rigorous personal obligations which one incurred in the vocation of ordained priesthood. The Sulpician image of the priesthood required that one's daily ministerial program must especially provide for meeting these in addition to any other activity. Hence, a "good" priest would be one who assiduously and consistently fulfilled the various spiritual obligations imposed upon him. This became for de Mazenod a primary and even haunting concern during his first years of ministry, through such works as Tronson's *Examens particuliers* which influenced his years of seminary formation.

China. Pius VII replied that there was currently a more pressing need for missionaries in France.

⁹⁴ December 1813 letters to his mother (*EO* 14.97) and director Duclaux (*EO* 14.98).

⁹⁵ This tripartite understanding of de Mazenod's vocation is borrowed in part from Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 278-9.

As apostle

In addition to being a good priest, we find that Eugene during his seminary years was also concerned with proclaiming and explaining the Word of God among those people who had been neglected by the existing Church pastoral structures. We note in his early years that he was joyful at being assigned as catechist to the spiritually-neglected, both children and adults;⁹⁶ a later entry in his personal journal recounts that he had intended from the start of his ministry to focus upon the needs of the poor and to catechize children.⁹⁷ His early list of resolutions noted that his priestly ministry would focus especially upon ministries to those people not normally reached.⁹⁸ Such points underscore de Mazenod's intention to be one who, as a priest, would bring the instruments of God's Good News to the farthest corners of his surroundings, following Jesus' mission to seek out the lost and the sick.⁹⁹

As sacrificial victim

This third lens through which to appreciate de Mazenod's perceived vocation is based upon the vision of ordained priesthood as imitating the sacrificial life of Christ, as completely as possible, through the priest's actions of self-denial and self-giving. True to the Sulpician inspiration of Charles de Condren and further promoted by Olier, Jesus' bodily sacrifice re-called at the altar is but one form in which the priest makes known the Lamb of God. It is also through his ongoing self-denial in every aspect of his life, as well as the vanquishment of his sins and weaknesses, that the sacrificial nature of Jesus is remembered.

Eugene was aware of this in his 1813 retreat:

I will never forget during the Sacrifice, when [*our Lord*] is on the altar, to ask with inward groaning... a love of God and his Son, my adorable Savior... lastly to be a priest according to his heart... I will persevere in the most insistent request to satisfy by martyrdom or at least by death in service to my neighbor...¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Letter to his mother, February 4, 1809, in *EO* 14.44.

⁹⁷ Journal entry, March 31, 1839, in *EO* 20.

⁹⁸ Personal resolutions of 1812 or 1813, *EO* 15.110.

⁹⁹ Usage of the term during this period continued the twelfth century understanding of the apostles' ministry being linked to ordained sacramental ministry.

¹⁰⁰ Personal *Règlement* made during December 1812 retreat, *EO* 15.109.

It is in this way that the priest most dearly approaches his beloved, to love with the depth of the Savior.

The greatest measure of this self-sacrifice is to embody the gospel passage, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13), which speaks of a more inclusive consummation including one’s physical life if necessary. We find this attitude also in Tronson’s *Examens particuliers*, in his consideration of the spirit of priesthood. One question from the Examens represents well this attitude of the influential Sulpician-editor and the work:

Have we had this participation in the spirit of Jesus, sovereign priest, that is, have we been in the disposition to sacrifice ourselves without ceasing, and to give as he did our sweat, our blood and our lives for the glory of his Father, and for the salvation of the world?¹⁰¹

Such was the love of Jesus for us, his expression of divine charity in its purest; such was the privileged call of the martyrs for the faith. Indeed, this spectacle of martyrdom would have been part of the Catholic landscape of his time, with the memory of the countless French Revolution martyrs from scarcely twenty years before, along with additional hardships of the later Napoleonic era.

Eugene intuited this, and it would shape his impending ministry. We find that de Mazenod in his seminary years reflected upon the real possibility of suffering for his faith. In a late September 1809 letter to his mother, he sought to allay her concerns regarding his vocation; while conscious of the new Napoleonic aggression and threats against the Church in France, he noted that, as a layman, he would have likely faced danger anyway in military service:

¹⁰¹ From “Examen de l’esprit ecclésiastique” in Tronson, *Examens particuliers...*, II.1, 10. The 1860 edition of this work, though published later than de Mazenod’s early years, still most likely reproduces the attitude during his time. Pielorz notes that the French School sense of a priest’s “consummation” as received by de Mazenod was essentially limited to the interior personal struggle of vanquishing the corrupt aspects of one’s human nature (*The Spiritual Life...*, 279), and this is clearly so in the writings of Bérulle and Olier. Tronson seems to offer a more inclusive challenge to his readers. De Mazenod would have been familiar with the *Examens* as a guide for his developing priestly identity (see his 1812-13 list of personal resolutions in *EO* 15.110), and with Tronson’s encouragement to foster “an ardent zeal for the Glory of God and for the salvation of souls.” (Tronson, *Examens...*, 3).

so, I ask you, what would you have to say if you saw me forced to tote the gun over my shoulder... if blows there must be, isn't it better to get them in the service of our God and for our God who did not grudge giving his life to save us...¹⁰²

De Mazenod at this time would have been keenly aware that his discipleship and loyalty to the Church may well become costly for him. Likewise, in his prepared conference for the subdiaconate ordination, he recognized the gravity of the moment. Addressing “the Church, our Mother” who found herself weak and defenseless, he presented the small group of new subdeacons who stood ready to defend her honor:

look, we are here... we came to birth but moments ago... we feel in our hearts the fulness of life... united by the bonds of the same charity, anointed by the same spirit... we will form that sacred Legion, that mystical phalanx that the world and hell cannot crush, we will march ahead carrying on high the standard of the cross, this divine sign... which will emerge always victorious... and... has the virtue of procuring the immortal palm of victory for those who fall in its defense.... [to] die, yes die if need be, to preserve you intact...¹⁰³

This sense of possible physical martyrdom blended into de Mazenod's emerging call to be consumed in his impending life of priestly ministry, taking his inspiration from the images of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and that of the Lamb of sacrifice. Among his short list of “general intentions” made during his first weeks of priesthood, de Mazenod wished “to be wholly God's and for all.”¹⁰⁴ This seems to harmonize with historical interpretations of his nature which was loathe to admit of halfway measures,¹⁰⁵ hence this passage would appear to summarize de Mazenod's overall attitude of his life as priest and follower of Jesus - that he would give himself totally to whatever he was called to do, whether in priestly duties or in seeking the good of his neighbor. He would strive to fulfill his various priestly spiritual duties completely and correctly, for example he would offer the Eucharist “with a scrupulous exactitude.” His call to at-

¹⁰² Letter of late September 1809 to his mother, in *EO* 14.60.

¹⁰³ Conference for sub-diaconate ordination day, December 23, 1809, in *EO* 14.65.

¹⁰⁴ His general resolutions of 1811, in *EO* 14.101.

¹⁰⁵ A few comments to this effect are found in his self-portrait written for his spiritual director, October 1808, in *EO* 14.30.

tend to the service of someone, whether the sick, or whoever needed his attention, he would strive to fulfill even though it may conflict with his other priestly devotional demands. In his 1814 prison ministry, he stepped in to help with additional needs of the prisoners, in place of other assistants who had fallen ill. For de Mazenod, this was all in response to the model for discipleship which Jesus the Savior had taught through his own life example, in his self-gift to the glory of the Father and the salvation of the world.

He wasn't able to do these easily, in spite of his annual modifications and re-commitment to his personal spiritual rule of life. Indeed what individual could do so? He was almost torn apart both physically and spiritually during these first years in his inability to meet all of these varied demands upon him. During his annual retreats he would castigate himself for not fulfilling them,¹⁰⁶ especially the duties associated with the priesthood, that "perfect state" portrayed in Tronson's interpretation which demanded so much in itself to be completed.

TURNING POINTS AND SHIFTING WINDS FROM 1814

Events in 1814

Eugene followed his way of priest-apostle-sacrifice through the first years of his priestly ministry. After his months as co-director of Saint-Sulpice, he returned to Aix in October, 1812 to begin his approved ministries of parish preaching, catechesis, clergy reform, and prison visits. He was very busy until contracting a grave illness between March and April of 1814, just as the world would breathe a sigh of relief at Napoleon's abdication on April 6. The Church in France would soon rejoice with the beginning of the Catholic Restoration and unrestricted ministry.

This brush with death may have been the opening of his period of reflection upon his chosen way and means to follow it. After a summer occupied with his youth society and hearing of the exploits of his friend's missionary preaching exploits, de Mazenod found himself bogged down with outside family demands and the relentless conflict between ministry

¹⁰⁶ His December 1813 retreat notes are representative of this. *EO* 15.121 and 122.

and prayer, and considered entering an enclosed order.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, though, he admitted the extreme need of his poor sinners.¹⁰⁸ De Mazenod was further saddened at the loss of a Trappist brother who had lived with him after his ordination as a servant and spiritual support, but had been recalled to his monastic community during the fall of that year.¹⁰⁹

With the departure of Maur, Eugene was now utterly alone to fulfill his self-imposed rule of life. Unfettered by Napoleonic restrictions upon the establishment of new societies, he wrote to Forbin-Janson revealing three possibilities. He had a “keen desire” to examine the rule of the reorganized group, while at the the same time noted his other two conceivable options of enclosing himself in an approved order, or retiring alone to a second family residence, there to live an unfettered regular life. He admitted, however, a strong tug at his heart to follow the missionary way of the apostles, seeking to be of service to those people in his region who were almost lost to the faith.¹¹⁰ The possibility of joining Forbin-Janson seems to have dissipated in early December with a letter from his spiritual director who discouraged him from following his friend.¹¹¹ An additional note from the Aix vicar general for priests echoed this sentiment; de Mazenod noted that this latter diocesan authority represented for him the will of God.¹¹²

Eugene entered his annual retreat during that month bearing at least some of these concerns, though the tone of his reflections would indicate that he was still seeking to recommit himself to his prayer and ministry as a sole worker in the vineyard which the Lord had apportioned to him; neither the possibility of a community-based life nor one based on enclosure makes itself known in his available journal. Worthy of note, however, is one sec-

¹⁰⁷ De Mazenod was seeking to return his father and canon-uncle to France from Palermo. He notes in mid-September 1814 that he is occupied with being the “servant of everyone,” though he sees it as probably being the will of God for him. Letter to Forbin-Janson, in *EO* 15.128.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Trappist Brother Maur (family name Pierre-Martin Bardeux), believed to have been from a dissolved local monastery, was a valet to de Mazenod between 1812 and Maur’s departure in September 1814. Eugene apparently saw him as a religious support as well; he notes in retreat resolutions between 1813-1815 that he would “oblige Maur to accuse me of my faults in the morning at oraison.” *EO* 15.122.

¹¹⁰ Letter to Forbin-Janson, October 28, 1814, in *EO* 6.2.

¹¹¹ Letter from Duclaux, December 1814, in *Rey*, vol. 1, 170 and 176.

¹¹² Letter from vicar general, reported in Eugene’s *Memoires*, Rambert, vol. 1, 164.

tion in which he reflects upon the foundations of his zeal to be a “martyr of charity,”¹¹³ recognizing that his motives for ministry had not been entirely without a self-serving interest. This is soon followed by another in which he considers the demands of the call to imitate Jesus most completely through following the way to deepest humility and detachment.¹¹⁴

Events in 1815

If Eugene received any insight into his future possibilities during that December retreat, he didn’t act upon it during the first busy months of 1815. Lent began early that year with Easter falling on March 26,¹¹⁵ accompanied by the brief uproar and dissipation of the “Hundred Days” of Napoleon’s second empire between March 1 and June 22. Indeed, Eugene gave no hint of founding a missionary society to his father in a March letter, being prepared rather to serve the French king within his ability.¹¹⁶ Likewise, a letter to his father in mid-September makes no direct mention of committing himself to a new missionary society while admitting of being very busy with the ministry to children and “other commitments,” and de Mazenod noted his inability to secure the finances necessary for his father’s return to France.¹¹⁷ This had up until now been a major concern which had impeded Eugene’s freedom for initiating some sort of community venture. It was likely between early to mid-September that he began to move beyond this consideration, however, noting in a letter dated October 28 that he had been working towards it at his own expense for nearly two months.¹¹⁸

The Beginning of an Organized Expression of Apostolic Life

It was not until October when de Mazenod indicates that has made his decision. On the second day of that month, he had purchased part of a for-

¹¹³ Retreat notes of December, 1814, in *EO* 15.130; one entry upon beginning the exercise, and a second from the third day, eighth meditation.

¹¹⁴ De Mazenod considered the Ignatian ‘three degrees of humility’ as presented by Nepveau, and committed himself to the pursuit of the most demanding one. Seventh day, twentieth meditation in *ibid*.

¹¹⁵ Easter date calculated from <http://www.assa.org.au/edm.html> (last accessed March 30, 2014.)

¹¹⁶ Letter to father, March 26, 1815, in *EO* 15.132.

¹¹⁷ Letter to father, September 15, 1815, in *EO* 15.134.

¹¹⁸ Letter to Forbin-Janson, Oct. 28, 1815, in *EO* 6.5.

mer Carmelite convent from a secular owner and he began to refer to his new project in subsequent correspondence. We now begin to note certain words and concepts used to describe the intended Society.

a) It would live “apostolically” and “poorly,”¹¹⁹ following the way and hardship of the apostles on a rule drawn from the thought of such renewal-minded founders as Ignatius of Loyola, Charles Borromeo, Philip Neri, Vincent de Paul, and Alphonsus di Liguori;¹²⁰

b) new members would need to “stifle love of comfort”;¹²¹

c) the Society would “live together in one house” under a common rule,¹²² to which the members would vow perseverance but would not be bound by religious vows;¹²³

d) echoing the Augustinian ideal, the community would have “one heart and one soul.”¹²⁴ One part of their life would be given to mission preaching, the other to that of temporary religious enclosure in which the missionaries could replenish their energies through rest, prayer, study, and perhaps some less demanding ministry such as attending to spiritual needs of youth or other people who would visit their mission center;

e) the Society would seek to restore religious fervor in the region of Provence,¹²⁵ primarily through preaching but also through reproducing the perfection “of the first disciples of the apostles”;¹²⁶ they would aim to preach the word of God without “alloy of self” but rather as men of interior life, “truly apostolic men”;¹²⁷

f) the new Society would bear at least some similarity to Forbin-Janson’s Society of the Missionaries of France, maintaining the possibility of a future union between the two.

¹¹⁹ Letter to Hilaire Aubert, October, 1815, in *EO* 6.3.

¹²⁰ Letter to Tempier, October 9, 1815, *EO* 6.4. It is interesting to note some commonly-accepted characteristics of these men. Each was a priest, and each was involved in the needs of Church renewal during his respective lifetime; also, these men as a group possessed a more positive attitude towards the human person and human nature than did the post-Bérullian spiritual family, while being zealously concerned for their spiritual needs.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Letter to father, November 8, 1815, in *EO* 13.1.

¹²⁶ Letter to Tempier, November 15, 1815, in *EO* 6.6.

¹²⁷ Letter to Tempier, December 13, 1815, in *EO* 6.7.

De Mazenod wrote to Forbin-Janson on October 28:

I dare not tell you how much I have written since being involved in this affair, which you are right in calling ours. For I certainly intend that our two enterprises be but one. However at this moment, as we begin, we must appear to have in common only the name, so as not to frighten both our superiors and the missionaries themselves who... do not want to travel or work outside the diocese or... at the most [would go] into neighboring dioceses where they speak the Provençal tongue. Explain all that to M. Rauzan.¹²⁸

g) The Society would have two patron saints; Leonard of Port Maurice (of missionary preachers) and Alphonsus Liguori (of confessors). Following his beatification, we find that Alphonsus remained a particular model for them.¹²⁹

Elements of an Apostolic Life as Proposed in the First Society Rule

The initial rule for the Society,¹³⁰ submitted by de Mazenod and his four initial missionary companions on January 25, 1816, also lists the following points of particular interest:

a) The first members were deeply moved by the almost total loss of

¹²⁸ Letter to Forbin-Janson, October 23, 1815, in EO 6.5. Jean-Baptiste Rauzan (1757-1847) was the founder and superior of the *Missionnaires de France*. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate a copy of their 1816-era rule; de Mazenod had requested a copy from Forbin-Janson, who sent him one. The *Missionnaires de Provence* 1818 rule includes a lengthy section on mission preaching which is believed to have been influenced by that of Rauzan's society (see G. Cosentino, *Histoire des nos Règles*, vol. 1, 177).

¹²⁹ Alphonsus was especially esteemed by the early Society, and indeed by de Mazenod since before 1816. Eugene wrote in a May 1, 1816 letter to his father that he was seeking a current copy of the Redemptorist constitutions and other documents pertaining to certain venerated Redemptorist priests; also that he had "extensively" studied Alphonsus' works (notably his moral theology) and intended to walk in his steps and imitate his virtues (EO 13.3. See also Pielorz, "Le rôle du fondateur dans la publication de la première biographie française de S. Alphonse de Liguori" in *Ét Obl* 18 (1959):163-80; (author unknown) "S. Alphonse de Liguori et Eugène de Mazenod modèles de vie apostolique", in *Missions* 14 (June 1876):203-12. Concerning de Mazenod and his promotion of Alphonsian moral theology over the Jansenist tendencies, see Pielorz, "Rapports avec les curés d'Aix", in *Ét Obl* 19 (1960): 339-40; E. Lamirande, "Mgr de Mazenod et la morale de S. Alphonse", in *Ét Obl* 16 (1957):287-8.

¹³⁰ The first *règlement* or brief Rule is published in *Missions* 52 (1914):61-3; also in EO 14.

faith in the Provençal countryside, and were convinced that conducting parish missions would be the only means to remedy this;

b) they wished to consecrate themselves to this demanding ministry through an intention of perseverance in the society until death, following a particular rule of life;

c) they were desirous of being “useful to the diocese” while at the same time working at their own sanctification in conformity with their vocation through prayer, meditating upon the sacred truths, practicing the virtues of religion, studying Sacred Scripture, the holy Fathers, dogmatic and moral theology, in preaching, and in the direction of youth.¹³¹

We find that religious vows as such are not mentioned in this short rule, however they would seek to live as if actually bound by them. A second interesting point is that the direction of youth appears as a secondary aim in this initial rule, a ministry which they could fulfill while at home between mission assignments.

The 1818 rule of the Society was the eventual amplification of the original one. Eugene completed the first “Constitutions and Rules of the Society of the Missionaries of Provence” during August and September 1818 to accommodate the expansion of the Society into the diocese of Digne, a considerable distance from Provence.¹³² It adopted the vows of chastity, obedience, and perseverance which were absent in the foundational document. It was for the most part composed by de Mazenod from a collection of other rules, borrowing principally from those of Alphonsus di Liguori, Ignatius of Loyola, Philip Neri, the Sulpicians, *and other influential sources*.¹³³ The resulting rule was largely a combination of either partial quotations or summaries from other rules and written works. However, de Mazenod’s particular way of identifying the diverse elements of the resulting rule and capturing the overall charism and spirit of his Society through his redaction produced an effective channel for the Holy Spirit to meet the contemporary needs of the Church.

¹³¹ *Missions* 52 (1914):61-2.

¹³² De Mazenod most likely completed a text which had been begun some time earlier. See Pielorz, “Le séjour du Fondateur à St. Laurent et la rédaction de nos règles,” *Missions* 84 (1957):297-322.

¹³³ The various influential sources are discussed in Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 71-205.

The Apostolic Ends of the Society in the 1818 and 1825 Statutes

The differences between the apostolic ends of the 1818 and 1825 versions are minor. There were a few changes made to the Latin translation of the 1825 French document, sometimes resulting in a difference in precision; any significant changes will be noted below. Also, each end of the institute is taken from the 1825 version, describing any significant change from the 1818 rule.

The principal ends of the early Society reflect their concern for apostolic ministry. “Preaching the Word of God to the people” - this was the first end of the Society, “to form an association of secular priests living together and seeking to imitate the virtues and example of our Savior Jesus Christ, principally by devoting themselves to the preaching of the word of God to the poor.”¹³⁴ In consultation and agreement with the local bishop, they would principally address the needs of the poor rural and spiritually deprived village dwellers (art.2) through exercise of missions, retreats, teaching of catechism or other spiritual exercises. They would also practice the imitation of the virtues and example of Jesus Christ (to be considered in the second part of this work).

They desired “...to make up for, insofar as possible, the marvelous institutions that have disappeared since the French Revolution...” - seeking to supplement the blessings which were lost along with the religious orders in France, namely their piety and fervor, virtues, and their regular life (life guided by a holy rule, or *regula*). The Society would observe various practices normally associated with them with a further aim to giving such religious witness in their ministry among youth.¹³⁵

Reform of the clergy was a major concern; “... the missionaries will neglect nothing to make up for the evil perpetrated and which continues to be perpetrated by evil priests who ravage the Church by their avarice, their impurity, and their sacrileges.”¹³⁶ Though becoming a secondary end in the 1825 rule, it nevertheless remained a most important one of the institute which would require as much zeal and perseverance as for the principal end.¹³⁷ It is interesting here that the means of doing so makes

¹³⁴ Part 1, ch.1, sec.1, art.1. 1825, 18; 1818, 13. See also Y. Beaudoin, *DOV*, s.v. “Ends of the Congregation.”

¹³⁵ Art. 3-5, 1825, 19; 1818, 13-14.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, art. 6.

¹³⁷ 1818, 14.

no direct reference to an image of Jesus the High Priest, characteristic of Bérulle and his later disciples; rather, “insofar as they can”,¹³⁸ they will begin to do battle with present reform needs through their prayers, their advice, and their good example.¹³⁹ They will also offer retreats to local priests, and the mission residences will always be available to those priests seeking spiritual renewal. Finally, the 1826 pontifically approved rule would include an additional secondary responsibility for the missionaries which was requested at the time of their petition - that they would accept the direction of seminaries.¹⁴⁰

In the 1818 rule, this section is followed by de Mazenod’s passionate appeal for reformed priests. The Society members would exemplify this through developing the virtues to counter the vices found in the clergy, their “excessively carefree manner, avarice, and corruption.” They would “...be priests who are zealous, disinterested and solidly virtuous...” who were to “employ, in a word, the same means which our Savior employed when he wanted to convert the world...”¹⁴¹ and follow in the footsteps of Jesus as did the first apostles. The preface to the 1825 rule emphasizes this appeal.¹⁴²

“Other External Works” of the Society

In addition to the chief emphases of the Society, a section on other external works gives a more pointed plan for the call to replace the absent religious orders and to reform the clergy, calling for the members to be attentive to personal example through word and exercise of “every sort of virtue and... that none of them must be foreign to us.”¹⁴³

a) Preaching, beyond mission preaching, was to be done in a way which did not emphasize “the elegance of style over the solidity of doctrine”; it was essential to preach, as the Apostle, Jesus Christ and him crucified, “... not with pretentious speech, but in their demonstration of the

¹³⁸ Art. 6, 1825, 19-20; art. 2, 1818, 15. The 1818 rule notes that they would only be able to do so indirectly, due to the relatively young age of the Society members.

¹³⁹ Art. 7, 1825, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Y. Beaudoin, *Le grand séminaire de Marseille (et scholasticat oblat) sous la direction des Oblats de Marie Immaculée (1827-1862)*, vol. 21 of *Archives de Histoire Oblate* (Ottawa : Éditions des Études oblates, 1966), 21.

¹⁴¹ 1818, 17

¹⁴² 1825, 13-7; 1818, 15-9.

¹⁴³ Part I, ch. 3, sec.1, art.1. 1825, 32; 1818, 35.

Spirit...”¹⁴⁴ This way of preaching was particularly suited to the needs of the people to whom de Mazenod and the Society directed their missionary efforts. It was typically intended to evoke repentance and conversion through sacramental confession, regarded as a specially graced moment to reap the fruits of their preaching.¹⁴⁵

b) The direction of youth, to be considered as another essential duty of the institute, would be a focus of each mission house through establishing local youth societies.¹⁴⁶ Each one would use, with few changes, the statutes which had guided the Christian youth of Aix beginning in 1813.¹⁴⁷ Both the 1818 and 1825 rules give this work a higher priority than the initial 1816 one.

c) The Society was to remember the spiritual needs of prisoners, among the most spiritually neglected souls, endeavoring to bring them the sacraments of confession and Eucharist as well as accompanying the condemned through their final moments of life.¹⁴⁸

d) Members would attend to the spiritual needs of the dying. They would also accompany them through their sickness and final struggle, offering them the sacraments more freely than the prevailing pastoral custom of restraint and conservatism.¹⁴⁹

e) Reciting the Divine Office together in public was meant to be more than a simple spiritual exercise; it was rather part of their apostolic work intended to supplant the regular prayer of the displaced religious orders which had disappeared due to the revolution.¹⁵⁰

f) Retreats and catechetical instructions would be offered through public exercises within the chapels and facilities of each mission house, an additional means to rekindle and nurture the faith among the people.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ *‘non in sublimitate sermonis, sed in ostensione spiritus...’* Part 1, ch. 3, sec. 1, art. 3-5, 1825, 32-3; 1818, 35-6.

¹⁴⁵ Part 1, ch. 3, sec.2, art.1, 1825, 36; 1818, 36-7.

¹⁴⁶ Part 1, ch. 3, sec.3, art.1, 1825, 39; 1818, 39.

¹⁴⁷ From a rule for the youth sodality *Association de la jeunesse chrétienne*, beginning in 1813; in *DM*, (Oblate General Archives: Rome),VIII-2a. This rule is believed to have some similarities with the 1818 missionary rule.

¹⁴⁸ Part 1, ch. 3, sec. 4, 1825, 39-40; 1818, 39-40. The Society practice to accompany condemned prisoners to their death was contrary to the wider Church pastoral practice.

¹⁴⁹ Part 1, ch. 3, sec. 5, 1825, 40-1; 1818, 40-1.

¹⁵⁰ Part 1, ch. 3, sec. 6, 1825, 41-2; 1818, 41-2.

¹⁵¹ Part 1, ch. 3, sec. 7, 1825, 43-4; 1818, 42-3.

Chapter Two

JESUS BEFORE THE FATHER: DE MAZENOD'S LOVE FOR GOD IN PRAYER

We have read how Eugene de Mazenod's love and gratitude for Jesus' intervention in his life led him to place the Savior at its center. His Sulpician formation led Eugene to further express that love through seeking to unite his adoration of the Father with Jesus, principally through a life in imitation of Jesus in his high priesthood before the Father. De Mazenod's way of doing this was in his life of regular devotion and adoration, through his practices of prayer and meditation, with the goal of making his entire life an act of worship pleasing to God.

The first part of this chapter examines de Mazenod's vocation to priesthood and the special attention it demanded as a way of spiritual perfection. The second section explores the place and principal areas of his devotional life which served to animate and support his overall growth in love for God through loving Jesus. The third considers his more specific expressions of adoration (his "duties of piety") which were primarily centered about the sacrament of Eucharist, and other supportive practices.

DE MAZENOD AND THE PRIESTHOOD

His Vocation to Imitate Jesus

Eugene's vocation to priesthood was the special way through which he would become configured to Jesus' state as High Priest.¹ Realizing

¹ A. Taché, *La vie spirituelle d'Eugène de Mazenod...*, 64-84 offers a good summary of de Mazenod's sense of priesthood and its inherent call to perfection, as well as considering his associated duties of piety. See also *DOV*, s.v. "Priesthood."

such an all-consuming “state of perfection” which the vocation demanded of him might only hope to be realized through his loving devotion to Jesus, the assistance of the Holy Spirit and a spirit of piety. Eugene’s compassion and love for God and others would subsequently tend toward replicating ever more fully Jesus’ own divine selfless love.

He recognized that his vocation to share in the priesthood of Jesus was a great gift to him, as he recalled in a letter following his ordination.

I am writing this on my knees, prostrate, overwhelmed, stunned, to share with you what the Lord, in his immense, incomprehensible mercy, has just accomplished in me. I am a priest of Jesus Christ... Yes, it is I, it really is I, the wretched sinner whose turpitude you are familiar with... The thought uppermost in my mind and that I get quite lost in is this: so this is how my God in his goodness avenges himself for all my acts of ingratitude, by doing so much for me that, God though he may be, he can do no more.²

Eugene’s gratitude to God for lavishing this gift upon him aided to form in him a firm intention to live this vocation worthily and wholeheartedly.

His specific identity with Jesus as High Priest was firmly and intensively established during his formation at Saint-Sulpice. It received an additional element following the 1816 foundation of the missionary society and the adoption of St. Alphonsus as a co-protector.

I wish you to change the end of our litanies; instead of saying *Jesus sacerdos* we must say *Christe salvator*. That is the aspect under which we ought to contemplate our divine Master. Our particular vocation is such that we are associated in a special manner with the redemption of men; the Blessed Liguori has likewise put his Congregation under the protection of the Savior. Would that we all endeavor, by the sacrifice of our entire being, not to render his redemption useless, both in regard to ourselves and in regard to those whom we are called upon to evangelize.³

While not abandoning his responsibilities of priestly prayer and ministry, nor the sense of self-gift to God in response to the Father’s plan, de

² Letter to Duclaux, December 21, 1811, in *EO* 14.98.

³ Letter to the Aix missionaries, July, 1816, in *EO* 6.12.

Mazenod's sense of priesthood seems to have veered slightly from the more rigorous priestly tones of the Sulpician school. The priestly identity of the Society would now accommodate the identity of Christ the Savior. Rather than confining itself to protecting the sacred vocation from outside distractions, evident in Eugene's earlier writing, the Society embraced a view which was more explicitly in the context of ministry and service to others.

A Vocation to Priestly "Perfection"

Following his ordination, de Mazenod was continually aware of the dignity accorded his vocation by way of his Sulpician formation, and he was committed to fully be a re-creation of his Savior-High Priest.

I will try with God's help to renew myself in the spirit of the priesthood, and my first step will be to impress upon myself that the priesthood is a state of perfection, which demands of those who have the happiness to be invested with it a scrupulous fidelity to the least movements of the Holy Spirit, an extreme horror of sin, however venial it may appear, great purity of heart and intention, in everything seeking God alone, his glory, the salvation of souls and our progress in the ways of perfection.⁴

His sense of "perfection," bearing the nuance of being complete found in the Latin word *perfectus*, expressed the Sulpician intent that the priest be totally identified with Christ, the High Priest and Victim who gave himself completely for the salvation of the world through his faithfulness to the Father's divine plan. Indeed, we have noted earlier that Eugene envisioned his own vocation as a modified expression of this, as "priest-apostle-victim." His re-production of Jesus' total donation to the Father would be expressed in his completion of the priestly responsibilities and through a gradually transformed life of moral virtue.

The Importance of Piety in de Mazenod's Priestly Life

Eugene wrote at several points during his first ministry years about his need for piety in order to fulfill his priestly role.

...I must really grasp the sublimity of my ministry and of the holiness

⁴ Resolutions as director of Saint-Sulpice, January, 1812, in *EO* 15.103.

it requires of me, and that I be really convinced that it is piety alone, and the most extensive piety that can help me to reach my end. Without piety all will be sterile in me; piety on the contrary will give life to all my actions, will fertilize everything: *Pietas... ad omnia utilis est* (1 Tm 4:8)... And St. Paul also said when he wrote to Timothy: *Exerce autem te ipsum ad pietatem* (1 Tm 4:7), persuaded that a pious minister fulfills all his other duties with exactitude.⁵

His understanding of the French word *piété* had been shaped by the preceding centuries as well as by more contemporary spiritual currents. Pielorz notes that de Mazenod's understanding, rather than resembling the scholastic virtue of piety which leads us to respect parents and others superior to oneself, more closely resembled the sense of what is called the "gift of piety." This quality helps to transform one's worship of God from the cold and impersonal source of all creation into one which is filial, beholding and honoring God as a son would do toward his father.⁶ One's religious exercises also tend to become less a burdensome obligation to fulfill than a loving response to one's heavenly Father. The gift of piety, coupled with a deep loving regard for Jesus, assisted in fulfilling one's obligations faithfully and completely.⁷

Coupled with this, however, was de Mazenod's anxious regard for the obligation to fulfill his specific duties of piety associated with the priestly vocation, considered later in this chapter.⁸ This entailed for Eugene the necessity of a rule of life to sustain him in meeting these obligations, to bind him to regular practices which exteriorly expressed his inner attitudes toward God. Its importance for him and for his future Society is more fully considered in the following chapter. De Mazenod tended to measure his degree of piety by his faithfulness in completing these duties. He saw the cultivation of piety as a principal need for other priests, one result be-

⁵ Retreat of December, 1812, in *EO* 15.109. In an earlier retreat moment during August of that year, de Mazenod had also intended to examine his life of piety; "... to meditate profoundly on God's law and all the obligations my vocation imposes, and by frequent self-scrutiny examine every aspect of my conduct, past and present, to see how far I have wandered from the duties that are mine to fulfill." Retreat at Issy, in *EO* 15.106.

⁶ Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 232.

⁷ J. Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1999), 293.

⁸ Eugene lists a set of these as *oraison* (meditation), the Mass, divine office, spiritual reading and other practices (*EO* 15.103), examined elsewhere in this chapter.

ing his establishment of a “pious association” at the Aix seminary which encouraged its growth among seminarians.⁹

LOVING UNION WITH JESUS THROUGH A LIFE OF DEVOTIONS

De Mazenod’s quest to unite his adoration to that of Jesus could only hope to be realized through a union in love with the Savior. He fostered this love through a prayerful devotion to the person of Jesus as revealed in the gospels, and in his study and imitation of other sainted figures who had realized this loving and faithful attitude in their own lives. Let us begin by considering the concept of devotion, and its related observance of following various individual “devotions” which aid in one’s Christian discipleship.

Devotion versus “Devotions”

We should first try to be clear as to what Eugene meant by the word “devotion” (from the Latin *devotio*, signifying a total dedication). It can take one of three principal meanings within a religious context, each finding its place in his spiritual life.¹⁰

First, the scholastic meaning of devotion signifies the promptness or readiness of the will in the service of God.¹¹ One’s will is more completely offered to God through devotion, thereby rendering a fuller worship. Eugene de Mazenod was certainly concerned with directing his entire person to the service and worship of God. This understanding of devotion aptly describes his life mission, seeking to be united with Jesus in love before the Father and in ministry to others. His pre-ordination retreat notes reflect this desire:

I pray that I may profit from the grace I am privileged to receive, and use it to purify my soul and rid my heart completely of creatures, so that the Holy Spirit, when it no longer encounters obstacles to its divine operations, may come to rest on me in all its fullness, filling everything within me with the love of J.C. my Savior... in such a way that I live and breathe no longer but in him, consume myself in his love, serving him and spreading the news of how lovable he is

⁹ Letter to Forbin-Janson of May 12, 1813, in *EO* 15.119.

¹⁰ *NCE*, s.v. “Devotions, religious.”

¹¹ *Summa theologica*, 2a-2ae, q. 82.1.

and how foolish men are to seek elsewhere their hearts' resting place when they can never find it but in him alone.¹²

His life project of seeking detachment from creatures and sense distractions was intended to help him develop a heart for God alone, following the example of Jesus and united to him through love.

A second sense of devotion can refer to personal sentiment, such as feelings of love or fervor resulting from some religious activity. Examples of this understanding of devotion are also readily found in de Mazenod's writings.¹³

Third, devotion can be used in the sense of centering one's attention upon a person, object, activity, etc., with the desire to stimulate one's worship of God or its related sentiment. De Mazenod would later see the importance of these external expressions of devotion within his apostolate of reforming the faith in France, noting the deplorable condition of the clergy in the 1818 rule of the Society.¹⁴ The 1825 rule preface restates the urgent need of the members to rekindle the faith:

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..... priests... who would labor with all the resources at their command to convert others...¹⁵

The early Missionaries observed a large number of prayers and devotions as part of their normal religious life.¹⁶ The various devotional practices for Society members are more dispersed throughout the rule sections; the complete list is quite long, and many of them are found in the text of the Redemptorist constitutions. They fall into four principal categories

¹² Retreat notes of December 1811, in *EO* 14.95.

¹³ He notes in his 1812 personal rule concerning the Mass, for example, "...I will have for the holy Sacrifice the most tender devotion..." *EO* 15.109.

¹⁴ De Mazenod gave one principal reason as "the laziness, the indifference, the corruption of priests", *1818*, part 1, ch. 1, sec. 3, 16; see also *1825*, 13-14.

¹⁵ *1825* preface, 13e-14e.

¹⁶ A very useful reference work for the development of various devotional and prayer practices for de Mazenod and the Society is G. Cosentino, *Exercices de piété de l'Oblat*, vol. 19 of *Archives d'Histoire Oblate* (Ottawa: Éditions des Études Oblates, 1962).

which especially grounded de Mazenod in his spiritual quest to imitate and ultimately become as Jesus in his apostolic life; his devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Eucharist, Mary, and a collection of saints.¹⁷

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Eugene de Mazenod's spirituality found its incarnational aspect with his focus upon the human person and attributes of Jesus; his focus upon Jesus may be perhaps best understood through Eugene's devotion to the Sacred Heart.¹⁸ This particular devotion, until recent decades thought to have originated in the tenth or eleventh century, actually had its deepest roots within the scriptural and traditional perception of the heart as being the seat of human dispositions. It enjoyed a particular zeal in France with the reported revelations to Mary Margaret Alacoque in 1675. The fact that Marseilles was also a principal area where the devotion flourished should indicate something of the particular fervor that it must have enjoyed in the surrounding region through the early nineteenth century.¹⁹

Devotion to Jesus' Sacred Heart, while recalling Jesus' physical self which suffered his passion and death, was not limited to a special regard for the physical heart; its veneration pointed to Jesus' threefold redemptive love - his human love, his sensible and spiritual love resulting from infused charity, and his divine love as the Word Incarnate. Judged in later years to be "the most excellent form of devotion" by Leo XIII,²⁰ devotion to the Sacred Heart contained a focus upon the total love found in the per-

¹⁷ These areas are mentioned in Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life*...., 232-236.

¹⁸ There is no shortage of literature written about this devotion before the Second Vatican Council. Some useful works of varying length which treat of its history and theology include: *NCE*, s.v. "Sacred Heart (devotion to);" *Catholicisme*, s.v. "Sacré-Coeur (dévotion);" *DS II*, s.v. "Coeur (Sacré);" A. Hamon, *Histoire de la dévotion au Sacré Coeur de Jésus*, 4 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1922-28); J.-V. Bainvel, *La dévotion au Sacré Coeur de Jésus: doctrine, histoire* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1919); L. Garriguet, *Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1919).

¹⁹ Devotion to Marguerite Marie Alacoque (1648-1690) and her revelations sprang from the convent of Paray-le-Monial. In 1720, the bishop of Marseilles, Mgr. De Belsunce, consecrated the city to the Sacred Heart to implore deliverance from a pestilence. One of his later vicars general and a strong proponent of the devotion was the canon Charles Auguste André de Mazenod, great uncle of Eugene who lived with him for a time as an émigré.

²⁰ Pope Leo XIII, May 25, 1899, *Annum sacrum* (encyclical letter on consecration to the Sacred Heart), n. 2.

son of Jesus, his self-giving love which endured suffering and the cross, the only love worthy of imitation. De Mazenod's devotion to the Sacred Heart would have been for him a principal direction to grow in his love for Jesus, and a key reference point from which to understand his interior spiritual program through 1826.

De Mazenod had been an adherent of the devotion from the time of his adolescence in Venice, as his rule of life reveals.

I will unite my feeble adorations to those of the saintly Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, the Angels and the Saints... assist me in all my actions, be my advocates before God and the Heart of Jesus... before leaving my chamber... I will take, then some of the blessed water and I will respectfully kiss my crucifix, at the place of the wound of the Heart...²¹

During his later sojourn in Naples, Zinelli counseled Eugene to hold fast to his devotion.²²

After his return to France, de Mazenod had a part in establishing a confraternity dedicated to the Sacred Heart in Marseilles, the first established there following the Revolution, and he maintained a relationship with some of its members. Two of his notable confessors of the period, the two priests Denys and Magy, were also proponents of the devotion.²³ Still a layman, de Mazenod was instrumental for establishing in Aix the monthly First Friday observance.²⁴

The main focus of Sulpician religious practice was upon the Eucharist, and de Mazenod's years at Saint-Sulpice give little direct mention of his Sacred Heart devotion. Even here, though, one notices an echo of devotion to Jesus' Heart through the Sulpician focus upon reproducing his

²¹ For more information regarding de Mazenod's devotion to the Sacred Heart, see M. Bernad, "Mgr de Mazenod : sa dévotion au Sacré Coeur de Jésus", in *Missions* 62 (1928):13-23; E. Baffie, *Bishop de Mazenod: his inner life and virtue* (London: R. and T. Washbourn, 1909), 132-43.

²² Zinelli wrote him during this period, "Remember always the devotion to the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ... I recommend it to you without ceasing, to the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ; and I have felt a great consolation in seeing how much you honor Him." Bernad, "Mgr de Mazenod..." 15.

²³ *Ibid.*, 16-7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

interiority, or the seat of his interior dispositions.²⁵ Eugene's devotion to the Sacred Heart could only have been reinforced through his Eucharistic devotions practiced at Saint-Sulpice, and his seminary rule notes several observances consonant with the devotion. One should also note that devotion to the Sacred Heart was modeled in the life and writings of certain saintly individuals who influenced Eugene's spiritual life during these years, particularly those of Aloysius Gonzaga and Alphonsus Rodriguez.

There is little concrete mention of Eugene's relationship with any Sacred Heart confraternities during his first years of ministry, though in Aix he would have found himself in the company of other devotees whom he had known before entering the seminary. The reader should keep in mind that Napoleon's suppression of what he deemed "unnecessary" Catholic pastoral practices may also have affected the public observances. The devotion was still a concern for de Mazenod, however; the seminary pious association which he established for the Aix seminarians in 1813 maintained a particular devotion to the Sacred Heart. He established in 1814 a confraternity in Aix which included Tempier, soon to become one of the first Missionaries of Provence, and de Mazenod was a regular presider of its various public observances.²⁶ In 1818, when the Missionaries were called to form their second establishment at the shrine of *Notre Dame du Laus*, they immediately establishing the devotion there.

To summarize, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was a longstanding one in the life of Eugene de Mazenod prior to 1826. Its focus upon growth in love for Jesus in response to Jesus' own love for him resonated with the goal of his entire spiritual program; its effect can be observed within Eugene's spiritual life from his time as a layman into that of his priesthood. His devotion to the Eucharist and to Mary, which we shall now examine, were not totally separate from this principal one.

Eugene's Devotion to the Eucharist

De Mazenod's relationship with Jesus and its importance have been discussed earlier in this work. His early piety as an adolescent and his later reawakening to God's love for him before 1808 found a special outlet in

²⁵ The terms *intérieur de Jésus* and *coeur de Jésus* were virtually interchangeable during the seventeenth century; see Garriguet, *Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus*, 87.

²⁶ Baffie, 136-8; see also Bernad, 19.

the Eucharistic atmosphere of Saint-Sulpice.²⁷ More than a simple affective expression, de Mazenod showed a deep loving respect and reverence for the Eucharistic mystery which was apparent in his time spent in prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, his regard for celebrating the Mass, and other related practices. His appreciation for the Eucharist would ultimately find its place in his regard for the later missionary society and its ministry, two aspects which recur in his thoughts concerning his love for God and love for God through love for others.²⁸

“Jesus present in the Eucharist” was probably the strongest theme which influenced Eugene in his devotion to the sacrament. His reverence for the Incarnate Word and the various mysteries of Jesus present within the sacrament resonated with the Sulpician tradition. This devotion found its principal expressions in the central place of the Eucharist within de Mazenod’s various acts of adoration, as we shall soon find.

Devotion to Mary for de Mazenod and the early Society

Mary in Eugene’s young spiritual life

The importance of the Blessed Virgin within the de Mazenod’s spiritual life has been explored over the years in numerous works.²⁹ Eugene possessed both a theological sensitivity to her place within the divine plan of salvation and her relevance to the pastoral need of his time, both of which reinforced his emerging sense of apostolic life. Let us first briefly examine Mary’s role within de Mazenod’s overall spiritual development through 1826, then we will consider some of his theological appreciation for her.

²⁷ The *Pietas seminarii* instructed the seminarians that “...the principal devotion will be that of consecrating oneself to the most holy sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. In him, not only will one venerate the most Holy Trinity, source of all goodness, and Christ who is hidden there...but one will keep alive this same Lord who communicates to us his very life.” Olier, *Introduction.../Pietas seminarii*, no.2, 164.

²⁸ A number of articles have been written which consider de Mazenod’s regard for the Eucharist during this 1812-1826 period of interest and his more mature understanding in later years. See F. Ciardi, “The Eucharist in the Life and Thoughts of Eugene de Mazenod,” *VOL* 38 (1979): 201-231 (originally in Italian as “L’Eucaristia nella vita e nel pensiero di Eugenio de Mazenod”, in *Claretianum* 19 (1979): 259-289); idem., “Eucharist”, in *DOV*, 291-7; Baffie, 99-131.

²⁹ For additional reading of Mary within the spiritual life of de Mazenod and the missionary society, see Y. Beaudoin, “Mary,” *DOV*, 528-552; in his spiritual life before 1812, see Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 233-5.

Eugene's earliest childhood offers us little information concerning his first devotion to Mary. It is generally accepted that he received a generally positive example through his family, though there is little to support this by way of written accounts.³⁰ His 1794-1797 sojourn in Venice provided him with a personal rule which helped to instill and regulate his life of piety, holding him to a daily recitation of the rosary and the Office of the Blessed Virgin. In addition, Eugene sought to unite his acts of adoration with those of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He would also seek Mary's assistance in his daily actions in imitation of Jesus himself who, as a child, had depended upon her for his needs.³¹

Writings from his early adulthood until 1808 offer virtually nothing concerning his ongoing Marian piety and relationship with her. Following his 1802 return to France, some early biographers have noted that he had a special affinity for praying at the altar of Our Lady of Grace in the Church of the Madeleine, and the chapel of Notre-Dame de la Seds.³²

His influential years at Saint-Sulpice

De Mazenod's years at Saint-Sulpice offered him the environment which helped to deepen his appreciation for Mary within a deeper theological context, as well as to strengthen his piety. Sulpician piety underscored the intimate connection between Son and Mother; one's filial love and respect for the mother further expressed one's love, honor, and adoration of Jesus. Eugene likewise appreciated the special relationship between mother and Son which offered a way to approach Jesus through her.³³ This influenced Eugene not only in his own interior life, but would eventually serve within the pastoral sphere as well.

The seminary placed a special emphasis upon devotion to Mary within Saint-Sulpice as the inspiration for the institute and as intercessor for clergy. This was evident in many visible ways, including her statue at the seminary entrance which held the Christ Child in her lap, the main altar of the adjoining church of Saint-Sulpice which had been dedicated to her, a

³⁰ His mother's favorite prayer was the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and his father apparently had at least a nominal devotion to her. *DOV*, s.v. "Mary."

³¹ Rey, *Histoire...* vol. 1, 26.

³² A. Estève, *Articles produits par la postulation de la cause du Serviteur de Dieu C.-J.-Eugène de Mazenod*, 1926, 22; from *NCE*, s.v. "Mary."

³³ Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 233-5.

Marian image or initials found above the room of every seminarian, and her invocation before and after each exercise.³⁴

In addition to daily visits to Jesus in the Eucharist while at Saint-Sulpice, de Mazenod made additional devotional visits to Mary and St. Joseph. This practice illustrated the Sulpician regard for Mary's special place as mother of Jesus; indeed, her maternal proximity to her Son was such that one praying might almost instinctively be led to visit the one after spending a few moments with the other. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary were more popularly promoted through the works of St. Alphonsus Liguori, and would eventually become part of the Missionaries' rule.³⁵

So much of the Sulpician atmosphere served to reinforce Eugene's identification of Mary in her relationship to the Son and in her importance for priests, and his devotional life certainly included a filial love for her. It is generally accepted, however, that de Mazenod held no extraordinary devotion at this time to her Immaculate Conception beyond the expected attitudes of acceptance and devotion.³⁶

Mary during the first years of ministry, 1812-1816

Following his ordination and eventual return to Aix, de Mazenod's rule of life does not reveal any special devotion to the Blessed Mother beyond reciting a daily rosary as part of an overall program directed toward fulfilling his priestly responsibilities.³⁷ Nor does his more elaborated rule of four months later offer any mention of a particular devotion to her. This later rule does reflect, however, his great desire to grow in his love for Jesus, and one could easily draw the conclusion that de Mazenod's daily rosary, with its various sacred mysteries, would have readily fit into this overall plan.

We do find that Mary enjoyed a significant role in his 1813 formation of the *Christian Association of the Youth of Aix (Association chrétienne*

³⁴ "While they adhere closely to the Christ child, the aspirants of this Society will honor by a special cult his most Holy Mother, Mary and the blessed Joseph. [The aspirants] will abandon themselves fully and with trust to their custodial protection, and... they will pass their life in all security..." Olier, *Introduction.../Pietas seminarii*, X, 171. Also, read Icard, 264-6.

³⁵ Cosentino, *Exercices de Piété...*, 112; Icard, 38 & 259-60.

³⁶ Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 233-4.

³⁷ Rule of August-September 1812, in *EO* 15.107.

des jeunes d'Aix).³⁸ An 1816 copy of their regulation considers their devotion to Mary:

They will call in aid to that end all the desire the Most Holy Virgin has of cooperating in their salvation... From the moment they entered the congregation, they took this holy Mother of God as their advocate and patron... It is in her that a congregationist must place all his trust...³⁹

Their weekly rosary was to be recited three times during the course of a week. It was their special and “easy” way to honor their patroness, through whom the members would ask everything that they desired from God.⁴⁰

Mary in the early years of the Society

The first Society rule makes no mention of any special Marian devotion or her promotion, but both the 1818 and 1826 rules indicate her importance to both the members’ interior lives and their pastoral efforts. Missionaries would appeal to Mary while journeying to their assigned parish mission, praying for her protection by way of reciting the *Sub tuum, Dignare me*, the *Defende*; they would also invoke her upon their arrival.⁴¹ Their preaching would recall the people to her devotion as an aid to their perseverance in the faith.⁴² Devotion to her would be one of the concerns for the Society in their chapel public devotions.⁴³ As for the members’ religious life, they were to make at least one daily visit to the Blessed Virgin along with their visit to the Blessed Sacrament, toward whom they were to

³⁸ For more information on these associations, see E. Lamirande, “Les Règlements de la Congrégation de la Jeunesse chrétienne d’Aix et nos saintes Règles”, in *Ét Obl* 15 (1956):17-33.

³⁹ “Abridgement of the rule of life of the congregationists...”, 1816, in *EO* 15.135. Following the 1815 resumption of pastoral activities in France, the association was renamed the *Congregation de la jeunesse* (the “Congregation of youth”).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Part one, ch. 2, sec. 1, arts. 13 and 16. 1825, 26. This is thought to have been inspired from the mission rule of St. Leonard of Port-Maurice; see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 82-3 & 195.

⁴² Part one, ch. 3, sec. 1, art. 19. 1825, 35. Possibly inspired from the Rule of St. Ignatius; see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 136-7.

⁴³ Part one, ch. 3, sec. 7, art. 2. 1825, 43. Possibly inspired from the rule of St. Alphonsus; see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 83-5.

cultivate a special devotion and look to Mary as their Mother. They would also recite the rosary daily, and give special effort to increase the fervor and devotion to her among the faithful.⁴⁴

Mention should be made of an August 15, 1822 “experience” which has long been part of the Society’s history.⁴⁵ A statue of the Immaculate Conception had been dedicated earlier that day in the Aix mission chapel and, immediately afterward, Eugene wrote a letter in which he alludes to an interior spiritual movement during the blessing. In the letter, he noted that a) he had gained a deeper insight into Mary and the call for the society to place all its hope in her; b) he had a deeper insight as to the worth of the society to the wider Church; c) with deeper clarity, he realized the necessity that the members of the society, beginning with himself, should recommit themselves to the desire and practice of holiness for the sake of the mission; and d) looked with a newfound serenity upon the present struggles of the society, finding within himself a new and firm resolve to struggle against all who sought to dismiss her.⁴⁶

As noted earlier, the title of the missionary society was abruptly changed at the time of its February 1826 papal approbation. The particular adoption of the Mother of God into the institutional title has been the subject of considerable debate. One suggestion offered was that, at the time of the petition, de Mazenod suddenly realized that the short-lived current title (the Oblates of Saint Charles) was already in use by another society; this argument is countered, however, when one recalls that the rule of the first Oblates of St. Charles was one inspiration for that of the early Missionaries. A second given possibility for the change, having more merit,

⁴⁴ Part two, ch. 2, sec. 2, arts. 4-5. 1825, 57. This apparently was taken from the rule of St. Alphonsus; see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 100-2.

⁴⁵ Letter to Tempier, Aug 15, 1822, in *EO* 6.86; also see *NCE*, s.v. “Mary” (Beaudoin, “Mary,” 533); K. Lubowicki, “L’expérience du 15 août 1822”, in *VOL* 47 (1988):11-22; idem., *Maria nella vita del beato Eugenio de Mazenod e della sua congregazione*, no. 20 of *Quaderni di Vermicino* (Frascati, 1988), 120-48; *Positio super Introductione Causae S.D. Eugenii de Mazenod* (Rome: 1935), 716; E. Lamblin, “Souvenirs d’Aix: l’Immaculée Conception et la congrégation de la jeunesse chrétienne” in *Missions* (1904):470.

⁴⁶ *NCE*, s.v. “Mary.” A tradition has passed down to present-day Oblates that the statue of Mary smiled upon Eugene during the time of his experience; the only testimony to the encounter is the aforementioned letter in which he makes no such claim. Of course, the fruitfulness of de Mazenod’s experience is more readily identifiable in his deeper insight and renewed commitment which followed.

is that de Mazenod had envisioned a possible merger with the Oblates of the Virgin Mary during his journey to Rome.⁴⁷ It is also to be noted that de Mazenod was preparing his petition to Leo XII during the octave of the Immaculate Conception, which could possibly have been a moment of inspiration.

Whatever the primary reason may have been, de Mazenod had already begun to accustom himself to Mary's special place in the life of the new Society. Leo XII had already confided to de Mazenod in an audience on December 22, 1825 that he intended to approve the missionary institute, and Eugene wrote a letter that day which revealed his sense of Mary's importance as its intercessor and protectress:

Let us renew ourselves especially in devotion to the most holy Virgin and render ourselves worthy to be Oblates of Mary Immaculate. But this is a passport to heaven! How have we not thought of it sooner? Avow that it will be as glorious as it will be consoling for us to be consecrated to her in a special manner and to bear her name. The Oblates of Mary! This name satisfies the heart and the ear. I must admit to you that I was quite surprised, when it was decided to take the name I had thought should be left aside, at being so impervious, at feeling so little pleasure, I would almost say a kind of repugnance, at bearing the name of a saint who is my particular protector, for whom I have so much devotion. And now I see the reason; we were remiss in regard to our Mother, our Queen, she who protects us and who must obtain for us all graces whereof her divine Son has made her the dispenser. So let us rejoice to bear her name and her livery.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ De Mazenod visited the P. Pio Brunone Lanteri (1759-1830) in Turin in November 1825, while en route to Rome. Another society of diocesan right, the Oblates of the Virgin Mary had lost the support of their patron bishop and dispersed in 1820; the two founders considered the possibility of merging societies. Following de Mazenod's successful approbation, Lanteri wrote him in March with the news that his society had decided against any merger. His own community eventually received pontifical approbation on September 1, 1826. See Y. Beaudoin, "Lanteri," *Dictionnaire historique des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, 366-8; J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 256-60.

⁴⁸ Letter to P. Tempier, December 22-25, 1825, in *EO* 6.213. The other saint to which he refers is Charles Borromeo.

A brief summary of Mary's importance within his overall discipleship

Our brief examination of the place of the Mother of God within Eugene's spiritual life suggests several ways in which she was theologically important to him and the future Society, not only in the realm of their interior life but also their pastoral efforts. These ways may be categorized as:

a) *Christological.* Mary's special place as the mother of Jesus, emphasized during his Saint-Sulpice years, remained operative in de Mazenod's pastoral and theological thought. Mary's maternal closeness to her son was evident in her sensitivity to Jesus' sentiments, notably in his desire for the salvation of all people.⁴⁹ Membership in de Mazenod's youth society included a consecration to Mary; this was held as the deepest way to follow Mary in her availability to the salvific plan. This intimacy between Mary and Jesus was further emphasized through the association chapel practice of visiting Mary after visiting Jesus, for the reason that the Mother must never be separated from her Son.⁵⁰

b) *Mary as a model of discipleship.* The mother of Jesus offered an outstanding model for the particular qualities of humility, deepest faith, and steady contemplation.⁵¹ Her special and deep love for her Son was also a prized object for imitation.⁵²

c) *Mary's role in salvation history.* Mary's closeness of heart with Jesus, and her willingness to accept the Father's plan for her through the Incarnation, meant that she had a unique co-redemptive role in the history of salvation. Mary's fiat allowed the Son to enter into the created world through her cooperation. Her docility to the Father's plan was also a rightful attribute of the priestly vocation, since the priest effected in each celebration of the Eucharist, which Olier saw as a "second Incarnation."⁵³

d) *Mary's intercessory role.* From his Saint-Sulpice years, de Mazenod regarded Mary as protector of priests and eventually of missionaries.

⁴⁹ *Abrégé du règlement de vie...*, p. 15, & *Statuts*, ch. XII, art. 50, *Missions* (1899): 87; also *DOV*, s.v. "Mary."

⁵⁰ "Before leaving the church where they have visited Our Lord, they will not forget to say some prayers to the Blessed Virgin, for one should never separate the Mother from the Son if one wants one's prayers to be heard." From the Association daily rule of life, 1816, in *EO* 15.135.

⁵¹ From de Mazenod's class notes, "Explications ou notes sur le Nouveau Testament." *DM* III-2b, 4; 12; 15.

⁵² Retreat notes, December 1811, in *EO* 14.95.

⁵³ Taché, *La vie spirituelle...*, 357-61.

He also acknowledged Mary's wider role as privileged intercessor within his own prayer and the eventual rule of his Society. Indeed this intercessory role was promoted in their missionary efforts, as noted by the ongoing mission prayers and the Missionaries' invocation of her as protectress of the mission.⁵⁴

e) *Pastoral considerations.* Mary's closeness to the heart and sentiments of her Son offered an additional avenue for individuals to approach a reconciliation and renewal with God; this aspect was especially well-utilized in the missionaries' efforts to rekindle the faith during parish missions. These efforts contained several familiar elements of Marian piety such as the rosary, and regular decades of the Ave Maria were usually offered by groups of parishioners for the success of the mission. Preachers would occasionally appeal to her as the Mother of Mercy, the Help of Christians, and the Refuge of Sinners. Mary was promoted as exemplar of a faithful disciple to women and girls. Each of these expressions tended to reinforce the mission tradition of consecrating the parish to the Blessed Virgin which would have occurred during the opening week.⁵⁵

Devotion to Other Particular Saints and Sainly Figures

Eugene maintained a number of devotions to particular saints during his youth and early ministerial life, and several of these were embraced in the spiritual life of the missionary society. He drew inspiration from a wide range of them during his early youth, his seminary period, and first years of priesthood. A list of some especially notable saints includes Aloysius Gonzaga, a model for de Mazenod during his own young adulthood and who held a special place within the later youth ministry of the Society. The zealous "apostle of charity" Vincent de Paul was the patron of the *Missionaries of Provence* during their first years; Leonard of Port-Maurice was a second model and inspiration for the Society parish mission work.⁵⁶ As mentioned earlier, Alphonsus di Liguori was a special figure for the

⁵⁴ "The Parish Mission: synthesis of the Oblate Preachers' Congress, Rome, April-June 1955, *Missions* (1957)" 80.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*:76-81.

⁵⁶ Vincent de Paul was a general patron saint of missionaries, thus adopted at the beginning of the Society until the 1839 canonization of Alphonse de Liguori; de Mazenod mentioned him indirectly in a letter July 19, 1817, adding "Feast of our holy patron" (*EO* 6.17). De Mazenod also reflected upon the influence of Leonard of Port-Maurice in a retreat reflection of May, 1824, in *EO* 15.156.

missionary society, particularly following his 1816 beatification. Charles Borromeo, a major figure in Tridentine church reform as cardinal archbishop of Milan, had long been the patron saint of Charles-Eugene and the de Mazenod family.

This brief list should suffice to show the presence of sainted individuals as an important aspect of de Mazenod's spiritual journey. Besides seeking their intercessory aid, the saints offered to the Society yet additional role models for lives of overall virtue and pastoral zeal, which fed the missionaries' own desire to most fully give of themselves in loving service of God.

De Mazenod's "Love of the Cross"

A time-honored devotion

Eugene, in his desire to grow in his love for Jesus through imitating him, was drawn to embrace every interior quality and experience of his Savior. For many centuries, there had existed a traditional Christian practice of developing a special regard or "love" for Jesus' cross.⁵⁷ More than pious sentiment, this was a conscientious method to lovingly imitate Jesus in his inner dispositions experienced during his passion and crucifixion. Although lacking any detailed personal treatment, one can nevertheless find among de Mazenod's writings that he apparently had some knowledge and acceptance for this Sulpician love for the cross.⁵⁸

During his seminary years, Eugene had already showed a special interest in the three virtues of humility, mortification, and evangelical poverty.⁵⁹ It is interesting to consider the place of these virtues within a particular image of the cross proposed by Olier in his *Catechisme chrétien* (or "*Christian Catechism*").⁶⁰ Basically, the disciple was called to carry Jesus'

⁵⁷ The *Imitation of Christ*, book II, chapter 12, also speaks of a disciple's following the way of the Cross, and to which de Mazenod refers in *EO* 15.109. His tone at this moment, however, would seem to resonate more closely with that of Olier.

⁵⁸ For more reading on the significance of the Oblate missionary cross worn by missionary preachers, see "Oblate Cross," in *DOV*, s.v. "Oblate Cross."

⁵⁹ His particular emphasis upon these three virtues is examined in the fourth chapter of this work; a perusal of de Mazenod's personal rule of the time also supports this claim (*EO* 14.28).

⁶⁰ Text used is *Catéchisme chrétien pour la vie intérieure / Journée chrétienne : textes revus et annotés par François Amiot* (Paris: Le Rameau, 1953).

cross through cultivating a predilection or desire (Olier's text uses the verb *aimer*) for three specific virtues or attitudes which Jesus had exhibited throughout his life:

a) *Personal humility* - the ability to consider oneself as being unimportant, and to prefer that others see oneself as of no importance. One matures in this virtue through recognizing that any personal goodness comes to oneself from God; also, one must learn to shun honors and recognition of personal importance, as well as not to seek ecclesiastical appointments.⁶¹

b) *An acceptance of pain and sorrow, suffering, persecution* - these will comprise the various physical and interior penances and mortifications which one accepts in their desire to live according to the enlightenment of the Spirit. Living solely according to one's human preferences will result in one's loss of eternal life; Jesus' death on the cross has redeemed us and made it possible for us to enjoy eternal life, but we can accept this only through dying to our human excesses and living according to the Spirit which he has given us, thus being prepared to live a transformed existence on the last day.⁶²

c) *Personal evangelical poverty* - all of humanity shares in the sin of Adam and in the present reality of sin in one's life. Olier uses imagery from the seventeenth century to illustrate his appreciation for embracing voluntary poverty. Just as a criminal who has misused his possessions to foment crimes might be forced to forfeit all possessions great and small to the royal authority which he has offended, so the disciple of Jesus should seek to live with as little material belongings as possible in an attitude of penance and atonement. Justice urges the disciple to consider himself as unworthy to share materially in the bounty of the Creator; like the prodigal son, the disciple should shun any accumulation of goods in order to express his deserved place before the Father as a servant rather than a son.⁶³

De Mazenod sought to pursue this love of the cross during his seminary years and those of his early ministry, noting that his life would be ordered to embrace the cross or to develop a love for it.⁶⁴ He wrote in a

⁶¹ Olier, *Catéchisme chrétien...*, lessons 10-13, 25-33.

⁶² *Ibid.*, lessons 14-18, 33-42.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, lesson 19, 42-44.

⁶⁴ De Mazenod notes in his December 1811 post-retreat general resolutions that he intended "...to seek only the cross of J.C. and the penance due to my sins...", in

list of his first Mass intentions that he would ask to grow in a love of the cross and a share in Jesus' suffering and humiliation.⁶⁵ One year later, as he prepared to enter his Aix ministry, de Mazenod noted that his love for Jesus would hopefully lead him to imitate the Savior as fully as possible.

I will meditate on Jesus my love in his incarnation, his hidden life, his mission, his passion and death... to try to obtain that the Lord will hear my prayers, I will join to the most exact observance of his Law the practice of mortification in such wise that it flows through all my actions... reminding me that the whole life of Jesus my model was a perpetual cross and a continual martyrdom...⁶⁶

This was essential for him in his desire to glorify God through his life:

there are no half-measures, if I want to be like Jesus Christ in glory, I must first resemble him in his humiliations and sufferings, like Jesus crucified; let us try therefore to conform in all I do to this divine model...⁶⁷

A more mature understanding of living with the Cross, from 1814

The reader will recall from the last chapter that de Mazenod meditated upon the Ignatian “three degrees of humility” during his December 1814 retreat. He set his sights upon fulfilling the third and most demanding one, in which the individual would prefer the disparagement of others over the worth of one’s good name, personal hardship rather than ease, and poverty to riches. The form found in the *Spiritual Exercises* essentially parallels the Sulpician presentation of the Cross for disciples. However, the Sulpi-

EO 14.101; also in his December 1814 retreat, thirteenth meditation, “... there are no half-measures, if I want to be like Jesus Christ in glory, I must first resemble him in his humiliations and sufferings, like Jesus crucified; let us try therefore to conform in all I do to this divine model...,” in *EO* 15.130. In his twentieth meditation on following Jesus through the acceptance of the deepest expression of humility, “one would prefer poverty to riches, sufferings to pleasure and humiliation to glory...” (ibid.) Eugene also notes in a May 22, 1824 letter to another Society member, in *EO* 6.137 “... let us never overlook that in wishing to become true disciples of Jesus Christ we have embraced the cross to be carried each day and that we have had to renounce the esteem and love of men.”

⁶⁵ Mass Intentions, December 25-27, 1811, in *EO* 14.100.

⁶⁶ Retreat notes of December 1813, in *EO* 15.109.

⁶⁷ Retreat of 1814, thirteenth meditation, in *EO* 15.130.

cian form seems to suggest more the need for voluntary mortification in one's spiritual life, while the Ignatian form could imply other involuntary sufferings. This is noteworthy because, as we shall find in the next chapter, it was about this time that Eugene's appropriation of mortification seemed to move interiorly toward the Ignatian sense.⁶⁸

In 1824, the missionaries were encountering considerable opposition to their work by local clergy and pastors. Eugene wrote to a fellow missionary in the hope of supporting him, reminding him that it was proper for them to rejoice in the face of being rejected for the love of Jesus and the mission. Their proper lot as his apostolic followers was only to encounter the cross which they had embraced; they could expect nothing more.⁶⁹

There exists at least the strong suggestion that a well-known practice of developing a special regard for the cross had its place within Eugene's interior life. This would have resonated with his overall devotion to the Sacred Heart and its focus upon Jesus' redemptive love. It also echoes the particular preference of the devotion for the virtues of humility and obedience, along with its call to reparation for sins. While de Mazenod only offers occasional references to the concept of spiritually sharing in Jesus' self-denial and sufferings of the cross, one finds several parallels between points from within de Mazenod's written thought and the Sulpician expression of the tradition. His reflection upon humility and suffering as presented in his 1814 retreat offers a modified though still active regard for the practice.

Having considered the essential elements in the devotional life of Eugene de Mazenod and his eventual missionary society, we now turn to his more formal expressions of adoring God.

⁶⁸ The next chapter of this work examines de Mazenod's approach to humility along with other select virtues.

⁶⁹ "I rejoice with you... that you have been judged worthy to be despised for the love of God and be hated for all the good that you and yours accomplish in the Church of God... let us never overlook that in wishing to become true disciples of Jesus Christ we have embraced the cross to be carried each day and that we have had to renounce the esteem and love of men... we ought not to be treated otherwise than our leader and our model..." Letter to Fr. Courtès at Aix, May 22, 1824, in *EO* 6.137.

His "Duties of Piety" Which Expressed His Loving Adoration

Eugene held to the belief that one's adoration of God was considered the most important duty of a Christian and the principal one of a priest, in imitation of Jesus' loving adoration of his Father.⁷⁰ Adoration, when seen in light of the virtues of religion and justice, is the essential disposition which one owes to God as creator.⁷¹ Eugene listed some principal elements for his own spiritual life which were later incorporated into the spiritual regimen of his mission society.

My duties of piety consist: 1. In oraison, 2. Holy mass, 3., divine office, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, prayer; the whole accompanied, preceded and followed by the holy practice of the presence of God.⁷²

Four notable means of adoration - the Mass, praying the Divine Office, his daily meditation or *l'oraison* before the reserved sacrament, and daily Eucharistic visits - have an obvious association with the Eucharist. A

⁷⁰ De Mazenod wrote during a retreat in December 1812 that, "Prayer being a principal part of the cult of adoration that is due to the sovereign Majesty of God, I must apply myself with an altogether special concern to fulfill this duty with all the conditions required to satisfy it..." Retreat of Dec. 1812, in *EO* 15.104.

⁷¹ The virtue of religion is treated in the *Summa theologica* IIa-IIae, questions 80-96 but especially 81-88. The Bérulle school of spirituality is credited with the recovery of the virtue of religion, recalling disciples to a special emphasis upon adoration as the principal means of uniting to God in love. Jesus was considered the chief adorer of the Father; the adoration by disciples was rendered more complete through their devotion and love for Jesus. Additional treatment of its subsequent development within scholastic and Bérullian thought may be found in *DS*, s.v. "Religion (vertu de)." Deville addresses the specifically Bérullian regard for it in *The French School of Spirituality*, 137-8; see also Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, vol. 3, 338-341. Interpreted through the later thought of Olier and especially Tronson, the mystical attraction of the Bérullian concept became de-emphasized; one was to adore the Father through Jesus, but by faithful completion of the particular duties or obligations of their state; see Krumenacker, 423-54.

⁷² Resolutions as director of Saint-Sulpice, January 1812, in *EO* 15.103. This list resonates with the overall Olieran/Sulpician spiritual program, though its precise origin is difficult to determine; Gautier in his introduction to the *Traité de saints ordres* (Paris: La Colombe, 1953), 24-42 mentions *l'oraison*, Mass and communion, particular examen, and various devotions as elements of the overall Sulpician program.

fifth observance, popularly known at the time as the “Practice of the Presence of God,” sought to bring this daily encounter with Jesus more completely into his daily round of activities. Additional aids were his spiritual reading and a regular particular examen. Let us first consider the centrality of the Eucharist in de Mazenod’s life of adoration, then consider the remaining areas.

The Eucharist as de Mazenod’s Locus of Adoration

The Mass and his Eucharistic life

The sacrifice of Jesus within the mystery of the Eucharist was de Mazenod’s primary focus upon the sacrament. Daily celebration of the Mass was a daily participation in the passion and death of Jesus, the Savior’s self-offering in trusting obedience to the Father mystically repeated by the liturgical celebrant. The Eucharistic celebration was the visible moment in which the priest, having assumed Jesus’ priestly character at ordination, represented him in the role of High Priest in prayer before the Father. Jesus’ interior disposition to total gift of himself, experienced ever anew in the Mass, was a daily incentive for the priest in his life of practiced virtue and its corresponding self-denial for the sake of God through prayer and others through ministry. An additional important point noted of the Sulpician program was that the seminarian’s regular attendance at Mass, recalling each day the Savior’s suffering and death for the sins of the world, was considered a strong support for their ongoing growth in the virtues required of a priest.⁷³ Upon beginning his priestly life, Eugene considered the Mass to be the most excellent of all the prayers which could be offered to God.⁷⁴

The celebration of Mass places oneself in the presence of the mysteries of redemption, or the “Sacred Mysteries.” Reflecting upon his responsibility to celebrate Mass and his need to be interiorly recollected, de Mazenod as a new priest noted how he would do so in the future:

Once arrived at the Church, I will pause in adoration before the

⁷³ Icard, 225.

⁷⁴ “Mass is unquestionably the most excellent of all the prayers which can be offered to God whether on earth or in heaven itself...” Rule from December 1812 retreat, in *EO* 15.109. See also Taché, *La vie spirituelle...*, 75-8.

Blessed Sacrament to make acts of love, thanksgiving, devotion, offering, sacrifice; in short, I will recapitulate the good thoughts and more important resolutions from my oraison, but in a summary manner as I should be sufficiently prepared for the Sacred Mysteries by oraison, towards the end of which I must dwell on the most holy Sacrifice that Jesus Christ will offer his Father through my ministry.⁷⁵ (*Italics added*)

He would also give great attention to following all the movements of the rite, worthy of precision and great care in the observance of the rubrics. With this in mind, perhaps also with a reforming desire to give good example to other priests, de Mazenod deliberately resolved at his ordination to always observe what he termed a “scrupulous exactitude” for the rubrics of the priest-celebrant.⁷⁶

His high regard for the importance and privilege of the Eucharistic sacrifice was also evident in his desire to celebrate more than once daily if possible. De Mazenod noted that his faithfulness to daily celebration, being the most excellent prayer possible to God, would be a more fruitful means for the salvation of others than whatever else he might do. He also valued the practice of assisting at the Mass of another celebrant when the need arose, as he noted in a reflection from about 1813. Rather than demeaning the dignity of one’s ordained priesthood, serving at the Mass of another celebrant followed the example of esteemed and respected figures such as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Philip Neri.⁷⁷ In this, one can easily find de Mazenod’s ardent desire to be close to his beloved in the sacrament.

Both 1818 and 1825 Society rules state that the priest-missionary was to live in a manner such that he could daily celebrate the Eucharist. The latter rule also noted that non-ordained Society members were to receive Eucharist several times each week, more frequently than was the prevailing French custom.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Rule of life, 1812, in *EO* 15.107.

⁷⁶ “I will always observe the rubrics with scrupulous exactitude, remembering that there is not a single one in the holy Sacrifice, however trivial it may seem, which is not *of precept*... I will act in such a way as to be able to maintain that there is not in the catholic universe a single priest who says the mass more in conformity with the rules than myself.” From the Rule of December 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

⁷⁷ Reflection on priests serving Mass, in *EO* 15.112.

⁷⁸ Part two, ch. 3, sec. 2, arts. 1 and 5 in *1825*, 64-5; it is interesting to note that

Frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament

Eugene's love and gratitude to his Savior was too great to be confined simply to occasions for celebrating Mass or haphazard sanctuary visits. He noted:

For myself, to whom the Lord has always given the grace of being touched and penetrated with the love he shows us in his Sacrament... I will not imitate the insouciance of those priests who after they have said mass, if they say it at all, do not appear again in the temple of the Living God who resides there, unless it be to pass through on the run when some business calls them there... while their icy heart is perhaps far, far away... I will not let a single day go by without going to the foot of the holy altar to pour out my heart in the bosom of the one who loves me...⁷⁹

He could recall those privileged years at Saint-Sulpice when he resided within a few footsteps of the chapel, and where he was accustomed to make several visits in the course of the day. He resolved at the beginning of his ministry to visit at least once daily, where he would share his joys and sorrows with his Lord or simply for moments of adoration. Eugene made regular visits to “the feet” of Jesus, savoring the time which he could spend with his Redeemer in the sacrament.

The practice of daily visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was part of the Society rule from 1818. In addition, the missionaries were to stop for a few moments before leaving and returning to their residence, as well as before and after meals.

The Divine Office

A historically conditioned observance of the prayer

The recital of the Divine Office was considered by Olier to be the second responsibility of the priest following the celebration of the Mass. Its observance was the product of a historical development and occasional reform efforts through the preceding centuries. A brief summary paragraph of its development prior to the early nineteenth century would perhaps be useful.

these articles were likely originated with de Mazenod. Non-priest members would communicate on Sundays, holy days of obligation, Wednesdays and Fridays.

⁷⁹ Rule of December 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

The norm for praying the Divine Office from before the eleventh century had been choral observance by groups of priests in cathedrals or within smaller clerical communities (or “colleges”). The gradual movement of ministry and worship from the diocesan center into outlying parishes resulted in very many priests no longer being able to participate in regular common worship in the cathedral. This occurred at the same time as the development of the one-volume Franciscan breviary in response to their apostolate which called them into villages and cities, and was further influenced by the *devotio moderna* movement and its increased accent upon individual interior spirituality. Nevertheless, choral observance remained the officially sanctioned norm for priestly observance of the office, while private recitation by priests became increasingly though unofficially accepted. The sixteenth century found a number of societies of clerics regular (such as the Barnabites and the Theatines) which embraced choral or at least common observance as part of their reform spirit, finding some support from the Council of Trent.⁸⁰ Later priestly reform communities, such as the Sulpicians, carried the desire to fulfill this reforming spirit of observance into the eighteenth century and beyond.⁸¹

Earlier exposure to the practice, before 1812

While we cannot know with certainty about the young Eugene’s exposures to the public liturgical practice, he did have several possible sources of personal experience in early youth. His uncle Charles-Fortuné and great uncle Charles-Auguste-André de Mazenod, both canons from the cathedral of Aix, had been regular participants at the cathedral Divine Office observances during his early years. His sojourn at the Barnabite *Reale Collegio dei Nobili di Torino* (October 1791-February 1794) would also have given him the possibility of an early exposure to the practice among that society of regular clerics; one common practice in Barnabite institutions was that students were required to attend the communal Divine Office liturgies on congregational feast days. Later, Eugene had some exposure to gatherings

⁸⁰ Session XXI of the Council of Trent, in the *Decreta reformationis*, ch. 4, refers to the practice of public prayer in parishes; there is no provision for private observance. *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 138.

⁸¹ R. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: the origins of the Divine Office and its meaning for today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 297-306.

of priests who would at times pray the Office in common, as he recalled the practices of his mentor Zinelli and other priests during his years in Venice. As for his own piety as a youth, Eugene stated that he privately recited the “Little Office of the Blessed Virgin” which was the regular way for laity or seminarians to participate in the officially sanctioned prayer of the Church.⁸² It is evident that both chanted and recited forms of the Divine Office were known within Eugene’s developing religious culture.

Early ministry years, 1812-1816

We find that Eugene held a high regard for his impending responsibility to pray the Divine Office during his priesthood, as found in a note from his personal rule of December 1812:

After the Sacrifice of the altar the divine office is one of the most important functions of my ministry. In making me responsible for this office, the Church wishes that several times a day her minister be present before the throne of his God’s mercies to draw down heavenly blessings on her children... she wishes that I perform in her name, and in the name of the Christian people, that I take part here below in what employs the blessed spirits in heaven... that I begin during this life that concert of praises that I shall not cease to repeat in the other, if, as I must hope, I have the happiness to get there.⁸³

The prayer was regarded as an important means of sustaining the relationship of blessing between God the creator and his blessed people. Its importance to Eugene dictated that he would also be concerned for his attitude during the times of prayer, intending to pray respectfully (as regards vocal pace and bodily posture), attentively (that the prayer not be mechanical or rote), and devoutly (that his affection be engaged in the prayer).⁸⁴

Between 1816 and 1826

We find that a common recitation of the Divine Office is not specifically stated among the intentions of the new society of January, 1816. It

⁸² “Souvenir de famille”, in *Missions* 79 (1952): 644-5. For more on de Mazenod and the adoption of the Divine Office, see *DOV*, s.v. “Liturgy of the Hours”; see also, J. Reslé, “La psalmodie en commun de l’office divin,” *Ét Obl* 20 (1961):225-36.

⁸³ Retreat notes from December, 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

does appear in the 1818 rule, interestingly enough as an external work of the new Society rather than as a pious exercise. In this original contribution to the emerging Society rule, de Mazenod's reason is found in a reflection from a later general chapter session.⁸⁵ Regular praise of God through the Divine Office was one of the treasures of Catholic religious life which he hoped to restore through this explicitly stated end of the Society.⁸⁶ The hours would be prayed in common, though recited rather than chanted; for Sundays and feast days, the vespers of solemnities were to be sung in the Society's public chapels.⁸⁷

The members were obliged to fulfill the expected common observances unless serious reason kept them from doing so, and even then their absence required the approval of the superior; those who could not attend were expected to make their prayer in private. This was important since a significant reason for the Society fulfillment of the office was intercessory, regarding the practice as an essential channel of blessings and grace for the Society works and those of the wider Church.⁸⁸

Meditation, or "l'Oraison"

Eugene had been exposed in his adolescence to the well-known Liguorian and Ignatian methods of prayer.⁸⁹ During his 1808-1811 sojourn at Saint-Sulpice, however, he was formally trained to follow the well-

⁸⁵ The "Lecture des Actes du Chapitre de 1837" notes that "in recalling the memories which had preoccupied him during the institution of the Society, de Mazenod stated one principal reason was to reinstate in the Church of God the ancient religious bodies; that... he had above all been painfully affected by the cessation of the divine office; and consequently he had intended to impose upon our members, priests or simple oblates, the same obligation which weighed upon the members of other religious orders." Pie-lorz, *Les Chapitres généraux aux temps du Fondateur*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Éditions des Études Oblates, 1968), 194.

⁸⁶ First part, ch. 1, sec. 1, art. 4-5. 1825, 19.

⁸⁷ First part, ch. 3, sec. 7, art. 4. 1825, 43.

⁸⁸ First part, ch. 3, sec. 6. 1825, 41-2.

⁸⁹ De Mazenod apparently followed the prayer method of St. Alphonsus while in Venice, the simplest of the three forms suggested and essentially a sequence of a short meditative reading, pious reflection and a final personal resolution; see Rey, vol. 1, 26. De Mazenod would have been exposed to the more demanding Ignatian prayer during his spiritual direction relationship with the Jesuit P. Magy from 1805-1808, and had experienced the spiritual exercises sometime before entering Saint-Sulpice; see *ibid.*, 61-2. For a more extensive comparison of the three prayer methods, see Cosentino, *Exercices de piété...*, 38-49.

known Sulpician method. The main purpose for this Sulpician exercise was to foster growth in select virtues of Jesus as gleaned from meditation upon one of his earthly mysteries, some tenet related to church doctrine, or a theme related to a given feast day or liturgical season.⁹⁰

The seminary practice of meditative prayer normally specified by de Mazenod as l'*oraison* (as in l'*oraison mentale* or mental prayer, apparently to distinguish it from the more generic French use of *oraison* for prayer), was one of several steps governing the actual meditation time.⁹¹ The practice included a short period during the preceding evening to consider the topic for the coming meditation; the actual meditation time itself, lasting perhaps thirty minutes, was comprised of the three stages of adoration, cooperation, and thanksgiving. In the first stage, the praying person would behold "Jesus before the eyes", acknowledging his presence and giving homage. "Jesus in the heart" would reflect upon a particular mystery or theme, drawing from it one desirable virtue or sentiment for imitation. "Jesus in the hands" would beseech God for the strength and wisdom to cultivate this virtue, as well as consider some means to put it into daily practice. The seminary practice apparently included a weekly review of the overall method, in order to assure its correct observance.⁹²

This method for prayer accompanied Eugene into his first years of ordained ministry. He actually wrote very little concerning his meditation experiences. We find in his 1812 personal rule of life that he intended to follow the practice for one hour each day, unless circumstances forced him to divide it into two sessions. As to the structure of his prayer activity during that hour, we have virtually nothing to suggest that he followed any other prayer form.⁹³ De Mazenod struggled with his need to observe

⁹⁰ The subjects for *oraison* followed a predetermined day-by-day list. Icard, 203; 211-214; 218.

⁹¹ In spite of its apparently cumbersome style, the intent was that the Sulpician practice be followed "with clarity, piety, and precision," as noted in Icard, 212-3.

⁹² The Saturday reinforcement of the method is mentioned in *ibid.*, 223-4.

⁹³ De Mazenod is believed to have written a document, dated 22 October 1812, titled *Méthode de l'Oraison mentale expliquée par M. Duclaux, Sulpicien (DM)* which would also support this as his practice. *DOV*, s.v. "Prayer-Oraison" (F.K. Nemeck 736) posits that scriptural reading was likely a part of the formal hour of *oraison*, and that de Mazenod's prayer included elements of Ignatian and Liguorian prayer methods; this was apparently based upon a segment of de Mazenod's 1812 personal rule taken from Rambert, vol. 1, 117. However, an examination of de Mazenod's written version of the document reveals that Rambert's citation is incomplete and would be misleading.

the hour of prayer in the midst of his active ministry; he noted during several annual retreats that he needed to recommit himself more firmly to the practice in the face of daily ministry demands.

The 1816 initial rule makes no mention of specific prayer practices nor of performing them in common, evidently allowing the members to privately observe their individual prayer duties. The 1818 and 1825 Constitutions & Rules, borrowing from and adapting the related segment from the rule of St. Alphonsus, regulates that *l'oraison mental* be made twice daily; following the Trinitarian morning prayer for forty-five minutes, and before the Blessed Sacrament for thirty minutes each evening.⁹⁴ The members were to give special attention to meditate on the theological virtues and those of Jesus, though the choice of particular subject was more liberally determined than the fixed daily assigned topic of the Sulpician practice. These virtues would also serve as the subject of their particular examen and spiritual conferences.⁹⁵

The observation that this segment of the rule was borrowed from the Redemptorist version raises the question as to the Oblate missionaries' use of the Ignatian or the simpler Liguorian meditation methods. The Ignatian prayer method was certainly well known at the time among religious; apparently this was more frequently followed by de Mazenod and his Society during extended retreat exercises.⁹⁶ The method of St. Alphonsus was

According to the original document, de Mazenod intended to begin his practice of *oraison* at 5am (presumably in his residence), thus allowing an hour before going to the church for Mass: ("*je ne commencerai l'oraison qu'à cinq pour passer sans intervalle de l'oraison à l'autel, et alors, après avoir dit la prière vocale je réciterai matines et laudes et je lirai quelques chapitres de l'Écriture Sainte*", (EO 15.107). The quote in Rambert reads, "... *et alors, après avoir dit la prière vocale, je lirai quelques chapitres de l'Écriture sainte,*" which lacks mention of the intervening divine office prayers.

⁹⁴ The 1825 text cites the two periods as, "In the morning, after morning prayer, for three quarters of an hour; and in the evening, in the church, before the Blessed Sacrament, for half an hour." (Part 2, ch. 2, sec. 2, art. 1; 1825, 57). The morning session would have followed the Trinitarian morning prayer, and the evening session was to be a gathering before the Eucharist. The 1825 rule seems to consider both prayer sessions were for cultivating theological virtues and those of Jesus; however, the morning session, following the Trinitarian *prière du matin*, suggests a more focused meditative session upon virtues and the like, while the evening session, gathered around the Blessed Sacrament, suggested a more intimate and less structured encounter with Jesus. See *DOV*, s.v. "Prayer-Oraison" (Nemeck, "Prayer-Oraison," *DOV*, 738-9).

⁹⁵ 1818, 61; 1825, 57.

⁹⁶ Cosentino, *Exercices de piété...*, 30-3.

recommended in the 1819 *Recueil de cantiques* to those members who found the Sulpician way too difficult.⁹⁷ It is generally acknowledged that the Sulpician method was promoted as the “ordinary” though not exclusive prayer program during this period, based upon the practice of de Mazenod and French priests in general.

Spiritual Reading

The practice of daily spiritual reading was important for Eugene during his seminary years and following his ordination. He committed himself in his 1812 personal rule to a daily reading of the lives or spiritual writings of the saints which offered additional food for his daily meditation, his desire for growth in virtue, a spirit of piety, and his overall self-giving.⁹⁸ The practice found its way into the Society rules, calling for a half-hour of spiritual reading and for “some time every day” to be invested in additional scriptural study.⁹⁹

Particular Examen

The three principal practices of particular examen, in which a particular virtue or undesirable practice is the focus of ongoing reflection and efforts at correction, were the Sulpician, Ignatian, and Alphonsan methods. Eugene was exposed to all three; each of them would find their presence in his spiritual life before 1826.¹⁰⁰

His seminary years, as one would expect, trained him to follow the Sulpician process, evident from his first ministry years into the formation of the mission society; sessions would be fifteen minutes’ duration, it would typically open with a gospel reading, and included the prayers *Veni Sancti Spiritu* and *o Domine mea*. An 1816 retreat journal entry suggests, however, that de Mazenod had returned to the Ignatian method by this time; indeed, the addition of moments of silence were blended into the common practice. The Alphonsian practice was more evident in an additional monthly examen practice.¹⁰¹

Whatever his particular “way”, the practice offered a daily opportu-

⁹⁷ The document is quoted in Cosentino, *Exercices de piété...*, 33.

⁹⁸ Personal rule of life written in December, 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

⁹⁹ Part two, ch. 2, sec. 2, art. 3-4. 1825, 57.

¹⁰⁰ See Cosentino, *Exercices de piété...*, 123-31.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

nity to consider particular elements which one desired to cultivate in daily life. Deliberate virtue practices, attitudes of courtesy, moments of recollecting God's presence in his life, etc., would be regularly remembered and recommitted to frequent practice.

Adoration and the Practice of the Presence of God

A practical expression of the virtue of faith

A consistent spiritual practice for Eugene de Mazenod from his seminary days through 1826 and beyond was "the practice of the presence of God." A well-known struggle for him was living in the tension between the two demands of giving total attention to God while giving himself to others in ministry. This practice of the presence of God has traditionally offered a means to realize a unified life of adoration and loving service, while respecting the particular circumstances of one's particular vocation. The practice would have been well known among religious persons through his time, appearing within the writings of such spiritual authors as Thomas Aquinas, Teresa of Avila, Bérulle, and Rodriguez.¹⁰²

One practices the presence of God through cultivating a habit of recalling God's presence and responding to it through silent acts of love without interrupting one's other activity. Its doctrinal foundation is based upon God's presence which may be known through all things as their Creator. God is also notably present in the souls of the just person through grace: "... those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them". (Jn 14:23) The prayer engages the two spiritual faculties of the intellect and the will; the first through one's necessary intellectual assent that God is indeed present (an "act of faith"), and the second by engaging the will as one actually goes about the continual practice of seeking God. Thus one is gradually led to an ongoing and ever-deepening choice and hunger for God alone as well as God to be found dwelling in the neighbor, fostering a purification for one's love of God. This prayer dynamic aided in the praying person's growth in virtue, a deepening of one's aversion to sin, and an

¹⁰² Aquinas considers this in the *Summa* I, q.8.3; Teresa refers to the "prayer of recollection" in her *Way of Perfection* (ch. 28); Rodriguez does so in *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*, vol. 1 (Dublin: James Duffy, 1870), sixth treatise. The prayer is considered in greater length in *DS*, s.v. "Présence de Dieu."

ever-greater desire to serve God,¹⁰³ three consuming desires in the spiritual program of Eugene de Mazenod.

De Mazenod and the practice before 1816

Eugene's first seminary reflections from 1808 reveal his sense of being under God's gaze, though in a manner which reflects the tendency to belittle oneself, a characteristic of his early priestly formation. Eugene recognized that he stood always before God, within God's gaze, thus he should continually recall God's presence. Clearly, he experienced the engagement of his intellect in the exercise.¹⁰⁴

He later more specifically recommends the practice of fostering growth in recognizing God's presence in a list of recommended activities for spiritual growth in 1810, noting the value of short and fervently uttered ejaculatory prayers (*prières jaculatoires*) practiced in the spirituality of his time.

Have God's presence always before one's eyes. A person who really loves never forgets the loved object. To keep this divine presence in mind it is good to keep about one's person, or have in one's room, something suitable to remind us of it... the best way is often to repeat during the course of the day acts of love of God, and acts of petition to obtain this divine love, for example: "My God and my all, I love you with all my heart - I give myself to you - do with me as you will - I desire nothing but you alone, my God - give me your love and it is enough." But one must produce these acts without straining and without aspiring to sensible consolations, for absolutely no other reason than to please God by saying them.¹⁰⁵

Eugene gave a slightly more detailed understanding of the practice in his December 1812 retreat notes. After reflecting upon the place of the

¹⁰³ Additional reading for this may be found in *NCE*, s.v. "Presence of God"; see also Aumann, 358-60.

¹⁰⁴ Typical of these first years is "My sins must be always before me so as never to forget I am last of all in the eyes of the just God... so I must... put up with the little vulgarities, lack of respect, etc., ... reflecting that the soul of the person upsetting me is infinitely more precious and beautiful in God's eyes than is my own..." Resolutions upon entering the seminary, October, 1808, in *EO* 14.28.

¹⁰⁵ General counsels for achieving perfection, circa 1809, in *EO* 14.39. The Latin inscription translated into English, "[one] must always pray and never give up."

Divine Office within his spiritual regimen, he noted that:

But however holy, however excellent this prayer may be, it is not sufficient to fulfill the Saviour's precept which calls for our prayer to be continual, oportet semper orare et nunquam deficere (Luke 18:1)... this continual prayer is not at all impossible... A simple and easy way of fulfilling this precept is the practice of the presence of God and ejaculatory prayers, adding to that the important, vital meditation which is like the arsenal that supplies the provisions for the day... by means of this holy practice, the faithful soul is ceaselessly in the company of his beloved...¹⁰⁶

He goes on to list several possible means which could serve as signals to periodically recall oneself to an awareness of God's presence, such as upon hearing the chime of the clock or the rumble of a passing carriage. As an aside, one should also note the importance de Mazenod placed upon daily meditation as an essential source for dwelling in God's presence, the experience to be sustained through the other suggested means throughout the day.

The practice for de Mazenod and the Society between 1816 and 1826

The practice finds its place within the 1818 and 1825 Society rules within the segment regulating silence and recollection, borrowing almost exclusively from the rule of St. Alphonsus. Noting that the whole life of the Society members ought to be one of continual recollection, they were to make every effort to walk always in the presence of God, and make effort to frequently utter short but fervent ejaculatory prayers.¹⁰⁷

De Mazenod also saw the fruit of this spiritual way as essential during times of personal difficulty. His 1824 retreat reflects upon his painful and undesired duties as vicar general of the Marseilles diocese:

... in two days' time I will find myself once more in contact with it... again to do my duty there, to try... to bring a little bit of life back into a dead diocese... no matter; have God alone before us, the honor of his Church... but one must have much virtue to sacrifice one's peace... to face the hatred and persecution of men precisely so as

¹⁰⁶ From his rule composed during an Aix retreat, December, 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

¹⁰⁷ Part 2, ch. 2, sec. 1, articles 1-2. *1818*, 63; *1825*, 55.

to do good for men. This virtue is acquired and conserved only by union with God, prayer and meditation, etc., walking always before God and keeping one's eyes on heaven alone...¹⁰⁸

Supporting observances which cultivated this practice

Although he gave few details as to his understanding of the cultivation of the presence of God in his life, several practices of the society would have supported the members' cultivation of this attitude:

a) *The Oblate cross* - The missionary cross worn by the Society members served several purposes. In addition to identifying themselves as missionary preachers to wherever they may be sent, the cross was also to be a constant reminder of Jesus whose virtues they sought to imitate, and to whom they would offer short prayers.¹⁰⁹

b) *Community respect for an atmosphere of recollection* - The practice of respecting silence within Society residences had the goal of supporting the members' development of this sensitivity to God's presence in their lives. Regulations in the early Society rules governed house silence and otherwise sought to support an overall attitude of prayer and recollection. De Mazenod reminded the members that such observance was essential for their growth in spiritual recollection. This was so necessary for the fruitfulness of their ministry, given its demands which pulled them away from regular community life and its observances.¹¹⁰

c) *Prayers before and after meals and other activities* - We should not ignore the importance of the innumerable prayers which de Mazenod and the missionaries prayed at various times each day. The simple prayer before and after meals or other activities served to remind them of God's continual presence in their lives, and to see themselves within God's ongoing plan for salvation.

¹⁰⁸ Notes on May 1824 retreat, in *EO* 15.156.

¹⁰⁹ "This crucifix will serve as the credentials of their ambassadorship to be carried out by them among different peoples to whom they will be sent... They will often fix their eyes on this crucifix, take it in their hands, and while holding it direct toward it frequent aspirations." Part two, ch. 3, sec. 3, art. 2-3. 1825, 67.

¹¹⁰ Part two, ch. 2, sec. 1, art. 8. 1825, 56.

Chapter Three

DE MAZENOD'S GROWING ABILITY TO LOVE THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

Eugene de Mazenod's ever - deepening love for Jesus, expressed through his practices of devotion and adoration, moved him to ever more fully reflect the divine love through his personal and ministerial interactions. This chapter focuses upon the second dimension in de Mazenod's response to the Paschal mystery; his deliberate practice of certain Christian virtues, each with its corresponding self-denial. The first part suggests a set of virtues which were especially important to de Mazenod; the remainder considers each one in turn.

DE MAZENOD'S LIFE OF PRACTICED VIRTUE

An Elusive Collection

The more Eugene was able to grow in his uniting love for Jesus, the more Jesus' love would tend toward expressing itself in Eugene's life, notably through his deliberate habitual exercise of certain virtues or sentiments. These were a product of his gradual growth in charity, his ever greater unity of love with God through the love of Jesus. One's life of virtue, while made possible through God's action in the individual's supernatural life, still needs to be exercised exteriorly. For Eugene, this called for the practice of a select set of virtues according to the way that Jesus of the gospels was perceived to have lived them, as understood by the spirituality of his time.

There are several passages in de Mazenod's writings where he mentions the idea of living a life of virtue in a general sense; others which relate to given virtues of Jesus; others still where he mentions specific

virtues which were important to him and, eventually, to his followers.¹ A search through his various documents and letters during this period reveals some notably favored ones which were promoted by the many spiritual writers and other figures of his time. Several of de Mazenod's practiced virtues have been discussed by some authors, while others have considered only one or the other.²

While Eugene himself mentioned groups of virtues in various written documents, he does not offer any formal list of those which were of special importance to him. Perhaps the most inclusive list which interested him is to be found in identical paragraphs in both the 1818 and 1825 Society rules:

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 seriously to be saints. They must walk courageously along the same paths trodden before them by so many apostolic laborers for the Gospel who, while carrying out the same ministry to which themselves now feel called, handed on such splendid examples of virtues. They must wholly renounce themselves, having uniquely view the glory of God, the good of the church, and the edification and salvation of souls. They must constantly renew themselves in the spirit of their vocation, living in a state of habitual self-denial, seeking at all times to reach the very summit of perfection, by working unremittingly to become humble, meek, obedient, lovers of poverty, penitent, mortified, free from inordinate attachment to the world or to family, filled with zeal, ready to sacrifice all their goods,

¹ For example, in his December 1810 conference notes (in *EO* 14.77) he wrote, "... my Savior, you call me too to spur myself to imitate the virtues of which you came on earth to give a heroic example... Support my tottering steps as I make this journey that all things conspire to urge me to pursue with courage. The great examples of your humility, penitence, infinite love would be more than enough to hasten me on my journey." An 1816 letter to a friend noted that "Humility, the spirit of abnegation, obedience, etc., and the utmost in the way of fraternal charity are also necessary for the good order and the happiness of a Society." (Letter to Charles Forbin-Janson, October 9, 1816, in *EO* 6.14). There are several such examples.

² For example, Pielorz (*The Spiritual Life*..., 236-64) identifies "...humility, obedience, patience, gentleness and fraternal charity" along with detachment from created things and from the affections; Taché, *La vie spirituelle*..., 357-65, specifically considers charity and zeal; Baffie considers a wider list.

talents, ease, and the sanctification of their neighbor. 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.³

The use of the word “virtue” in the documents does not follow the strict theological definition of the term as used in scholastic theology; de Mazenod apparently understood the term in the Sulpician sense, sometimes referred to in French as *sentiments*.⁴ The previous excerpt from the rule preface suggests a short list of qualities which a disciple should develop and practice, namely humility, meekness (the French quality of *douceur*), obedience, poverty, penance, mortification, and zeal. The text also notes the disciple’s need to trust in God’s plan being executed in the midst of difficulties and spiritual uncertainty (to be “full of unbounded confidence in God”).

A Suggested Rank of Importance for de Mazenod’s Qualities

Occupying a prominent place in the Constitutions and Rules of his spiritual family, it is interesting to consider the relative importance of these virtues and qualities within the writings of de Mazenod during his early ministry years. An analysis of his available letters and other written documents from December 1811 until July 1826 suggests that he had at least some familiarity with each of these qualities and a concern for their development.⁵ The appendix to this work contains more details of this examination. If we consider the results in two date periods which pivot about January 1816 (when the Society was founded), we note the following:

³ From the preface to the Rule. 1825, 14-5.

⁴ For example, in Olier, *Introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes / pietas seminarii* ch. 1, 8, we find “Our Lord has continued... to give (to men) his same Spirit, which is that of GOD, living in him, for establishing in them the same sentiments of his soul...” It is interesting to note the list of these virtues found in the table of contents, namely, the virtues of religion, humility, penance, mortification, patience, the French *douceur*, poverty, chastity, obedience, and charity towards the neighbor. Eugene had some acquaintance with this list; a personal copy of Olier’s book, given to him and signed by his mentor Fr. Emery, is displayed in the Museum of the Postulation of the Missionary Oblate General House.

⁵ December 1811 was the month of de Mazenod’s ordination to priesthood, during which he reflected considerably upon his imminent ministry; for that reason, we include it as part of our 1812-1826 time period.

humility, obedience, and poverty (19 each); zeal for souls (16); confidence in God (11); patience (10); penance (8); mortification (4); meekness, or the French *douceur* (2); *chastity* (0).

This simple analysis has a few limitations, of course, such as a subjective judgement of what constitutes a valid “mention” for each quality, and the few or absent mentions for certain other qualities. The resulting figures do, however, offer a beginning point for suggesting a relative importance of each mentioned sentiment, and with the exception of zeal and meekness are considered in the remainder of this chapter.⁶ For the purposes of this present study, their order of presentation is based upon their frequency of mention from January 1816 and the foundation of de Mazend’s missionary society. The principal reason is that this latter period would have followed a short period of maturation and adjustment for Eugene (the reader will note in the appendix how some items received more emphasis during the first half than in the second or vice versa, suggesting a shift in their importance for him).

Let us begin with a consideration of the virtue of humility.

The Virtue of Humility

Humility was the fundamental virtue for de Mazenod, who noted in 1812 that humility would have a primary place in his spiritual life.⁷ The table of virtues reveals that he was especially intent on following this resolution, as it was frequently mentioned both before and after 1816.

Humility is the virtue by which a person recognizes God as the source of all goodness within oneself (both divine graces received as well as natural abilities). Its opposite is found in the vice of pride, in which one thinks, acts, and considers oneself as self-sufficient and independent of this divine Source. Correctly understood, humility is a sincere acknowledgment of the truth of one’s place before God. It seeks to imitate the filial humility of Jesus who set aside his divinity to share in our humanity, and who freely acknowledged his receiving everything from the Father (Lk 22:42)

⁶ The italicized qualities of zeal and meekness have a special relationship with what is known as one’s “love of neighbor”; these are considered in the next chapter which examines de Mazenod’s life with regard to community and ministry.

⁷ “... I am convinced above all that the house of my salvation must be built on humility, as the Lord wishes to build on nothingness...” August 1812 retreat entry, *EO* 15.106.

to complete the Father's will in all things (Jn 5:30).

The Bérullian and post-Bérullian school, in its great reverence for the Incarnation as the crowning event expressing the humility of Jesus, placed a characteristic accent upon recognizing one's worthlessness due to the effects of original sin (one should recognize oneself as a *néant* (that one counts as "nothing") before God.⁸

Humility in the Life of de Mazenod before 1816

Eugene de Mazenod sought to develop within himself the virtue of humility through the development of his *self-knowledge, an awareness of one's sinfulness and past failures*.⁹ Not an empty concept for him, de Mazenod's vision of himself was illuminated by his deeply-felt relationship with the Savior. He noted in his December 1811 priestly formation retreat:

The thought that comes most frequently to me is that I am the greatest sinner I know. It isn't an exaggeration; I have the proof to hand in the memory of my numerous sins and the bad use made of so many graces... it is also from this conviction of my unworthiness that is born a feeling ... that I am to see myself in the house of the Father of the family only as a vile slave¹⁰

He likewise gave evidence of cultivating a deeper level of his contemporary sense of humility, adopting an attitude of deficiency in worthiness when compared to others. Desiring to imitate the holy lives of certain

⁸ Tronson, *Examens particuliers*, gives a definition for humility in the first examination of humility (290), and the five degrees are proposed in examinations four through eight. The work defines the virtue as "a virtue that makes the man, aware of his own miseries, treat himself only with despisement, and is at ease that others regard him and treat him as the same..." and offers steps for its cultivation.

⁹ *Introduction à la vie...* proposes three attainable degrees of humility as follows: a) to take pleasure in the true knowledge of oneself in one's own "misery" and faults (28); b) to consider others greater than oneself (33-4); c) to wish to be known in one's nothingness and lowliness (35). These seem to find greater resonance in de Mazenod's thought (particularly with de Mazenod's use of *néant*), in comparison to other possible reflections on humility which may have influenced him. For instance, Rodriguez in *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*, vol. 1 notes the three degrees as a) to have a humble opinion of oneself through self-knowledge; b) in being glad to be despised (itself containing four steps); c) to ascribe all one's goodness and utility to God, not being moved by honors or the esteem of others (150-251).

¹⁰ "On sin", December 1811 pre ordination retreat, in *EO* 14.95.

associates, de Mazenod in his retreat notes of 1812 noted:

Mr. Emery, Mr. Duclaux... and the vast majority of their pupils... will be all my life each one a helper... encouraging me to make progress. God, what virtues! How wretched I judge myself by comparison with all these holy clerics!... how far behind them I am in virtue.¹¹

This accompanies an apparent personal sense of nothingness on which, he felt, depended his spiritual life. Eugene's perceived call to penitential practices in his life would build upon this,¹² and he would seek to continually hold himself in humility by cultivating patience when contradicted by others and by joy in being despised or scorned.¹³ He also sought to live this degree of personal nothingness through his intention not to pursue an ecclesiastical career which would have been open to him, given his noble origins.¹⁴

The moment of his December 1814 retreat led de Mazenod to consider more closely the Ignatian "three degrees of humility" of the *Spiritual Exercises* as interpreted somewhat differently by the French Jesuit François Nepveu, a notable spiritual writer of the period. After considering the first two, de Mazenod contemplates the third - that of preferring poverty over riches, sufferings to pleasure and humiliation to glory - and commits himself to following this most complete way.¹⁵

¹¹ Retreat at Issy, August 1812, in *EO* 15.106.

¹² "...since the Lord wishes to build on nothingness..." *ibid.*

¹³ He writes of how his spirit of penance would aid in pursuing interior humility, "... holding me continually in humility, by patience in contradictions and by joy in being despised." Rules drawn up during Aix retreat, 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

¹⁴ De Mazenod in an April 1809 letter to his mother mentions his intention to remain as a cleric (*EO* 14.50). He also refused an appointment as diocesan vicar upon his ordination.

¹⁵ Twentieth meditation, Retreat of December 1814, in *EO* 15.130. De Mazenod records the thought of Nepveu found in *Retraite selon l'esprit et la méthode de saint Ignace pour les ecclésiastiques* as follows, "The third degree of humility or of perfection consists in being so disposed that... one would prefer poverty to riches, sufferings to pleasure and humiliations to glory, in such wise that if by an ordinance of Providence one were obliged to live in a state of grandeur and abundance of all goods, one would always have a secret and continual inclination that would bring us towards the state of humility and poverty. Here we have what is called having the mind of Jesus Christ."

Humility and the Society between 1816-1826

Convinced of the value for practicing the virtue of humility, Eugene insisted that it would have a fundamental place in the life of his new Society. He stated in an 1817 letter that humility was a principal virtue upon which the new religious congregation was to be founded.¹⁶

Indeed, the 1825 version of the missionaries' Constitutions and Rules lists humility under "other principal observances" and has as part of its goal to imitate in everything the example of Jesus Christ and his apostles.¹⁷ Members should

become well versed in the virtue of humility, a virtue that they will not cease to implore from God, since it is absolutely necessary for the perilous ministry in which they are engaged. So rich, indeed, are the fruits of this ministry, that it is to be feared that such marvelous achievements - due as they are to grace alone and whose glory consequently belongs only to God - might prove a dangerous snare for an imperfect missionary, who has not sufficiently cultivated this fundamental and indispensable virtue.¹⁸

The treatment of humility by the Missionaries' rule is believed to be from de Mazenod's own thought, except for the sixth article which is apparently a modification of a paragraph from the pertinent rule of St. Alphonsus.¹⁹ Some characteristics from Eugene's vision of the virtue include:

- 1) The rule notes that humility is one of the virtues with which the members would especially seek to "become other Jesus Christs."²⁰
- 2) The Missionaries would delight in seeking the lowest positions within the community, rejoicing when they are able to do so; they would

¹⁶ To Tempier, August 12, 1817, in *EO* 6.20. Read also Lamirande, " 'Parva congregatio' : la portée de l'expression, selon mgr de Mazenod," *Ét Obl* 20 (1961): 343-64; G. Blanchard, "Au coeur de notre spiritualité : les articles 287-298 de nos Saintes Règles", in *Ét Obl* 17 (1958): 200-6.

¹⁷ Part two, ch. 3, sec. 1. 1825, 62.

¹⁸ Part two, ch. 3, sec. 1, art. 5. 1825, 63.

¹⁹ Cosentino, *Histoire des...*, vol. 1, 73-6. The work includes the section of the relevant text of this Redemptorist source, "Costituzioni e regole della Congregazione dei Sacerdoti sotto il titolo del Santissimo Redentore (Napoli, 1791)". The section of the Missionaries' rule in question is part two, ch. 3, sec. 1, a. 3-9 (1825, 63-4).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, art. 3.

actively seek to cultivate this with the aid of their superior.²¹

3) The members will consider it an honor to discharge the most humble duties of the house; the superior himself is encouraged to serve at table as part of the regular rotation; and members in community life shall vie for the last place rather than the first unless otherwise prescribed. These are probably inspired by the Redemptorist rule.²²

De Mazenod on several occasions gave personal testimony to this virtue during these first years of the new missionary society, when his more attractive pastoral approach sometimes clashed with the prevailing practice. Several parish priests, unappreciative of the growing influence of the Society and its favor among their people, sometimes resorted to calumny or hidden political maneuvering within their diocese. Leflon recounts one episode during those difficult years in which Eugene dealt peacefully or even mutely with those who challenged him, rather than in a way more to be expected of one with his aristocratic background and expressive temperament.²³

Despite de Mazenod's emphasis upon cultivating the virtue of humility, he was always careful to respect the inherent dignity of ecclesiastical office and authority. His own position as first superior general of the *Missionaries of Provence* was a challenge for his sense of humility as he deliberately sought no positions of importance; once appointed, though, he insisted on every ecclesiastical right and courtesy which were due this office.²⁴

The Virtue of Obedience

Obedience would have to be the second virtue of special importance

²¹ "... the missionaries will take pleasure in occupying the last place. Without ostentation they will vie for it and will gladly and humbly do the most unpretentious work in the house. They will genuinely rejoice when they are humiliated and held in contempt, and, when they fall short of their pious desires, they will apply to the superior for additional opportunities..." art. 6, 1825, 63. It is interesting to note in the sixth *examen* on humility from the *Examens particuliers*, "Have we avoided all occasions of attracting attention to ourselves (*paroître*), gladly working in the most hidden places, and valuing as most honorable some of the lowest occupations (*des emplois les plus vils*) and from which everybody else flees?" (p. 301).

²² Articles 7-9. 1825, 64; see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 96-7.

²³ Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 129-44.

²⁴ See the account of Fortuné de Mazenod's elevation to the episcopacy in *ibid.*, 64-86 & 184-216.

in de Mazenod's spiritual life. It was considered by spiritual writers to be the most important evangelical virtue and religious vow, since obedience leads to growth in humility. It is also through obedience to God that one is able to make a complete offering of self.²⁵

"I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (Jn 5:30b) summarizes well Eugene de Mazenod's intention to practice the virtue of obedience. Obedience is the submission of personal volition to the divine will which seeks the salvation of all creation. An exercise of the will, one's deepest act of self-offering to God through obedience serves to complete one's offering of self to the Father.²⁶ The zealous Eugene was drawn to this lofty desire to completely offer himself, in imitation of his Savior.

De Mazenod and the Importance of His "Rule of Life"

The desirability of having a personal spiritual program of life to follow as an aid to spiritual growth and obedience was already a common practice before the early nineteenth century, and was an essential component of Eugene's seminary formation. Together with an exacting rule for daily seminary life, a personal rule aided to instill an attitude of promptness and regularity which would assist the future priest in keeping a spiritual focus amid his numerous ministerial demands. When approved by the appropriate authority of one's superior or spiritual director, a rule of life subsequently carried the weight of God's will as being expressed through authority and became a more concrete and sure way to follow God's plan through daily life and events.²⁷

The observance of one's personal rule of life in every detail, as well as one's attitude of responsibility toward it, was an important theme in the seminary practice of *particular examen*. The author addressed himself to the daily rule of seminary life as well as to one's personal rule, and even counsels the observance of the rules appropriate to an organized commu-

²⁵ Olier, *Introduction à la vie...*, ch. 8, 142.

²⁶ Rodriguez, *The Practice of...*, vol. 3, 225-30. For more on de Mazenod's regard for obedience, read *DOV*, s.v. "Obedience."

²⁷ The basic intent for a personal rule of life was to assist an individual in responding in docile obedience to the subtle movements of the Holy Spirit in daily life, and to live a more concrete form of obedience to one's spiritual guide; see *DS* 13, s.v. "Règlement de vie." Formation in punctuality and exactitude was part of the Sulpician formation program; see Icard, 108.

nity. The guidance of one's rule was to be considered a blessing and the manifestation of the will of God for a person, not to be taken lightly.²⁸

We first note de Mazenod's practice of living by a personal rule given him by his mentor Zinelli while in Venice.²⁹ He produced another rule to follow during his years of seminary life, and each year he reflected upon how well he had been faithful to it during that period. Eugene initiated yet another rule for himself upon leaving the seminary for his Aix ministry, and his annual retreats normally included his reflection on how well he had observed it.³⁰ He would modify his rule when necessity required, following the guidance and approval of his spiritual director. As we have noted earlier, de Mazenod was particularly rigorous in observing both the rules of the seminary and his own personal rule of life; his difficulty in following his personal rule distressed him during his first years of ministry.³¹

We find him reflecting upon the need for a personal rule in a December 1812 retreat, noting that the existence of a rule had long been recognized as essential for a serious disciple.

It has always been recognized in the Church, and by people wishing to reach perfection, that if one would reach and maintain oneself in it, one must submit to a fixed and invariable rule which, in its ceaseless subjugation of the disorders of the senses and the inconstancy that is native to the human will, was like a strict and rigorous Peda-

²⁸ Tronson, *Examens particuliers*, 48-58, offers five *examens* concerning fidelity to a seminarian's rule of life, which inquire as to his esteem for his rule; faithfulness in observing all of it; punctuality in observing it; his interior dispositions toward the rule; and his reasons for not having kept the rule. Faithfulness to one's personal rule is the theme of part three of Tronson's *De l'obéissance* (Paris : J.-P. Migne, 1857), also part of the Saint-Sulpice spiritual program.

²⁹ Eugene had received a short personal rule of life from Zinelli during his sojourn in Venice. The original document is no longer available but the text is reprinted in Rey, vol. 1, 25-6; it was essentially a daily regime of morning prayer and other pious exercises. For additional thoughts on this, see J. Morabito, *Je serai prêtre...*, 14-6.

³⁰ For instance, he wrote "I will impose a penance on myself for each inexcusable failure to keep the articles of my rule. This penance will be proportionate to the gravity of the point neglected. Retreat notes of 1813, in *EO* 15.121.

³¹ De Mazenod had submitted one to Mr. Duclaux (found in *EO* 15.109); his director approved his intended ministries and his rule, writing that "I am delighted with what you told me concerning your manner of life. Don't change a single iota of it unless it is absolutely necessary." Letter of February 23, 1813, in Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 406.

gogue who in his unbending strictness never permits his disciple to depart on frivolous pretexts from the rules that an enlightened wisdom has dictated to him... It is as it were a compass of the soul's dispositions... made during the blessed time of a retreat... to serve as a monument to the solemn pact which was made between the soul and its God.³²

Eugene adopted the rule of the *Missionaries of Provence* as his personal rule following their acceptance in October 1818, and one of his subsequent retreat writings shows his concern to follow them or adapt them to his particular circumstances.³³

Other Aspects of de Mazenod's Attitude toward Obedience before 1816

Eugene de Mazenod had a number of motives for cultivating the virtue of obedience in his life, formed principally during his years at Saint-Sulpice. Some of them are perennial, classical reasons, traces of which may be found from the time of the *devotio moderna* and apparent in the subsequent thought of Ignatius of Loyola and the post-Bérullian French School. Other reasons and interpretations of the virtue were more limited to his historical moment through influences such as Tronson; among them, we find the following:

1) *His desire to imitate Jesus*. This was the foundational guiding principal for de Mazenod's pursuit of the virtue, summarizing all other reasons. In this, de Mazenod was true to the roots of his Sulpician formation and the much longer Christian tradition of the disciple's configuration to Christ through following Jesus' life example. The hierarchical understanding of all the world, its relation between Creator and created, was well-expressed in the Bérullian relationships of sovereignty of God and the corresponding dependence of all creation. As Jesus perfectly expressed his filial relationship to his Father through complete submission to the divine will in all things, so his disciples are called to do likewise.³⁴

³² "Rule drawn up during Aix retreat, December, 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

³³ He reflects upon his ability to faithfully observe the rule during periods of absence from the community in his May 1824 retreat, in *EO* 15.156.

³⁴ Olier's *Introduction à la vie...* (ch. 13, 142-7) offers several reasons for cultivating the virtue, namely: 1) to be entirely responsive as dependent creatures upon the will of God the source of all life; 2) to imitate Jesus' filial obedience; 3) as servants to the Master who has redeemed us and has claim over us; 4) that our own will be offered

2) *A mortifying way to self-conquest*. De Mazenod notes in a general list of counsels for seeking spiritual perfection that one should conform oneself totally to God's will, mainly through accepting those things which ran contrary to one's own desires.³⁵ He also wrote:

... perfect obedience consists in doing what is prescribed for us without delay, with fidelity, joyfully, no questions asked, never asking for reasons or motives... in doubtful cases... when one cannot presume what obedience prescribes, choose what goes more against our tastes and inclinations. It is in this that the *vince te ipsum* consists that was so often inculcated and recommended by St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius.³⁶

The cultivation of personal obedience was considered the shortest route to acquire the other virtues.³⁷

3) *An ascetical aid to growth in humility*. Following the counsel of his time which advised against trusting one's own volition, de Mazenod saw his practice of this virtue as an aid to growth in humility. A counsel from the *Imitation of Christ* notes that one should seek to become humble through the overcoming of one's own will and Eugene sets out in his first seminary year to do likewise.³⁸ He notes in his early seminary retreat notes that he will observe:

in sacrifice to God; 5) to be fitting temples of the Holy Spirit; 6) to reflect our state of being dead to all things of the world, including our own will; 7) due to our rightful existence as penitents, in which we hold no claim of self before God.

³⁵ "To conform oneself in everything and without reserve to God's will principally in the things that are contrary to our taste..." found in a list of counsels for achieving religious perfection, 1809, in *EO* 14.39. This is a list that Eugene recommended to his mother for spiritual growth. He noted that the thought is found in the writings of Teresa of Avila; it is reasonable to assume that these views helped to form his own appreciation for the virtue.

³⁶ General counsels for achieving religious perfection, circa 1809, in *EO* 14.39, eighth point. *Vince te ipsum* translates as "conquer yourself."

³⁷ Rodriguez, *The Practice...*, vol. 3, 228-9. *The Imitation of Christ* book III, ch. 56.1, 214 reads "my son, to the degree that you can leave yourself behind, to that degree will you be able to enter into Me."

³⁸ *The Imitation of Christ*, book III, ch. 13, 133 notes that "You are your soul's most troublesome and worst enemy, especially when you and your spirit are not in harmony. If you wish to have control over your flesh and blood you must acquire genuine self-contempt." Olier's *Introduction à la vie...*, 146 notes that "One's self-will is the sworn enemy of salvation..." The sixth century *Rule of Benedict* emphasized one's "unhesitating obedience" (*oboedentia sine mora*) as an essential quality for achieving humility.

Absolute devotedness to the orders of the superiors, perfect submission to their least command, however puerile it seems to someone who has lived to be twenty six in the fullest independence... scrupulous obedience to the rule, even though I may seem overly meticulous in the eyes of my confreres...³⁹

He was also influenced by the memory of his earlier life of nobility, and how his road to total giving of himself to God was made more difficult by his earlier attitudes and practices. Obedience was an essential way of securing that desired end of being at the disposition of his God.

4) *De Mazenod and “blind” obedience.* This understanding of obedience, in which the subject makes for himself the orders of a superior not only with one’s will but in one’s intellectual acceptance of its rightness, was a well-known principal of Ignatian obedience. It would also have been encouraged for de Mazenod through the writings of Tronson. This more complete understanding of obedience, though not commonly found in our present day, would remain a persistent element in de Mazenod’s understanding of obedience through the rest of his life as superior general of the later Society.⁴⁰

A More Enhanced Understanding from 1814

Eugene’s December 1814 retreat offer an additional insight concerning the understanding of obedience. He noted in a reflection upon Jesus’ obedience before his ministry that the Savior had spent thirty years being responsible to his parents before assuming his short, three-year ministry. Why was that so? It must be that Jesus had been responsive to the Father’s specific will for him during those years.⁴¹ While still showing his willingness to recommit himself to a life divided between the demands of prayer and ministry, he makes a prayer: “May the Savior’s obedience not only with respect to his heavenly Father, but also in respect of Mary and Joseph

³⁹ Retreat of October, 1808, in *EO* 14.28.

⁴⁰ Tronson’s work *De l’Obéissance* speaks of this, offering Ignatius’ famous 1553 *Letter of Obedience* as a model. For de Mazenod’s regard for blind obedience, see *DOV*, s.v. “Obedience.”

⁴¹ “Such was the will of his Father, Jesus rendered more glory to God in the carpenter’s shop than he would have done filling Judea with the brilliance of his miracles.” Eighteenth meditation, retreat of December, 1814, in *EO* 15.130.

serve me as a rule to submit myself willingly, not only to events, but also to the wishes of others even when they are opposed to my own.”⁴²

The previously mentioned attitude of distrusting one’s self-determination in following the will of God is still found in de Mazenod’s thought just prior to 1816. He had been undecided for many months over whether to form a missionary society or to join an existing one. Shortly after becoming the acknowledged superior of the nascent *Missionaries of Provence*, he recognized a need to be accountable to another Society member out of respect for the virtues of obedience and humility. This led him to exchange a private vow of obedience with Tempier, his closest co-founder, on Holy Thursday, April 11, 1816.⁴³ He and Tempier were the only two members to vow obedience before it became a public and juridical requirement in the 1818 society Constitutions and Rules.

We find within both the 1818 and 1825 Rules that the *Missionaries* did not go as far as to exclusively embrace the Ignatian codification of obedience, though the underlying principles are to be found.⁴⁴ The part of the *Missionaries’* rule dealing with obedience is principally that which is found in the Redemptorist rule, though at least one writer has noted that the actual spirit of obedience was more Ignatian.⁴⁵

An additional motive for the virtue of obedience becomes more urgent with the foundation of the Society. Obedience is necessary for the well-functioning of any apostolic society and for its cohesive unity. Shortly after having received the papal approval of the 1826 statutes, de Mazenod appealed to the first Christian community image of “one heart and soul” which should be evident within their new congregation.

If all the members of the Society were what they ought to be, would we be in such a predicament in regard to composing the personnel of our houses?... Why can Fr. Touche not live under the obedience

⁴² Ibid. Olier also mentions Jesus’ long obedience to Mary and Joseph in his own treatment of obedience (*Introduction à la vie...*, 143).

⁴³ See Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 43; also Rey, vol. 1, 196-7.

⁴⁴ Most of the articles come from the Rule of St. Alphonsus and the Redemptorist *Statuti capitolari 1802*; a few others were likely inspired from Vincent de Paul and one from the Constitutions of St. Ignatius. See Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 91-5; 138-141; 154. See also, G. Fortin, “Les idées-force de la deuxième partie des constitutions,” *Ét Obl* 23 (1964): 86-8; G. Blanchard, “Au coeur de notre spiritualité: les articles 287-298 de nos Saintes Règles,” *Ét Obl* 17 (1958):198-201.

⁴⁵ Y. Beaudoin, “Mgr Eugène de Mazenod et les Jésuites,” *VOL* 51 (1992), 166.

of Fr. Honorat? Whence this repugnance which troubles the order of a nascent Society in which there should be only one heart and one soul? The fact is we are steeped in pride while still wishing to appear humble...⁴⁶

One difficulty for us who seek to live obediently is to be convinced that we are indeed being obedient to God's plan for us when it is imposed through physical limitations or the demands of the present moment. During this period, we find that Eugene needed to consider a few limitations concerning human health and functioning. He had found himself on the verge of death in 1814 due largely to his rigorous practices of fasting and lack of sleep, and indeed in 1816 he was once again forced (under obedience to Tempier) to seek rest and rejuvenation at Bonneveine. At this time, he noted the need to be more mindful of legitimate health needs; whether through age or human experience or both, de Mazenod was finally accepting human physical limitations as expressions of God's intent for individual disciples.⁴⁷ This awareness of having to submit himself to various imposed elements of God's will found in everyday realities is also apparent in de Mazenod's reflection:

I must above all be really convinced that I am doing God's will when I give myself to the service of my neighbor, immerse myself in the external business of our house, etc., and then do my best without worrying if, in doing work of this kind, I am unable to do other things which I would perhaps find more to my taste and seem more directly adapted to my own sanctification.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, he will continue to struggle with his acceptance of God's will made known in this way.

It is apparent that Eugene throughout this period had a very serious regard for the virtue of obedience in a way that seemed to resonate more

⁴⁶ Letter to Tempier, 9 March, 1826, in *EO* 7.229.

⁴⁷ "Soul and body are too closely linked to discount the infinite importance of regulating the latter's habits in such a way that it does no harm to the operations of the soul through exhaustion, etc... I have experience of such a setback. It is tiresome no doubt that the body's energies do not match the soul's activity, but that is how it is and that is God's will. So one has to go along with this way things are structured... for him to do his work." Annual retreat, approximately July-August, 1816, in *EO* 15.139.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

in spirit with the military exactness of Ignatian spirituality. This attitude followed his earlier training, and also resonated with an additional sense that God's immediate will for oneself is best determined through the observance of some rule of life. He was anxious to live by a rule in the first years of his ministry, and later had a deep love for that which the Society would ultimately produce. This was not because he was the principal rector, but rather his deep belief that one's cooperation with God in life was best realized in union with the mind of the Church and in obedience to her expressions of authority.

The Virtue of Evangelical Poverty

Evangelical poverty has maintained a consistent value throughout the evolution of both consecrated life and apostolic life and has remained a struggle for individuals and organized religious communities. The reasons for its practice within the first Christian communities, in imitation of Jesus and the first apostles, included the desire for detachment from the lure of created goods, to avoid the sin of avarice, and to provide for others who had less than sufficient living resources. The observance of evangelical poverty in both of its forms - interior (realizing a spiritual detachment or indifference to material possessions) and exterior (avoidance of material excess) - was considered the foundational vow for institutes of religious life prior to the Second Vatican Council.⁴⁹

Reanimating both the faith of the people and the image of the clergy were other major incentives for its conscientious practice in early nineteenth century France. The pre-revolutionary years had witnessed such clerical practices as a preoccupation for steady-income benefices and a preference for more lucrative urban parishes rather than the more impoverished ones found in the countryside. This had contributed to a lessening of social respect for religion and clergy. Efforts toward reanimation and renewal of the Church, with an emphasis upon a closer imitation of Jesus and the first

⁴⁹ De Mazenod notes in the preamble for both the virtue of poverty (part 2, ch. 1, sec. 1; 1818, 44) and later the vow (1825, 45), "Voluntary poverty has been regarded by the founders of religious orders as the foundation and support of spiritual perfection, as the impregnable bulwark of the religious life, and as the virtue that disposes us to acquire more easily the other virtues and to devote ourselves to good works." This likely finds some inspiration from Rodriguez (*The Practice...*, vol. 3, third treatise, ch.1, 135); see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 186-9.

apostles, included a renewed appreciation for the virtue of evangelical poverty in order to give greater credibility to proclaimers of the Gospel.

Evangelical Poverty in the Life of de Mazenod before 1816

It is important to note that the nobleman Eugene de Mazenod, in his earlier life, had experienced both material deprivation and privilege. His exile years eventually brought him face to face with the common lot of the materially poor through the setting of life with his father and uncles, in the lack of a steady income, their transient lifestyle, and his intermittent education. Eugene would have observed some of its more evil side-effects and undesirability. Conversely, his sojourn in Palermo allowed him to experience something of the other extreme while enjoying the more privileged life of noble society which accompanied his spiritual tepidity of that period.

In his relatively few written thoughts concerning the virtue of poverty during his seminary and early ministry years, Eugene does not cite any direct source to his thought. His first thoughts however seem to resonate with his Saint-Sulpice training, particularly from the penitential timbre of Olier's *Catéchisme chrétien* and the *Examens particuliers*,⁵⁰ and Eugene sought with characteristic zeal to practice several of these in his early life of discipleship.

We note in his Saint-Sulpice writings that he sought to limit his possessions and lifestyle as atonement for his past infidelities. His first year in the seminary found him identifying this with a penitential attitude.

...to punish myself for the creature comforts I over-indulged in in the world, and the kind of fondness I had for certain vanities, I shall observe poverty in my cell, and live simply outside it. I will do without fire so far as I can without excessive discomfort, I will see to my own needs, sweep my room, etc.⁵¹

His attitude of simplicity is evident. Upon receiving a pocket watch in May 1809, seeking to avoid nonessentials, he noted that a matching chain could easily be replaced by a length of ribbon.⁵²

⁵⁰ Olier, *Introduction à la vie...*, 114-30; Tronson, *Examens particuliers*, 426-37.

⁵¹ Personal resolutions, 1808, in *EO* 14.28. Noble-born seminarians such as de Mazenod would commonly arrange for a personal valet to assist them with personal needs; here he is declining the service.

⁵² Letter to his mother, May 29, 1809, in *EO* 14. 55.

His spirit of poverty also affected his manner of dress, evident in a cassock of plain material, woolen cincture, hair worn straight rather than shaped. One telling observation reads:

To be perfectly truthful, I don't see why men always want to adorn and pamper a miserable carcass which one day will be food for worms, and which is never less submissive than when it is catered to. And what is merely pitiable in men as a whole, becomes monstrous in men who take up the Cross of Christ.⁵³

His imposed regimen of simple surroundings would remain throughout his seminary years, as he noted at the end of his studies:

Strictly speaking, I have hardly anything. The miserable treadle-bed I had, was mislaid during vacation, and I have borrowed one. Everything consists of little more than a simple mattress, a table, three rickety cane chairs; that's all. And yet, I do not miss my beautiful room at Aix, since it no longer suits my taste, nor does it fit in with the simplicity I hope to practice for the rest of my life.⁵⁴

His 1814 retreat gives a hint of change in his personal reasoning. Eugene reflected upon the reality of Jesus' family and personal poverty which were evident from the conditions of his birth. God's infinite wisdom had deigned that his Son lived as he did, thus the virtue of poverty had to have been blessed by the Father and revealed through the Son. In effect,

Poverty is preferable to riches. So, if one is rich, one must be detached from riches, one must joyfully strip oneself, reduce oneself in spite of opulence to interior poverty, namely in the midst of abundance deprive oneself of more than what is superfluous; so if one is poor, one must really guard against the desire to become rich... Such is the teaching of the Savior.... is it not all the more so for a cleric?⁵⁵

Here one notices evidence of a change in Eugene's earlier reason for cultivating the virtue of evangelical poverty. Absent is the earlier emphasis of punishment for sins in seeking to imitate Jesus in his self-sacrifice;

⁵³ Eugene to his mother, January 6, 1810, in *EO* 14.66.

⁵⁴ Eugene to his mother, June 26-30, 1812, in Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 1, 304-5.

⁵⁵ December 1814 retreat, fifteenth meditation, in *EO* 14.130.

we now notice a more simple yet profound reason, that Jesus carried this attitude of detachment throughout his life. While de Mazenod will not altogether drop the motive of expiation for living the virtue, we will find that there is now a lessening of harshness in motive, one which will find its way into his redaction of the Society rule.

His Attitude toward the Virtue between 1816 and 1826

As mentioned earlier, the subject of evangelical poverty throughout Christian history has not been an easily acceptable one among disciples and communities. The first chapter noted that the ideal of those who sought to imitate the first apostolic community often became the victim of individual interpretations and concessions, with the result of a lessened community witness and often its decline.

Eugene de Mazenod followed a very gradual course of introducing the pursuit and commitment of evangelical poverty into his nascent missionary society. He intended that the virtue be included as a Society practice, asserting to Tempier in 1815 that their way would be a less popular one among the clergy.⁵⁶ The specific practice of the virtue of poverty does not receive direct mention in the 1816 rule beyond the collective “virtues of religion.”

The first specific mention of the virtue appears in the 1818 rule. The introduction and at least part of the inspiration for a “spirit” of poverty was likely derived from Rodriguez’ interpretation of the Ignatian practice, while the more concrete legislation was taken almost completely from the 1802 Redemptorist Statuti Capitolari 1802.⁵⁷ The spirit of poverty also appears in other sections of the rule; for example, the section on conducting parish missions regulated the missionaries’ mode of travel⁵⁸ and prescribed a very simple diet.⁵⁹ This will be repeated in the later 1825 text.

But the idea of incorporating any vows into de Mazenod’s vision of the missionary society had not been explicitly included in the 1816 com-

⁵⁶ De Mazenod writes that their particular way would not be easy, rather contrary to the prevailing attitude. “We must be truly saints ourselves... Most [priests] wish to go to heaven by a road other than that of abnegation, renunciation, forgetfulness of self, poverty, fatigue, etc.” Letter to Tempier, Dec 13, 1815, in *EO* 6.7.

⁵⁷ Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 86-90.

⁵⁸ Ch. 2, sec. 1, art. 7. *1818*, 20.

⁵⁹ Sec. 2. *1818*, 29-30.

pact, and a vow of evangelical poverty had not been included in the 1818 rule. Eugene regretted this in a May 1818 retreat note, in light of his deeply felt call to holiness:

My God! Who can doubt you are the master of hearts?... I feel I am so different today from what I was yesterday!... the thought that engaged and beguiled me throughout my thanksgiving, is that I must be a saint, and... I did not doubt that it had to be; a glance at the saints of our time like Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice and Blessed Alphonsus di Liguori, seemed to give me encouragement and strength. The means one must take to achieve this, far from frightening me, confirmed me in this confidence... I asked myself why, to the vows of chastity and obedience... I did not add that of poverty...⁶⁰

The vow was finally accepted as part of the Society rule during the 1821 general chapter. According to a copy of the report for that session, de Mazenod argued for the vow by using one of the very objectives for their foundation - that the group would strive to reproduce the virtues of the various religious institutes which had disappeared because of the French Revolution. Evangelical poverty was an essential component in such a life; hence, it was imperative for the *Missionaries of Provence* to cultivate it.⁶¹

The value and practice of personal detachment also appear in de Mazenod's writings during this period. He noted in a post-1817 retreat reflection that a disciple must seek to follow the spirit rather than letter of the law in the matter, coupled with the need to rid oneself of unnecessary accumulations.

Temporal goods, the abundance of which constitutes riches, are the necessary material for many of the good works prescribed by J.C. If he ordered all the faithful to abandon them, he would be contradicting himself... extreme poverty is an evil in itself rather than a good; it is an obstacle to virtue and a source of many violent temptations, injustice, corruption, impudence, laziness, discouragement, despair. This is why Scripture says: "Give me neither riches nor poverty

⁶⁰ Retreat notes, 1818, in *EO* 15.145.

⁶¹ The report notes, "The Very Reverend Father gave a variety of explanations relative to the practice of poverty; he declared that the spirit of our Rules was that it was to be lived as if it were in that regard under the most austere rules..." Pielorz, *Les Chapitres Généraux...*, vol. 1, 7. See also *DOV*, s.v. "Poverty"; G. Cosentino, "L'introduction des vœux dans notre congrégation", in *Ét Obl* 13 (1954):305-8.

(Prov. 30:8)... when [Jesus] tells us to renounce riches, he is obliging us only to do battle with the passions that they naturally excite...⁶²

* * *

I have always believed that the anathema laid by J.C. on riches is to be understood only of those who do not possess riches but are possessed by them, who make an idol of their money and place in it all their hopes and who use them only abusively, denying the poor man the help he has a right to demand, and making criminal use of what should be poured into the bosom of the indigent...⁶³

* * *

In general poverty is a virtue that brings a person to despise riches and temporal goods as things vain and empty by comparison with supernatural and eternal goods.... Religious poverty... does not only despise transitory goods but it gives them up as well so as to deprive itself of them even as regards the hope itself of having any in the future...⁶⁴

Practical-minded, he recognized the usefulness and necessity of material goods for the ministry.⁶⁵ He was also concerned in a letter to the novice master in 1826 that the novices be formed in a love of poverty among their necessary virtues.⁶⁶

An additional reason for cultivating simplicity was to have more available for the poor to whom they ministered; in suggesting that his bishop-uncle live within a Society residence, de Mazenod wrote that “Horror of pomp, love of simplicity, economy so as to have more for the needs of the poor...” would aid both the future spiritual need of the bishop and the material concern for his future flock.⁶⁷

⁶² Reflections on evangelical poverty, 1818-1821, in *EO* 15.150.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ “I thank God for giving me this spirit of detachment; I despise money, I make no use of it for myself. But I must foresee the needs that others may have in the future, make provision without attachment.” Retreat notes, 1821, in *EO* 15.155.

⁶⁶ Letter to Fr. Courtès, Feb. 2, 1826, in *EO* 7.222.

⁶⁷ Letter to Fortuné de Mazenod, November 17, 1817, in *EO* 15.143.

Confidence in God

A Lived Expression of the Theological Virtue of Hope

De Mazenod's developing confidence in God's goodness and providence in his life was a special concern for him, to be cultivated by all who seriously intended to follow the way of the gospel. This particular practice is also interesting because cultivating one's confidence in God and in God's love and mercy is considered a lived expression of the virtue of hope.⁶⁸ While de Mazenod's writings do not offer notable reflections on any of the theological virtues, they were known to be among the subjects of his daily meditation. As with the moral virtues and qualities of this chapter, his spiritual program outlined the way to practice this particular one, a mark of a spiritually mature disciple.

The theological virtue of hope, acting upon the will and dependent upon the virtue of faith, is a belief in the merciful goodness of God and the possibility of salvation offered by the mystery of the Cross. Hope looks ahead to what is possible and what is promised to Jesus' disciples, and strengthens one in overcoming the obstacles to reach it.⁶⁹ The triumph of Jesus over the cross strengthens us to endure the sufferings, difficulties, and temptations of everyday life, thus ultimately to realize one's new life in Christ. This is a principle which is repeatedly encountered in the life of a spiritually maturing disciple, and we find that Eugene de Mazenod had many opportunities to practice it through his trust in God between 1812 and 1826.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Aumann, 258-62. All three theological virtues are active to some degree in the life of a disciple at any given moment, and one could argue for the practice of all of them within this chapter. The virtue of hope, however, inasmuch as it looks forward to one's new life in Christ, seems most readily suggested when one considers de Mazenod's firm determination to reorient himself according to the virtues of Jesus. Eugene in his spiritual life reflects several ways in which he gave outward expression to this channel of the Holy Spirit's activity in his life.

⁶⁹ For a comprehensive treatment of the theological virtue of hope, read Aumann, 258-66. Tronson considers the disciple's task: "Christian hope demands that the soul, persuaded of the power and the goodness of God, and leaning upon the promises and the merits of Our Lord, expects to possess him in eternity, and of receiving thus in this life all the necessary assistance, provided that for its part the soul lack nothing of being faithful in him." *Examens particuliers...*, second point, 238.

⁷⁰ The idea of confidence (or trust) in God is an expression of the virtue of hope found in spiritually advanced disciples, as explained in Aumann, 260-1. Tronson dis-

Confidence in God and de Mazenod before 1816

His early formation in enacting a spirit of confidence in God's goodness and mercy would have been augmented by his use of the *Examens particuliers* which briefly addresses it.⁷¹ Eugene's particular expression of hope through his growing trust in God's providence is to be found in some of his earlier writing; gradually, Eugene sought to express this through a related spiritual practice of abandonment to the will of God. His 1814 retreat was an opportunity to reflect upon the level of his achieving trust in God, as we find in a reflection upon the Holy Family's flight into Egypt.

Have I taken as model in this total, absolute abandonment this divine Master who only acted in this way so as to give me the example of what I should do? Hardly. In all truth I... do not act in the matters that are confided to me... I have too much fear of failure, I do indeed pray a little, but not enough, not as if I were counting on prayer, as the foundation, etc... yet nothing could be more reasonable than to abandon myself entirely to God in my needs as in my enterprises. He knows my needs, he is my Father... this trust, abandonment is even a duty for it renders glory to God, for glory being an appreciation accompanied with love and praise, we cannot find a better way to indicate this appreciation, love, praise to God than by abandoning ourselves entirely... to his will.⁷²

Further Challenges to Growth, 1816-1826

This basic principle will accompany de Mazenod during these years. The awareness of God's mercy and intended salvation for all people will be notably apparent in some of Eugene's mission preaching of the period, while the struggle to trust in God's providence is found in his writings to others during the first years of the Society with its many difficulties.

Following the nomination of his uncle Fortuné to the bishopric of Marseilles which better secured the future of the Society, Eugene was once again reminded of God's goodness to him and, as he noted:

cusses confidence in God following his considerations on hope in *Examens particuliers...*, 240-2.

⁷¹ *Examens particuliers...* 237-9.

⁷² 1814 retreat, seventeenth meditation, in *EO* 14.130. R. Moosbrugger concludes in his work that de Mazenod's growth in trusting God was a significant point of his spiritual growth between 1815 and 1837; see his *The Spirituality of Blessed Eugene de Mazenod from 1818 until 1837* (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1981), 137-46.

... I wish to abandon myself to Him without ever being anxious about anything, doing everything for his glory and leaving him to care of the rest. It is truly inconceivable how he makes everything accord with his designs by ways we never would have thought of.⁷³

Writing to Tempier again during a mission which might possibly bear little fruit, de Mazenod encouraged him with the words,

why so discouraged, dear friend, why the complaints? ... you must therefore appeal to God to make your words penetrate into hearts that are hardened... we shall see, when it comes to putting the grain in the barn who will be right...⁷⁴

This disposition of confidence in God was considered to be an important characteristic of the would-be missionary, being noted in the preamble to both the 1818 and 1826 Society rule.⁷⁵

This is not to say that Eugene was never subject to moments where his confidence in God was tested; one such moment is evident in a May 1824 retreat, during a perilous moment for the his society. In addition to serving as superior general, Eugene had been serving for less than a year as diocesan vicar to his bishop-uncle Fortuné, which added to internal Society tensions. Eugene reveals some of his thirst for a drop of the elixir of hope in God's accompaniment:

Sweet hope, you have ever brought me happiness, and been dear to me for bringing me to see in God a ravishing perfection which made me love him with a delicious abandon, so often have I preached you to my brothers to encourage them to serve God, stiffen them to love, more than fear him, sweet hope have you abandoned me? What will become of me if you do not sustain my faith, and temper what it teaches me of the rigours of my God's Justice. Come back to me, come back, and be forever my faithful companion in the exacting scrutiny I am going to carry out of my numberless infidelities....⁷⁶

⁷³ Letter to Fr. Tempier, August 22, 1817, in *EO* 15.21.

⁷⁴ Letter of November 22, 1819, in *EO* 6.48.

⁷⁵ Both rule prefaces note that a desirable trait of the missionaries was that they be "full of confidence in God"; *1818*, 18; *1825*, 15.

⁷⁶ Retreat in Aix, May 1824, in *EO* 15.156. The acceptance of Eugene and Tempier to accompany Fortuné to Marseille resulted in much tension in the community amid some accusation of self-ambition on the parts of de Mazenod and Tempier (REY, vol. 1, 315), and some bishops had threatened to withdraw their men from what was juridically

These glimpses into de Mazenod's life between 1812 and 1826 are sufficient to reveal the attitudes of one who lived with a sense of hope in the goodness of God; a sense awakened with his early experience of a loving Savior and exercised in both his ministry and leadership of the Society.

The Virtue of Patience

The virtue of patience “enables one to bear physical and moral sufferings without sadness of spirit or dejection of heart.”⁷⁷ It is associated with the moral virtue of temperance and considered a necessary virtue for Christian life. Olier linked it to the vocation to priesthood and its sacrificial nature, noting that “Patience is a virtue which makes us carry in peace our pains and sufferings, and which gives us joy in tribulations which it may please God to send us.”⁷⁸

De Mazenod and Patience before 1816

Impatience was a particular struggle for de Mazenod during much of his priestly life. As Pielorz notes, “he was short on patience. Impatience was a driving force in his life. He felt the need to immediately thrust aside the difficulties on his path... he wants his projects to advance rapidly, to proceed by forced marches...”⁷⁹ His impatience would find expression particularly in “violent, thoughtless speech, like a discharge of vital energy under high pressure.”⁸⁰ We note de Mazenod's growing self-awareness in a 1808 autobiographical sketch to his spiritual director:

I am a lively and impetuous type of character. When I want something I want it very badly, I am impatient of the least hold-up and I find delays unbearable. Firm in my resolutions, I chafe against anything that gets in the way of carrying them out...⁸¹

It is striking to note that Eugene makes virtually no mention of it in the available reflections or letters between 1812 and 1816. He likely intended

seen as merely a society of secular priests. These had preceded de Mazenod's retreat in question, but the condition of the Society was still precarious at that moment. See Moosbrugger, *The Spirituality...*, 33-41.

⁷⁷ Aumann, 308.

⁷⁸ Olier, *Introduction à la vie...*, 104.

⁷⁹ Pielorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 202.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Self-portrait for Duclaux, 1808, in *EO* 14.30.

to include this shortcoming when he generally alluded to other failures in his quest to imitate Jesus in his life, but he does not leave any significant mention of this struggle during the very first years of his ministry.

Emergence of Patience as an Issue after 1816

It is only after the organization of his mission society that we begin to notice that his lack of patience becomes more of a concern and struggle for him. It is perhaps significant that it follows de Mazenod's final self-commitment to ministry among others rather than continue to work alone or enter a more enclosed religious order. Immersed in the numerous administrative details of leadership, much closer contact with other Society members in contrast to his earlier solitary existence which depended upon solace and tranquility of separation from others, could only force this issue to re-emerge in the ordinary events of life. The more active and involved life for which de Mazenod opted following 1816 served to provide the crucible for the subsequent growth in this virtue.

He reveals a range of interpretations concerning the virtue in the few treatments of patience which appear between 1816 and 1826. Among the principal points are that patience has worth in being shown for the sake of others, as he noted in a November 1817 letter.⁸² A second is that patience should be shown in response to the shortcomings of others in an act of charity.⁸³ Third, the exercise of patience in fulfilling some undesired and apparently worthless task can actually be pleasing to God.⁸⁴

The Virtue of Penance

The original sense of the Latin word *paenitentia* expressed the Gospel summons to an inclusive metanoia or re-orientation of one's life according to the message and way of Jesus. The virtue of penance addresses

⁸² Letter to Tempier, November, 1817, in *EO* 6.30. De Mazenod laments in the letter that, despite his patience, certain pastors were not receptive to his youth catechism ministry.

⁸³ "Repress absolutely and totally those first movements of impatience, petty acts of bluntness occasioned, it is true, very often by others' faults... Put up with the faults of others with charity." Summary of 1816 retreat resolutions, 1818, in *EO* 15.146.

⁸⁴ "Yesterday... boredom personified came and ensconced himself in my presence rigged out in all his finery; he sat down on my poor sofa as if were on his throne... my grim task was to do violence to nature and entertain the personage who was slowly killing me." Letter to Adolphe Tavernier, October, 1819, in *EO* 15.151.

the disciple's two-fold need for a) seeking a changed life, and b) a desire to compensate for one's past offenses.⁸⁵

In addition to his appreciation for the sacrament of penance, de Mazenod had a concern to meet the demands of satisfaction for past and present sins.⁸⁶ His concern for the expiatory value of the sacrament was part of his desire to embody Jesus' spirit of penance, which Eugene saw as a virtue to be imitated. The disciple's practice of this was in imitation of Jesus who, following his vocation to self-oblation throughout his life, accepted the lifelong accumulation of his sufferings as satisfaction to the Father for the sins of others. Jesus lived this spirit of penance by accepting whatever difficulties came his way, external (physical sufferings) as well as internal, in a spirit of obedience to his Father's plan for his life.⁸⁷ Those disciples desiring to imitate him as fully as possible could not neglect adopting this attitude within themselves, for their own sins as well as for those of others, in an ongoing attitude of "completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church." (Col 1:24)

The Importance of the Virtue for de Mazenod prior to 1816

As noted in the second chapter, Eugene held a deep appreciation for the action of the Savior in having renewed his religious fervor and Christian commitment. In response to this, he was drawn to the two mentioned aspects of penitential practice. His fundamental reason was to foster a new life in Christ as an act of gratitude; the second was a recognition of the Christian duty to make satisfaction (or *expiation*) for past sins and present failures, which also expressed his sorrow and determination to avoid these in the future. His retreat notes just preceding his priesthood ordination contain these sentiments.

this meditation [on the prodigal son] leads naturally to a consider-

⁸⁵ *DS*, s.v. "Pénitence."

⁸⁶ *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, fourteenth session, 88-99. *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, edited by J.A. McHugh & C.J. Callan (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1923) notes that the virtue of penance "... consists in turning to God sincerely and from the heart, and in hating and detesting our past transgressions, with a firm resolution of amendment of life, hoping to obtain pardon through the mercy of God."

⁸⁷ J.J. Olier, *Introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes*, 66. Eugene's allusion to this virtue has been noted in *EO* 14.77.

ation of what one could do to make satisfaction to a divine justice so cruelly offended... Scripture clearly lays down for us that we have to, that it is indispensable to lead a mortified, penitential, crucified life so as to make reparation for our past sins, to produce in a word worthy fruits of penance: *Facite fructos dignos paenitentiae* (Luke 3,8). Adam, David and other penitents had, after being forgiven, to do penance. And all the saints understood it in that sense: there is not one of them who was not a model in this sense. Have I less sins than they to expiate, or do I really claim to have a better understanding of the Saviour's teaching?⁸⁸

There are two classes of penitential practices which one may adopt - the external (active means such as fasting and other practices upon the body) as well as the internal variety (accepting as penance any undesirable circumstance in life resulting from one's living conditions, social interactions, illness, or other unsolicited and irritating realities of daily life, etc.). We find in his writings of this first period that de Mazenod seemed to focus principally upon a few external practices, most notably that of fasting, as well as performing other mortifying practices of the time for penitential reasons such as use of the hairshirt, the chain, the discipline (or scourge). His attitude of expiation for past sins resonates with the attitude toward expiation found in the Roman Catechism of his time⁸⁹ and further promoted by Olier:

In honor and in union with Jesus Christ our Lord, a penitent before God for my sins and for the sins of all, I make profession to do penance every day of my life, and to regard myself in all things as a poor and miserable sinner and unworthy penitent....⁹⁰

For an individual intent upon following the way of Christ in his or her life, satisfaction through some penitential expression sought to compen-

⁸⁸ Retreat preceding ordination, Dec. 1811, in *EO* 14.95. The Latin phrase calls one to produce worthy fruits of repentance.

⁸⁹ *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 264, notes of the virtue of penance: "That penance is a virtue may also be inferred from the ends which the true penitent proposes to himself. The first is to destroy sin and efface from the soul its every spot and stain. The second is to make satisfaction to God for the sins which he has committed, which is clearly an act of justice. Between God and man, it is true, no relation of strict justice can exist, so great is the distance that separates them; yet between them there is evidently a sort of justice, such as exists between a father and his children, between a master and his servants."

⁹⁰ J.J. Olier, *Introduction à la vie...* 73.

sate for the injustice of sins committed against God. Besides his perceived past sinfulness, de Mazenod was also concerned for his continual difficulty to completely observe his obligations imposed by both his priestly vocation and those assumed in his rule of life. His annual retreat periods would include at least some mention of his failure to meet some aspect of his personal rule; he would typically reassert his intention to do so, and consider some activity to provide a measure of satisfaction and correction for any failures.⁹¹

De Mazenod's retreat notes from December 1814 reveal signs of a gradually maturing attitude regarding his penitential life. He noted that his zeal for exterior penance may have been partially the result of self-aggrandizement in his priestly life, and that he would need to beware of this in the future;⁹² also that he should exercise more prudence in respecting legitimate physical needs.⁹³ At the same time, Eugene was still anxious to avoid any degree of sin in his life through following the way of the most virtuously successful saints.⁹⁴

His earlier near-fatal illness seemed to bring him to reconsider the penitential component of his particular and personal way of seeking to glorify God. Using the gospel image of the barren fruit tree which the owner considered cutting down, de Mazenod recalled that his illness had brought him to the point of death without yet being able to show quality fruit:

Great God! Would I have been found sterile? Would I have produced nothing but leaves?... the deadly blight that threatened it was destroyed, I hope, but it seems that it has exhausted its strength in expelling this poison, etc. it gives forth a large number of leaves, has beautiful bark, but the fruit is still not worth a lot. A lot of show, little in reality; outward beauty, substance still vitiated.⁹⁵

⁹¹ One example of this is from his retreat notes of December 1813, in *EO* 15.121. This was not an unusual practice for the time; L. Tronson, *Examens particuliers*, 52 in the second *examen* concerning one's *règlement* inquires, "for rendering perfect our fidelity, have we examined for a few moments each day the manner in which we have acted, imposing upon ourselves some penance for the faults which we may have committed?"

⁹² Retreat notes, December 1814, first meditation, in *EO* 15.130.

⁹³ Second meditation, *ibid.*

⁹⁴ Eighth meditation, *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Tenth meditation, *ibid.*

He interpreted this as due to tepidity on his part, and recommitted himself to his interior life. The best way to do this appeared for him to be that of religious consecrated life, guided by a rule. Alas! The conflict between regulated interiority and the demands of the ministry appear almost insurmountable.

Mine is a strange kind of sloth! There has never perhaps been anyone who experienced a desire for perfection so often, and no one who has been so captured by the attractions of this happy state, and yet on one too who has been more unfaithful to the resolutions which relate to it. Is it going to be the same this time as with the others? Yes, if I do not take better precautions to persevere in my good intentions... It must be agreed too that my readiness to be of service to others is being misused. I think that it is this dissipation in activities, etc., that does harm to the spirit of interiority ... so it will be vitally necessary to regulate very severely for the future my relations with my neighbor, and to foresee how I ought to go about it... what did the saints do? Let us enter into their style and put it into practice, for, since I must live in the midst of the world, and my position compels me to have dealings with many people great and small, it is essential for me that this kind of ministry be well regulated and help me to grow in perfection rather than take me away from it.⁹⁶

Penitential Observance among the Missionaries, 1816-1826

This quest for a demanding yet supportive lifestyle for both growth in virtue and the practice of penance would continue to accompany Eugene during the first years of his missionary society. The 1816 rule was a beginning, followed by the more detailed one of 1818. Until then he had to depend largely upon his own personal rule and the accompanying support of his new Society brothers, and would continue to find himself overextended and frustrated in his attempt to find a more accommodating lifestyle.⁹⁷

While Eugene continued in his ministerial life convinced of the need for expiatory penance within a disciple's life, a July 1816 letter to his father reveals a subtle change in his tone.

⁹⁶ Eleventh meditation, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ His fellow society brothers had insisted that he go away for rest and recovery. Retreat during an illness, July 1816, in *EO* 15.139.

By our sins we have run up a large debt that it is a question of discharging with penance and untiring good behavior in public; this good behavior in public may take the place of reparation that the church would have the right to exact.⁹⁸

A greater appreciation for *interior expressions* of the virtue of penance has begun to appear in de Mazenod's attitude. He also seems to have softened the attitude that his loving God would accept the reality of his human limitations and time constraints.⁹⁹ This more moderate view will become evident within the early rule of his future missionary society.

The 1816 rule of the society makes no specific statement for the penitential aspect of their life other than the desire to acquire virtues appropriate to a missionary.¹⁰⁰ The 1818 rule notes no particular reference to penitential exercises other than the practice of regular fasting. It does describe the spirit of the Society as one of atonement, the motive for the members' practice of the counsel of voluntary poverty¹⁰¹ and, beginning in 1821, the inclusion of the vow into the rule.¹⁰²

The Spirit of Mortification

The Spirit of Mortification for "Keeping the Commandments"

The various practices of *mortification*, as the name suggests, are directed toward bringing an end to a disciple's former ways of undesirable behavior. Mortification seeks to reorient one's new life in Christ through death to the attitudes and remaining traces of one's preceding sinful practices and habits. In its more positive exercises, the practice seeks to correct or change a given undesirable trait or even sinful tendency through the practice of a corresponding virtuous one. For example, a tendency to neglect morning prayer due to excessive sleep might be "mortified" through

⁹⁸ Letter to his father, July 8, 1816, in *EO* 15.137.

⁹⁹ Retreat of July, 1816, in *EO* 15.139.

¹⁰⁰ Letter to the Capitul Vicars General, at Aix, 1818, in *EO* 13.2 notes "The Missionaries will divide their group in such a way that while some strive in community to acquire the virtues and knowledge proper to a good missionary, others are touring the rural areas proclaiming the word of God."

¹⁰¹ Part 2, ch. 1, sec. 1. *1818*, 45.

¹⁰² This vow was introduced to the Society at its 1821 general chapter meeting; see Pielorz, *Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, vol. 1, 22-5.

the contrary disciplines of retiring at an earlier hour each evening and regulating the hour of rising. Finding its basis in the gospel call to individual metanoia, the various practices of mortification in patristic times included other edifying purposes of disciplining one's life in order to better resist temptations to future sin, and as compensation for past ones.¹⁰³

Mortification in de Mazenod's Life before 1814

Eugene makes no direct reference to any specific practices of personal discipline before his seminary years, although his adolescent years in Venice had introduced him to some fundamentals relating to a life of piety, courtesy of the influential Zinelli.¹⁰⁴ One might reasonably conclude that he had been reawakened to at least some of these just prior to entering Saint-Sulpice.¹⁰⁵ His developing thought during the years at Saint-Sulpice seems to resonate, not surprisingly, with the model and motives for personal mortification as promoted by Olier and Tronson along with some of the attitudes promoted within the *Imitation of Christ and Rodriguez*.¹⁰⁶ His principal reasons included the following:

- [to enact a spirit of penance] Though it be impossible for me to do penance in proportion with the number and enormity of my sins, I will act in such a way that this spirit of penance be so impressed on my soul, that I seize with joy every occasion of practicing it. It must flow into everything, both exterior and interior. Interiorly, by making

¹⁰³ For further information regarding the practice of mortification, see *DES*, s.v. "Ascesi."

¹⁰⁴ De Mazenod notes in a journal entry that this period was a decisive one for him, when he received from Zinelli the foundations of religion and of piety, upon which God constructed the edifice of his spiritual life. "It was at the school of that saintly priest that I learned to despise the vanities of the world, to taste the things of God." Reprinted in *Missions* (1866): 125.

¹⁰⁵ An 1808 letter fragment from a spiritual director recalls Eugene's devotion to Aloysius Gonzaga and Ignatius of Loyola, cited and printed in Pielorz, *The Spirituality of...*, 169. See also *DOV*, s.v. "Mortification."

¹⁰⁶ Olier, *Introduction à la vie...*, 94-103. The eighth chapter gives some of his thought; his suggested motives are found on 86-97. Tronson's *Examens particuliers* offers nineteen *examens* with which the practice of mortification was impressed upon the future priest; the first (352) challenges the seminarian, "Have we been well persuaded that upon this holy exercise depends all of our advancement and our perfection; and that, as a lack of mortification is the origin of vices and the cause of all of our evil, mortification is the foundation of virtues and the source of all our good?"

me renounce my own mind, by subjecting my will and my tastes, by holding me continually in humility, by patience in contradictions and by joy in being despised. Exteriorly, by holding captive my senses and punishing my body, both by privation of the things that it likes most, and by chastisement of its rebellions, and lastly by restraint, sobriety, modesty, vigilance, paying no attention to its pretended needs unless prudence require it, in short by reducing this slave to the most absolute servitude by a hard life and by work.¹⁰⁷

-[to express his sincerity in prayer (notably to avoid future sin), and in imitation of Jesus] To try to obtain that the Lord will hear my prayers [that he may preserve me from sin], I will join to the most exact observance of his Law the practice of mortification in such wise that it flows through all my actions, and into every circumstance of my life, reminding me that the whole life of Jesus my model was a perpetual cross and a continual martyrdom.¹⁰⁸

-[embracing the cross and the passion of Jesus] One must... do this not only to dominate the depraved inclinations of corrupt nature by mortifying its members, but also *ut adimpleat in corpore suo quae desunt passioni Christi* (Col 1:24).¹⁰⁹

- [for the sake of the ministry and priesthood] There are two kinds of mortification, one affects the body, the other the spirit; they are both the one and the other very necessary to the priest of Jesus Christ.... And who is most committed to combat in this life's arena if not the priest who is obliged to it not only in virtue of a duty common to all Christians, but because of his special office and the obligation entailed by his ministry...¹¹⁰

Greater Appreciation for "Interior" Mortifications from 1814

Eugene still had a thirst for physical exterior practices which accompanied him through the following years, but his harsh exercises had begun

¹⁰⁷ From "Duties toward God," personal rule composed in December 1812, in *EO* 15.109.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ From a note concerning mortification, 1812-1814, in *EO* 15.111. The Latin translates as "In order to fulfill what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ in his own body".

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

to cost him in terms of physical health. The seriousness of his 1814 illness was one example; another encounter with illness in 1817 provided a moment for him to reflect upon some of his practices. We also find him having to submit to the wishes of his spiritual guide, who counseled a more prudent lifestyle.¹¹¹

During this period, there appears evidence of a shift in focus from exterior to interior mortifications. Eugene does not entirely relinquish the physical practices - he mentions several times that he would seek permission from his director, and his life of discipleship up until that time appears to have promoted the death of the “old man” along with growth in the Spirit.¹¹² This more extreme view of the practice seems to be gradually losing its hold on him, however.

De Mazenod realized in 1816 that his physical health has suffered notably from his physical extremities, noting that he had perhaps too vigorously followed the example of the saints.¹¹³ We also see evidence that his mortifying senses were becoming more open to accepting God’s will in distractions and interruptions. His attention to growth in personal virtues had become inundated by the demands of his ministry, noting also in the 1816 retreat:

I notice first that in the midst of my extreme distress - for I am seeing myself as I really am, namely, absolutely deprived of any virtue, having only the desire for it and the will to work to get it - I note, not without surprise, that I am not bothered by all that. I have a great trust in God’s goodness... I cannot believe that this good Master will not grant me some consideration especially when I consider that my faults arise ... from the fact that I am busy, seemingly by his will, with the works of his glory and the salvation of my neighbor... I must above all be really convinced that I am doing God’s will when I give

¹¹¹ He noted in various retreats that he would ask, even plead with his director to allow more physical penances; for example in his retreat notes of May, 1818, in *EO* 15.145.

¹¹² “True mortification comprises two things: bodily pain and a constriction of the spirit. One must mortify the body by making it suffer. One must mortify the spirit by doing it violence.” Retreat notes from Aix seminary, December, 1814, sixth day, sixteenth meditation, in *EO* 15.130.

¹¹³ “The saints’ example seduced me, but it seems God in his goodness does not ask the same of me, as he seems to be warning me by a lessening of my energy and my health upset.” 1816 retreat notes, in *EO* 15.139.

myself to the service of my neighbor, immerse myself in the external business of our house, etc., and then do my best without worrying if, in doing work of this kind, I am unable to do other things which I would perhaps find more to my taste and seem more directly adapted to my own sanctification...¹¹⁴

De Mazenod was realizing that he could also offer to God any upset or interruption which daily demands may bring to him. His 1818 retreat writings show him recalling his ongoing need for penance, however “this penance should consist in the first place in the interior mortification of the will by obliging it to conform itself in everything to God’s good pleasure... this I will do with the least murmur, with the least recrimination...”¹¹⁵ He also noted, “I believe the rigorous observance of our Rule concerning meals can be counted in the list of bodily mortifications...”, and “my rigor as to the house regulation must go to the point of scrupulosity when I can follow it, it is the law, the penance God lays on me.”¹¹⁶ This last point is interesting because he is recognizing that following one’s rule offered significant means for one to realize a conversion to a fuller life in Christ; in other words, it would be mortifying through its observance.

Another expression of self-denial for Eugene would be his acceptance of certain “undesirable” ministries such as giving more time to hearing the confessions of women.¹¹⁷ Without explicitly making the connec-

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Retreat of May 1818, in *EO* 15.145.

¹¹⁶ De Mazenod’s 1818 summary of his 1816 retreat resolutions, in *EO* 15.146.

¹¹⁷ “I am primarily my brothers’ servant, and my children’s, then everyone’s. So I will no longer allow myself to give way to that extreme repugnance that I have to go to the confessional, I will make it an object of special care not to let be so apparent. Women too have to go to confession and have need of help to work out their salvation... It would perhaps be more perfect to welcome all those ladies who present themselves.” Ibid.

Confessors in de Mazenod’s time were advised to approach the confession of women’s sins with a special caution; in counseling priests on hearing confessions, Alphonsus noted in the *Selva* that “The confessor also stands in need of great fortitude, and at first in hearing the confessions of women. How many priests have lost their souls in hearing these confessions! We must treat in the confessional with young girls and young women; we must hear their temptations and often the avowal of their falls...” “The Administration of the Sacrament of Penance”, book II, instruction 4, n.2; from Alphonsus di Ligouri, *Ascetical Works*, vol. 12 (Brooklyn NY: Redemptorist Fathers, 1927), 276. The early Oblate rule repeats some of the precautions found in the Redemp-

tion, he was apparently arriving at a more enhanced understanding of the practice of mortification. He is looking beyond imposed practices toward those difficulties which naturally present themselves as inconveniences and trials in a life of ministry.

The 1825 Society constitutions includes a brief section of eight articles concerning mortification and penances, six of which have their source in the Rule of St. Alphonsus. The last two offer counsel for additional bodily austerities which were apparently inspired by Ignatius Loyola and Vincent de Paul, noting that they would not be permitted without the superior's permission.¹¹⁸

To summarize this section, during the years 1812-1826 we note some signs of change in Eugene's attitude concerning the practice of mortification, considered as a necessary ingredient of an apostolic lifestyle. He has apparently begun moving from an emphasis upon the more visible, exterior elements toward a greater appreciation for those interior expressions which are encountered more naturally in daily life and normally beyond one's control. Without completely dismissing exterior observances, we find that Eugene was learning to integrate those difficulties which were found both in ministry experiences and within the limitations imposed by his Society rule.

The Virtue of Evangelical Chastity

Chastity receives little if any written consideration within Eugene's writing, which might be a surprise for contemporary readers. His scant mention of it did not intend to discount chastity, of course; during the early nineteenth century, the cultivation of the virtue was primarily considered in its mortifying sense (that of "chastening" oneself so to avoid impure thoughts and action) in the service of realizing a fuller charity. Chastity was obviously an important virtue for any Christian within their particular vocation; a life of celibate chastity associated with ordained priesthood could have simply been an assumed discipline for those following a celibate life of discipleship, to be followed with little extra consideration.

torist one.

¹¹⁸ Part 2, ch. 2, sec. 3. 1825, 58-9. For an analysis of the probable sources of this section, see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 104-5; 144; 156.

Chapter Four

REALIZING JESUS' LOVE FOR OTHERS THROUGH THE REFINEMENT OF CHARITY

The virtue of charity and its lived expression form the overarching focus of this final chapter. We will first consider charity as a theological virtue and identify its essential concrete expression to be realized in what was known as one's "love of neighbor." The second part examines the essential attitude of personal oblation in de Mazenod's apostolic way. The third considers how charity to the neighbor was immediately lived and shaped through the refining practice of community charity among Eugene de Mazenod and the other Society members. The fourth part considers love of neighbor as it related to their ministry and practical ways in which the quality of their life of charity had its effect upon the Society mission.

De Mazenod, the Society, and the Importance of Charity

The full impact of the 1826 papal approbation for the missionary society would take time before becoming apparent to Eugene de Mazenod. As he noted, the new institute shared in the dignity of the Church's greatest religious orders, but he was just beginning to articulate its more specific distinguishing characteristics.¹ One of these concerned the foundational place of charity, which Eugene described in a letter of 1830. Although it was written a short time after the immediate scope of this study, it offers one of de Mazenod's first reflections upon the virtue and its necessity within the still-new Oblate congregation.

In a letter to the novice master of the Society, Eugene was grieved

¹ He wrote in a letter to the members on March 25, 1816: "See then our little flock, to whom the Father of the family has kindly wished to open wide the field of the holy Church... associated with the venerable Congregations which have spread throughout the Church so many great benefits... see her, right from her birth, enriched with the same privileges of those illustrious Societies..." *EO* 7.232.

by what he saw as a breakdown of overall community life and loss of common focus within their second foundation at Notre Dame de Laus. He noted:

I hope that each [member] will have told himself that he is rigorously obliged to observe our Rule strictly... once that is achieved, we will still be far from realizing the end that we propose; we must be filled with our spirit and live only by it.... Just as we have in a Society a common dress, common Rules, so must there be a common spirit which vivifies this particular body. The spirit of Bernardine is not that of the Jesuit. Ours also is our own....²

The “spirit” of the institute could be experienced through obedience to the new Constitutions and Rules, but what else of it is to be more concretely found within the Oblate life? He continues:

Charity is the pivot on which our whole existence turns. That which we ought to have for God makes us renounce the world and has vowed us to his glory by all manner of sacrifice, were it even to be our lives. It is in order to be worthy of this God to whom we are consecrated that we have vowed to renounce ourselves by obedience, riches by poverty, pleasures by chastity. I have no complaint about this last article, I have little to say about the second, but the first is not understood by certain individuals...³

Life guided by the virtue of charity was of foundational importance to de Mazenod’s vision for the Society. This regard for charity was bolstered by his special concern for the vow of obedience, which aids in bringing one’s personal will into ever fuller cooperation with the movements of divine love.

A Brief Summary of the Theological Virtue of Charity

While an extensive treatment of the virtue of charity would be prohibitively long, it will still be instructive to briefly consider some essential aspects which relate more directly to the present study.⁴

²Letter to Fr. Guibert, July 29, 1830, in *EO* 7.350.

³Ibid.

⁴A summary theological treatment of charity may be found in Aumann, 266-75; also, see *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, s.v. “Charité”; *NCE*, s.v. “Charity.”

Charity (from the Latin *caritas*) may be theologically understood as the absolutely other-centered quality of divine love. It seeks to express the quality of divine within the triune God, that fullness of love in the relationship between Father and Son which enables the issuance (or “procession”) of the Holy Spirit through the exchange of perfect other-centered love. God has first loved us with this limitless love, calling each person to respond through loving God in return; learning to return this perfect love as fully as possible to God and all people through one’s life, following the gospel example of Jesus, is the goal of Christian discipleship. To live according to charity is to live according to the new Law of Christ, seeking to love God with one’s whole heart, soul, and mind, and one’s neighbor as oneself (Mt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:9-10). This is, in effect, a lifelong quest for a disciple, the gradual purifying of one’s natural capacity to love so that it reflects more and more completely the divine love.

Charity considered as a theological virtue is found in the *Summa theologica* (2a-2ae, q. 23-46), in which Aquinas builds upon the concept of friendship to describe our basic relationship with God. He describes the virtue of charity as a supernatural habit infused by God into the will, by which we are given God’s divine power to love; in return, we have the potential to love God above all things, and both ourselves and our neighbor for the sake of God. The object of our life ruled by charity is the supreme goodness of God, our final end.⁵ Maturity in Christian discipleship results from our growing ability to love in such a way that God’s love alone shines forth in our actions.

Charity is present in our various expressions of love when we perform them with the primary intent of loving God. Without this primary intent, our various expressions of love for God and others (to whatever degree of other-centeredness they may contain) remain on the level of “natural” loves (i.e., the purely human capability); with God as the primary focus, our love becomes united with the spiritual and essentially an expression of the divine love.

The virtue of charity is the “source and summit” or the “soul” of the moral virtues, including those which Eugene endeavored to develop. Each moral virtue is a specific expression or facet of the divine love which tends toward making it visible, despite whatever degree of human imperfection

⁵ Aumann, 266.

is intertwined. The gradual development and perfection of each moral virtue also has the fullness of charity as its end, since its completion enables the disciple to more fully reflect the divine love in his or her life.

Charity towards the Neighbor as its Primary Lived Expression

An individual's growing love for God, if it be authentic, will gradually be accompanied by a love for what God loves. The second chapter of this work is primarily concerned with the love of God through devotion and prayer; the third concerns loving God through a faith-inspired love of oneself through avoidance of sin and a life of developing virtue. This present chapter more specifically addresses the love for others. It is expressed in the practice of what is called "love of neighbor," the most visible and authenticating expression of the theological virtue of charity.

De Mazenod goes on in the 1830 letter to specify a key expression of charity which was the visible sign and indicator of its existence within the person and the Society:

Charity for our neighbor is again an essential part of our spirit. We practice it first amongst us by loving each other as brothers, by considering our Society only as the most united family which exists on the earth, by rejoicing over the virtues, the talents and other qualities that our brothers possess just as much as if we possessed them ourselves, in bearing with mildness the little faults that some have not yet overcome, covering them over with the mantle of the most sincere charity, etc.; and as for the rest of mankind, in considering ourselves only as the servants of the Father of the family commanded to succor, to aid, to bring back his children by working to the utmost, in the midst of tribulations, of persecutions of every kind, without claiming any reward other than that which the Lord has promised to faithful servants who have worthily fulfilled their mission.⁶

As we have previously seen, the spiritual way of Eugene and his missionary society included the embodiment of visible, practical expressions for the virtues which they sought to develop. The conscientious development of charity toward one's neighbor as a visible manifestation of the theological virtue was another expression of this guiding principle, first in Eugene's personal life before 1816, then as a founding component of his

⁶ Letter to Fr. Guibert at Notre Dame de Laus, July 29, 1830, in *EO* 7.350.

society.⁷ His program for a progressive growth in a life of charity may be seen as possessing three basic components: An attitude of personal self-giving or *oblation* which was evident in his life; a refinement of this basic attitude of self-giving through the practice of *fraternal love*; and the fruitful expression of this refined charity as was experienced in zeal-filled *ministry to others*. Let us first turn to the topic of oblation.

CHARITY TO NEIGHBOR THROUGH A SPIRITUALITY OF OBLATION

The word *oblation*, at root, signifies the idea of offering something to God. It finds one consideration within the scholastic understanding of the virtue of religion as an exterior expression of adoration.⁸ When applied to his personal life, oblation was a foundational concept in the spiritual life of Eugene which helped to shape his vision for the self-giving required in priestly and religious apostolic life.⁹

De Mazenod's Willingness to Fully Give of Himself, before 1816

There appear to be no concrete written accounts from de Mazenod addressing the concept of oblation before 1826. It is more apparent, however, that the simple oblatory dimension of self-offering was a consistent dimension of de Mazenod's spiritual life dating from his seminary years, a characteristic which frequently appears within his writings during our period of interest. He made known his intention to totally give himself to

⁷ Additional reading concerning de Mazenod's special consideration of charity to the neighbor may be found in K. Lubowicki and F. Ciardi, "Charity," *DOV*, 103-20; M. Gilbert, "Les 'Novissima verba' du Fondateur," *Ét Obl* 18 (1969):45-59. For more general reading on charity to one's neighbor, see F. Giardini, "L'indole escatologica della carità verso il prossimo," *Angelicum* 78 (2001):559-614; L.-M. de Saint-Joseph, *Comme je vous ai aimés* vol. 8 of *Présence de Carmel* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966); *L'amour du prochain* (Paris: Cerf, 1954); R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, vol. 2 (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1951), 199-212.

⁸ The *Summa*, 2a-2ae, q. 81 considers the virtue of religion; q. 86 examines oblation as an exterior expression of this virtue. Additional reading concerning the term may be found in F. Ciardi, *L'oblazione: aspetti storici, teologici, spirituali* (*Quaderni di Vermicino* 14) (Frascati: Studentato Missionari O.M.I., 1986).

⁹ To read more about de Mazenod's underlying attitude of oblation, see *DOV*, s.v. "Oblation"; J.-M. Simon, "Essai d'une spiritualité oblate," *Ét Obl* 15 (1956):221-59; E. Lamirande, "Esprit d'oblation: approche historique," *Ét Obl* 15 (1956):323ff.; 346-355; M. Gilbert, "Our Oblation and the Oblation of Christ the Priest," *Ét Obl* 14 (1955):148-53.

his priestly vocation in a November 1809 letter to his mother. Trying to convince her that his acceptance of the order of sub-diaconate was the correct path for him, he noted:

It is not the sub-diaconate that binds me to the clerical state; it is my full, entire, voluntary and well-thought-out decision. This properly speaking is what binds me... God calls me to the clerical state. I want to be a cleric and I want it very much. And note that I don't want to be a cleric for eight days, six months, a year, ten years even; I want to be one for the whole of my life.¹⁰

We have already seen how Eugene's desire to totally give himself to the glory of God and the salvation of others was an elementary part of his spiritual life, seeking to follow Jesus' own complete salvific gift of self. This self-donation was not limited merely to interior virtue; de Mazenod's self-understanding as "priest-apostle-victim" carried the possibility of offering even his life in the service of others. Following his ordination, his nearly fatal illness in 1814 offered a striking testimony to his pursuit of this direction.¹¹

A Fuller Expression of His Spirituality of Oblation, following 1816

His brush with death had not dissuaded him in his desire to give himself more fully to God's unfolding plan for him, as was evident in letters during the autumn of 1814.¹² This persistent attitude of oblation in Eugene's spiritual way eventually led to the 1816 foundation of the

¹⁰ Letter to his mother, November 29, 1809, in *EO* 14.64.

¹¹ Notes from a spiritual conference before subdiaconate, December 23, 1809, in *EO* 14.65.

¹² In a September 12 letter to Forbin-Janson, de Mazenod noted that his time was being consumed by the involvement in arranging his family return to France as well as ministry demands: "... up to now and for a long time I am everyone's servant and at the disposition of the first-comer. This is apparently God's will. I have little taste for this work; I do not know if I will not have to change my vocation. I yearn sometimes for solitude; and the religious Orders that limit themselves to the sanctification of the individuals who follow their Rule and attend to that of others only by prayer, begin to offer me certain attractions." (in *EO* 15.128). His thought had become more focused in a following letter of October 28, noting that "I keenly desire to know your Constitutions... I will tell you without ado that I am hesitating between two plans: either to go off and bury myself in some well regulated community... or do in my diocese exactly what you have done successfully at Paris." Letter to Forbin-Janson, October 28, 1814, in *EO* 6.2.

missionary society and life according to a rule, eventually realizing the commitment of religious vows. The initial 1816 *règlement* contained no provision for vows as such, though the first society members would seek to follow the proposed life with the same intent as if they had entered a more established order. They would expend themselves in the new society in the pursuit of holiness and ministry service, resolving to persevere in it until death.¹³

This progressive giving of self is also evident in the lives of de Mazenod and the first Society members through their profession of religious vows, in an action understood by them as their “oblation.”¹⁴ Eugene’s exchange of private vows with Tempier (obedience and perseverance on April 11, 1816) were followed by the adoption of vows within the Society (chastity, obedience, and perseverance on November 1, 1818), the vow of evangelical poverty (October 21, 1821),¹⁵ and the community ratification of the papally-approved Constitutions and Rules (July 13, 1826).

De Mazenod recognized that there was a connection between one’s personal self-giving to the Society and its corresponding growth in unity and overall effectiveness. Though he wrote in terms which reflected a fear of failure before God, he realized that his own growth in holiness was in service to the community and its ongoing ministry.

To think of it! On my fidelity in responding to God’s grace, - for this help is always in proportion to needs - depends perhaps the salvation of a multitude of souls. If I am fervent the community at whose head I am placed will grow in fervor and whole populations will feel the influence of this growth in zeal and love. If on the contrary I am lazy, the community will thereby suffer a great loss, and the people will be the victims, and ... on the day of judgement they will all rise up against me to ask for an account of the treasure I deprived them of by my fault.¹⁶

This helped to form within Eugene a firm determination and striv-

¹³ To the Capitular Vicars General, at Aix, dated January 25, 1816, in *EO* 13.2.

¹⁴ De Mazenod apparently utilized the French translation of the Italian *oblazione* which was found in the Redemptorist constitutions and rules (Part 3, ch. 2, sec. 3 and 4 illustrate this usage (*I825*, 109-15). See also E. Lamirande, “Oblation-oblat,” *Ét Obl* 17 (1958):86-7.

¹⁵ One of the eleven Society members, a Fr. Alexandre Dupuy (1798-1880), refused to accept the vow of poverty in 1818 but was allowed to remain a member; he eventually left the Society in 1830.

¹⁶ Day retreat during the annual community retreat, October 30, 1818, in *EO* 15.148.

ing to do his own part in collaboration with God's assistance in his life-long task.

The Importance of the Mass in His Oblatory Pursuit

It should be no surprise that Eugene's high regard for the sacrament of the Eucharist would find its special place in his concept of oblation.¹⁷ We find it early in his priestly life, when he considered the attitude to take in his daily celebration, when he wrote:

I will never forget during the Sacrifice, when O.L. is on the altar, to ask with inward groaning for great sorrow for my past sins... and ... to be a priest according to his heart... I will add, as I have done daily so far, with all the fervor I can muster, the request for the grace, so little deserved, of final perseverance, and... I will persevere in the most insistent request to satisfy by martyrdom or at least by death in service to my neighbor, the enormous debt I have contracted towards the divine Justice.¹⁸

The essential focus of the Mass at his time was upon Jesus' total giving of himself to his suffering and death in fulfilment of the Father's plan. One's participation in the Mass was not to be a sterile sacrifice or ritual, but the chief way to spiritually unite oneself to Jesus through offering one's own self-denying love for God, thereby giving glory to God and disposing oneself to taking one's particular part in the Father's ongoing plan for salvation of the world. While Eugene had a more collective sense of the Mass as containing the totality of Jesus' "Sacred Mysteries" with respect to the divine plan for salvation, he had grasped this sense of priestly sacrifice perfected by Jesus and experienced most fully at Calvary. Like his Savior, Eugene sought to live this love to the extreme.

The Communal Practice of Love for Others

One's spirit of self-gift, necessary with the aid of the Holy Spirit for a fuller participation in the divine life of charity, is one element for existing within God's endless *agape*-love. This stage is not lived in isolation, however. The Christian disciple is called to live and love through following the

¹⁷ M. Gilbert, "Our Oblation and the Oblation of Christ the Priest," *Ét Obl* 14 (1955):148-153.

¹⁸ From his 1812 personal rule of life, in *EO* 15.109.

example of interrelationship found within the Trinity, in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit co-exist precisely in their interrelation and interdependence upon one another: The Father totally loving His only-begotten Son; the Son responding in complete filial love to that of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from this exchange as the third interrelating person of the trinitarian relationship.

Seen in this way, Christian disciples are called to live within the trinitarian understanding of *agape*-love, thereby existing within a *communio* or mutual participation in the divine love through the practice of one's oblation love. Through one's ongoing denial of self for loving God and others, each disciple shares in the interrelationship of the trinitarian persons through following the example of Jesus' own self-giving love. This is also a fundamental component of the many forms of religious life in the Church, where dwelling in union with the divine love is to be pursued and made visible through religious and religious communities. Being challenged to realize a heightened degree of *agape*-love (i.e., holiness), while supporting and challenging the growth of others, was part of the thought of Eugene de Mazenod in forming the Missionaries of Provence.

A life of *communio* is not a one-time realization through such actions as one's profession of religious vows within a religious community. As within the Trinity, *communio* is not a static existence; living within the milieu of divine charity is realized precisely through repetitive daily acts of unselfish love. For the Missionaries of Provence, their religious life formed an immediate and demanding milieu within which to practice their love for all people through their love for each other. Their developing faith-inspired love, which continually fostered their ability to live more and more within the realm of divine charity, was both strengthened and purified through the refining fire of fraternal love within the Society.¹⁹

The Importance of Community within de Mazenod's Apostolic Life

There have been a number of articles written about de Mazenod's vision for apostolic religious community and its implications for the contemporary Oblate mission. Most of these have examined his growing un-

¹⁹ "Fraternal love" and "love of neighbor" can both express one's love for other people. This study will use fraternal love to describe that expressed within the communities of the Society, while love of neighbor will normally be reserved for their ministerial and personal concern for others beyond.

derstanding as it developed over the whole of his ordained and religious life, with some studies considering shorter intervals.²⁰ Much of the foundation for de Mazenod's later preference for common life were present in his early ministry years, of course; let us consider this period with the aim of deducing some of its essential components.

At Saint-Sulpice, as one in the "company of saints"

Even though Eugene's original seminary formation period had secular priesthood as its goal, he clearly experienced a community atmosphere while at Saint-Sulpice. While he wrote little if anything about the admittedly limited degree of common life which existed there, the *Pietas seminarii* notes that the seminary student body was to consider itself as a "college of apostles" with the goal of learning and drawing inspiration from the original ones.²¹

While his available writings from the period do not give evidence of Eugene specifically using this theme of belonging to the *collège apostolique*, he more frequently wrote in terms of his belonging to the "company of saints." The seminary body classification as "saintly" was no doubt influenced by the Sulpician regard for the clerical state as one of spiritual perfection; students were bound to earnestly strive for holiness in preparation for the priesthood. Eugene considered himself blessed in having been called to follow the many examples of virtuous life and steadfast focus upon the Lord which he found there, and professed his unworthiness to live in the midst of those more spiritually accomplished souls.²² He also recognized that his admission into their company was calling him to a life of continual reform, listing some of the ways to do so:

Absolute devotedness to the orders of the superiors... scrupulous obedience to the rule... a friendly, generous charity towards all my

²⁰ See for instance: Y. Beaudoin, "Communauté et mission d'après Mgr de Mazenod et chez les premières générations d'oblats en Europe," in *VOL* 49 (1990):179-200; *DOV*, s.v. "Community"; D. Arena, *Unità e missione in Eugenio de Mazenod* (Quaderni di Vermicino 31) (Frascati, 1995), especially 236-44; F. Ciardi, "Fisionomia e natura della comunità oblata nel periodo di fondazione (1815-1818)," *Claretianum* 16 (1976):173-275.

²¹ Olier, *Introduction.../Pietas seminarii*, no. xii.

²² "I cannot pretend that I am other than unworthy, and very much unworthy, of living among the saints who form this truly heavenly house..." Resolutions upon entering the seminary, October 12-19, 1808, in *EO* 14.28.

brothers, respect for all superiors, trust in many of them... humility, above all humility... my very great need of penance...²³

Already we begin to note some elements of his emerging sense that some degree of community life was an important element in his emerging vocation. These principles would be reinforced through de Mazenod's membership in the seminary "pious association" (or *Aa*, for the French *Association anonyme*) in which he became a notable figure.²⁴

During his first years of ministry, 1812-1815

This image of having been in the company of saintly followers of Jesus remained with de Mazenod as he began his priestly life. Still assigned to Saint-Sulpice as a co-director, his August 1812 reflections note his intention to recall the teachings and examples of other seminary figures who were more accomplished than himself:

I must arouse all my energies to gather all the graces granted me, the host of good examples, holy instructions, all the good in short I ought to have amassed but have alas dissipated... a powerful means of persevering in these dispositions will be the memory of all the priestly virtues I saw practiced with such perseverance before my very eyes over the four years I have had the happiness of living in this seminary. Mr. Emery, Mr. Duclaux, the saint-like Mr. Duclaux, and all his other helpers, and the vast majority of their pupils, my dear fellow-disciples, will be all my life each one a helper, an invisible animator (*excitateur*)... encouraging me to make progress. God, what virtues! How wretched I judge myself by comparison with all these holy clerics!²⁵

Eugene returned to Aix in October 1812 to begin his priestly ministry there. He followed a common clerical practice of residing with his mother and aunts through which he anticipated finding some degree of support for ministerial life and normal daily physical existence, an otherwise solitary routine of prayer, study, and attending to others' spiritual needs.²⁶ His

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For more information regarding de Mazenod's involvement in the *Aa*, see Pie-lorz, *The Spiritual Life...*, 305-9.

²⁵ Spiritual reflections from Issy, August 1812, in *EO* 15.106.

²⁶ He noted in his August 1812 personal rule that he would spend one-half hour of

employment of the Trappist brother Maur as a valet and personal assistant between 1812 and 1815 must have also provided a degree of spiritual support to him;²⁷ Eugene's 1813 retreat resolutions noted his intention to seek a level of fraternal correction from the monk at their daily meditation.²⁸

The emerging body of missionaries, in 1814 - the cor unum et anima una

Following his illness in the spring of 1814, de Mazenod disclosed to Forbin-Janson his thoughts of forming a community of like-minded missionaries who would minister in the Provençal countryside. As we have noted, the idea gained urgency by late October; he wrote that he was considering either to enter into a personally favored community or follow the example of the *Missionaries of France* while remaining within the Aix diocese.

Meanwhile, de Mazenod had already begun to search out other like-minded priests for his project. A communication to the *père* Tempier dated October 9 finds him drawing upon the Acts 4:32-35 concept of "one heart and one soul" to typify the common focus and unity of the future group.²⁹ In the few documented usages before 1826, de Mazenod left hints of some essential components for this vision; an excerpt from a well-known passage among present-day Oblates is especially instructive:

My dear friend, read this letter at the foot of your crucifix with a mind to heed only God and what is demanded in the interests of his glory and of the salvation of souls from a priest like yourself. Stifle

spiritual reading "in the family circle" each evening, in *EO* 15.107.

²⁷ Brother Maur (birth name of Martin Bardeau), had joined de Mazenod while at Saint-Sulpice and followed him to Aix in October 1812. The displaced monk from the dissolved Trappist monastery at Versailles remained as de Mazenod's personal assistant for reasons of modesty and pastoral confidentiality, while also working as a domestic at his family residence until returning to monastic life in September 1815. See *Historical Dictionary of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate*, vol. 1, s.v. "Maur."

²⁸ Resolution ten was "To oblige Maur to accuse me of my faults in the morning at oraison." Retreat resolutions composed between 1813 and 1815, in *EO* 15.122.

²⁹ Besides being present in the thought of Augustine, Dominic, and later priestly reform movements, it was also found in the works of influential writers such as Rodriguez (*The Practice of Christian Perfection*, vol. 1, fourth treatise on union and fraternal charity, ch. 1) and Alphonsus di Liguori (*La vera sposa di Gesù Cristo*, ch. 12, sec. 1, no. 2).

the voice of cupidity, love of comfort and convenience; dwell deeply on the plight of our country people, their religious situation, the apostasy that daily spreads wider and dreadfully ravaging effects. Look at the feebleness of the means employed to date to oppose this flood of evil... We... full of confidence in the goodness of Providence, have laid down the foundations of an establishment which will steadily furnish our countryside with fervent missionaries... we will live together in one house..., under a Rule we shall adopt with common accord... Happiness awaits us in this holy Society which will have but one heart and soul. One part of the year will be devoted to the conversion of souls, the other to seclusion, study and our individual sanctification...; we wish to choose men who have the will and the courage to walk in the footsteps of the apostles... The greatest regularity must be planned and introduced in the house as soon as we enter it...³⁰

Eugene lamented to his novices in 1821 that he could not be with them physically, but was indeed so in his heart and soul through their common prayer and observance of the Rule.³¹ He encouraged another member to gather with others often and live in a “fraternal cordiality.”³² He later advised this same member that they both should be united in the love of Jesus Christ through their common search for holiness, thus their oneness would be a sign of Christ while their pastoral adversaries would disintegrate due to anger and malice.

We are not of this world, no, we no longer wish to belong to it, any more than our head, our divine and lovable Master, and that is why it persecutes us. I laugh at its hatred, I despise its conflicts and I pity those who let themselves be taken by its perfidious suggestions... Let us be united in the love of Jesus Christ, in our common perfection, let us love each other as we have done up to now, let us, in a word, be at one while they die of vexation and rage.³³

³⁰ Letter to Fr. Tempier, October 9, 1815, in *EO* 6.4.

³¹ “My dear friends, believe only that I am absent in body; my heart and soul are with you.” Letter to the novices and students at Notre Dame du Laus, August 15, 1821, in *EO* 6.69.

³² “Get together often and live in the most perfect unity. When I say unity, it is not that I fear that you quarrel, this thought does not cross my mind, but I wish to speak of that cordiality, that fusion, if I use that expression, which ought to exist among all the members of our Society which ought to have but one heart and one soul.” Letter to Fr. Courtès, November 8, 1821, in *EO* 6.74.

³³ Letter to Fr. Courtès, March 3, 1822, in *EO* 6.80.

After the papal approbation of the society Constitutions and Rules, de Mazenod remarked in a letter that its rapid passage through pontifical channels was a validation of the institute as a way to holiness. He lamented that others in the institute could not realize this because of their disunity due to squabbling over obedience and appointment of superiors.

If all the members of the Society were what they ought to be, would we be in such a predicament in regard to composing the personnel of our houses? Is it not a pity that we have to defer to caprices or aversions? Has such a scandal ever been seen? Why can Fr. Touche not live under the obedience of Fr. Honorat? Whence this repugnance which troubles the order of a nascent Society in which there should be only one heart and one soul? The fact is we are steeped in pride while still wishing to appear humble...³⁴

The Society as a family

Eugene also used expressions of family relationships to convey the depth of fraternal charity and unity which the members should show to each other and to the Society.³⁵ He also wrote on several occasions in terms of his being a spiritual father to the community members.³⁶ He rejoiced at the thought of their unity as brothers, recalling the words of the psalmist:

Never have I appreciated so much *quam dulce et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum*. This strikes me all the more in that I see with my own eyes that it is not given to all communities to taste this happiness, harder to find than one thinks in this world below. Let us pray God to preserve for us this precious blessing that men cannot snatch from us except by our own fault...³⁷

³⁴ Letter to Tempier, March 9, 1826, in *EO* 7.229.

³⁵ For thoughts concerning de Mazenod's use of family as an image for the Society, read F. Demers, "La paternité du Fondateur," *VOL* 54 (1995):17-29; M. Arena, *Unità e missione...*, 47-9 and 51-4; Ciardi, "Fisionomia..." , 203-6.

³⁶ During an extended absence, Eugene wrote "think of your father who languishes far from you in a land which he could almost call foreign, for it will always be a real exile for him as long as he is far from you and all his other brothers." (Letter to Fr. Sumien, March 18, 1823, in *EO* 6.96). The Society rule note that a local community superior was to look after the welfare of sick members, visiting them daily with the affectionate charity of a father for his son (part two, ch.4, sec. 1, a. 2; 1825, 71). See K. Lubowicki, *Mystère et dynamique de l'amour dans la vie du Bx Euge'ne de Mazenod* (Rome, 1990), 314-93.

³⁷ The passage apparently refers to Psalm 132, "how sweet and how joyful it is for

A new Society novice expressed to de Mazenod an inner disquiet because the young priest's father was not supportive of his joining a religious community. Eugene encouraged the new member to settle his heart, and thereby claim the "one heart and one soul" of his new family, the Society.³⁸

Summary of elements for de Mazenod's emerging fraternal life

The missionaries' communal life during this nascent period, according to de Mazenod, placed great importance upon the members' fraternal unity and love which the members would seek to cultivate and show towards one another. Such a goal required certain elements, among them the members' adherence to a common rule through obedience (the reader will recall the importance of obedience in the refinement of one's capacity to love selflessly), and the shared concern for growth in holiness of both the members and those to whom they ministered. It is perhaps interesting that the eventual Society rule included a somewhat modified image of the Sulpician apostolic college; rather than considering themselves in the exclusive company of the first apostles, the *Missionaries of Provence* would assume their more modest vocation of reproducing in their lives the holiness of the first disciples of the apostles, perhaps harkening to the first Jerusalem community.³⁹

Fraternal Love in Service to "the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls"

In his letter which expressed some amazement that the papal approval of the constitutions had occurred with little difficulty, de Mazenod called

brothers to live in unity." Letter to Fr. Tempier, August 12, 1817, in *EO* 6.20.

³⁸ In a January 20, 1833 letter to M. Guibert, Eugene wrote "I much appreciate your having thought of writing to me; I did not expect such consideration in the very first days of your stay among us; it is that you had already understood that we form a family, of which all who compose it wish only to have one heart and one soul." *EO* 6.91.

De Mazenod used a variety of other concepts to express this necessary sense of unity for the Society. Arena notes a number of phrases and images which de Mazenod used over his religious lifetime to convey the concept of unity, such as perfect harmony, conformity in vision and thought, perfect accord, perfect unanimity (*Unità e missione...*38). While these have been used by de Mazenod over the life of the congregation, this chapter indicates the two most striking ones between 1812 and 1826.

³⁹ Letter to Tempier, November 15, 1815, in *EO* 6.6.

the reader to take up the divine implications for its foundation and acceptance:

The conclusion to be drawn from this, my dear friends and good brothers, is: We must work, with renewed ardor and still more total devotedness, to bring to God all the glory that stems from our efforts and, to the needy souls of our neighbors, salvation in all possible ways; we must attach ourselves heart and soul to our Rules and practice [more] exactly what they prescribe to us.⁴⁰

All of their efforts were to be directed to God’s glory and the salvation of souls (including their own!) Thus, the two areas of focus for the Society were to be:

a) *The glory of God was to be realized in the missionaries’ transformed lives and selfless ministry, following the example of Jesus.* Jesus was considered the chief founder of the Society, whom the members would seek to imitate “in everything” along with the lived example of his holiness and that of the apostles.⁴¹ Consequently, the community members were united in seeking to imitate their holiness. Their common focus of striving to grow in charity through regularity to prayer and observance of their rule would be the gateway to their fraternal unity.⁴²

Their common life in fraternal love and the practice of virtues were essential for the Missionaries in order to live such a lofty ideal. In an early letter to Tempier, Eugene noted:

For the love of God never cease to inculcate and preach humility, abnegation, forgetfulness of self, disdain for worldly esteem. May these be ever the foundations of our little Society which, combined with a truly disinterested zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and the most tender, affectionate and sincere charity among

⁴⁰ Letter to Tempier and brother Oblates, February 18, 1826, in *EO* 7.226. He also notes in a March 1826 letter the themes of service to God’s glory and salvation of souls (*EO* 7.232).

⁴¹ Part two, ch. 3, sec. 1, introduction, *1825*, 62. As mentioned earlier, his letter of November 15, 1815 (*EO* 6.6) offers a slightly different view, that the missionaries “must reproduce the perfection of the first disciples of the apostles.”

⁴² In a March 18, 1823 letter to a director of a formation community, de Mazenod encouraged the instructor, “Continue to give them the example of all the virtues, of regularity, of fidelity to the Rule; live always in this intimate union which makes of our house a true paradise on earth...” *EO* 6.96.

ourselves, will make of our house an earthly paradise and will establish it in more solid a manner than all possible orders and laws.⁴³

It is also present as a reason for establishing a fixed rule for the Society:

But it is not enough for them simply to be convinced of the greatness 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 fervor and insuring that it lasts.⁴⁴

Such a common pursuit would require a common focus in service to their mission.

b) *The exterior focus of the Society was to be upon the glory of God through the salvation of souls.* Concern for the salvation of others had always been a component of de Mazenod's apostolic vision; it was expressly stated as an additional reason for the existence of the Society.⁴⁵ Their efforts to realize the salvation of others, always seen as participating in coordination with the salvific mission of the Church, would be best served through the members' efforts to grow in holiness.⁴⁶

The community also sought to aid in overcoming or at least minimizing the shortcomings and pastoral perils encountered by individual members. De Mazenod wrote to a member who was departing the Society in 1826, noting that the Society would have been beneficial to his developing vocation.

Had you forgotten what I had judged best for your salvation when you wrenched yourself from my bosom and did you not know the

⁴³ Letter believed to have been written on August 12, 1817, in *EO* 6.20.

⁴⁴ *1825*, 16.

⁴⁵ As stated in the 1816 initial rule (*EO* 13.2). For additional reading, see G. Santolini, "Mission Through Apostolic Community According to our Constitutions and Rules" in *VOL* (1990):201-8.

⁴⁶ "Love one another. Let all agree in maintaining good order and discipline by fidelity to the Rule... The Church expects you all to be a powerful aid in her distress; but be well persuaded that you will only be good enough to achieve something inasmuch as you advance in the practice of religious virtues." Letter to Fr. Courtès and the novice community, February 22, 1823, in *EO* 6.93.

motives which had resolved me to receive you in the Society? You said it when you repeated these words: “I feel that I am very little suited to the ministry,” that is to say when you would be on your own and deprived of the help that would have been given you by the Society which had received you... I would have kept in mind the risk which the Society incurred through the deficiency of your character but, being sure of the good that would result for you from entering the Society in which and with the help of which you would put to good advantage the talents that the good God had given you... and also convinced you would find therein a powerful remedy against your perplexities and incertitude.... I did not doubt you would be enamored right from the start with all the delight to be found in a family devoted to God and the Church, making great strides in the ways of perfection....⁴⁷

Eugene’s deep concern for the mission of the Society did not blind him, however, to a deeper concern for the welfare of the Church in its care for souls. He gave advice in 1824 concerning a departing member’s suitability for secular priesthood or another religious lifestyle. Writing to the novice master regarding the departing Fr. Bourrelier who wished to join the archdiocese of Aix, Eugene was adamant that the bishop understand the unsuitability of the man:

We must avoid nonetheless that this imbecile become likely to damn himself and ravage whatever... would be confided to him. So go and see the Archbishop on my behalf... letting him understand clearly that we are not taking this step for our own interests; for it would suit us infinitely more to be rid of such a type, but by duty and for the good of souls. This man can only be a member of a group. Please God he would go to the Chartreuse, but he pretends otherwise.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Letter to Br. N. Riccardi, February 17, 1826, in *EO* 7.225. Later, a January 26, 1828 letter to a bishop described how life in the Society would benefit a prospective member; “I think I can tell you that by undergoing a thorough examination in a good novitiate, this man who is very weak, but not bad, will probably become capable of doing good work in your diocese or, if he were too discredited there, we would employ him elsewhere. We will do all we can to correct the shortcomings attributed to him and make him fit for good work that bears no trace of his imperfections.” *EO* 13.62.

⁴⁸ Letter to Fr. Courtès, May 14, 1824, in *EO* 6.136. De Mazenod had previously corresponded with Bourrelier concerning his wavering vocation; see letters of August 27, 1821, in *ibid.*71; also September 19, 1821 in *ibid.*72.

Other Practices Aiding Growth in Fraternal Charity

Love for the Society/Congregation

De Mazenod was amazed with the emergence of the Society, which had received papal approbation in spite of its meager size and years of perilous development. He had only gradually overcome enough of his reluctance to request its papal approbation, finally doing so because of his love for the Society.⁴⁹ Once it was approved, he began to recognize the consequences of what he recognized to be a divine intervention.

Oh! Yes, we must needs tell ourselves that we have received a great grace! The more closely I consider it in all its aspects, the more I see the worth of this gift. We can never properly respond to it other than by an unwavering fidelity, and by a redoubled zeal and devotedness on behalf of the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls, especially the most abandoned... Does it not seem to you that it is a sign of predestination to bear the name of Mary, a name the Congregation bears as a family name held in common with the most holy and immaculate Mother of God? It is enough to make others jealous; but it is the Church who has given us this beautiful name, we receive it with respect, love, and gratitude...⁵⁰

Such a blessing upon their Society was worthy of the members' love as well and, with it, an abiding fidelity.

Commitment to the Society expressed in the vow of perseverance

The vow of perseverance became a practical and necessary expression of one's oblation of life to the Society.⁵¹ Perseverance, or the intention to remain with the Society until death, was present as an intention in the brief 1816 rule, then as a vow in the 1818 and 1826 constitutions.⁵² It assured that only the pope could dispense the members from their religious vows. The practice had a practical dimension. Before the 1917 code of

⁴⁹ He states this in a letter to Fr. Mye, October 25, 1825; *EO* 6.202. See also J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 256.

⁵⁰ Letter to Tempier, March 20, 1826, in *EO* 7.231.

⁵¹ For reading more on perseverance in the early Missionnaire community, see *DOV*, s.v. "Perseverance."

⁵² The vow is described in part two, ch. 1, sec. 4, *1818* (53-4); *1825* (54-5).

canon law, the profession of simple vows within apostolic societies could be dissolved by a local bishop, a particular hazard to de Mazenod's early Society during the first years of the French Catholic restoration. There was also the problem of what de Mazenod regarded as "defections" by Society members which tended to destabilize it.

That a Society member would actually seek to be released from his vows was abhorrent to de Mazenod. One's "coming together" with the Society in a personal offering was considered to be a lifelong investment, to be seriously weighed beforehand by both the individual and by the Society which would receive him. Accepting a new member would have its corresponding effect on the life of the Society, of course, and the purpose of an initial series of "frequent conversations" with a postulant were to determine both suitability and firm determination, as the rule noted:

From these interviews they will learn what benefit the Society may hope to receive from him, and above all, whether it can count on his perseverance; for no one must ever be allowed to enter our community for the sake of experiment, and without having made beforehand a firm resolution to remain in it until death.⁵³

One also notes here the permanent nature included within the eventual vow.

De Mazenod could write in particularly harsh terms when referring to those who left the Society after professing vows, often using the word "apostate" when describing their deed.⁵⁴ The cause of a member's defection was sometimes the result of a bishop demanding his return to the home diocese in spite of the vow of perseverance which, admittedly, remained the bishop's prerogative. The situation was particularly acute following de Mazenod's 1823 appointment as the Marseilles diocesan vicar general; there was a spreading belief that the founder's intentions were ultimately ambitious and self-serving and served to undermine the stability of the small group.⁵⁵

⁵³ Part three, ch. 3, art. 12, *1818*, 84; *1825*, 103. These were apparently composed of elements from both the Redemptorist rule and some of de Mazenod's own thought; see Cosentino, *Histoire de nos règles*, vol. 1, 95-6.

⁵⁴ For example, from a letter to the novices of Notre Dame de Laus in October 1820; "I thank the good God for all that he has inspired in you... and on the occasion of the execrable apostasy of the wretch who could not be brought back to his duty by the example of conduct as edifying as yours..." *EO* 6.56.

⁵⁵ De Mazenod was appointed as vicar general of the diocese by his bishop-uncle

While he could be harsh when speaking of those who had left, de Mazenod was more paternal in encouraging those who had begun to waver in their initial decision. His correspondence to the earlier-mentioned Fr. Bourrelier was perhaps typical:

You could not please me more, my dear Bourrelier, than by writing to me and laying before me the troubles that disturb you and which you have fashioned for yourself in such a bad way. What good is there in tormenting yourself as you do over trifles? Had I not sufficiently reassured you in the interview we had at Notre Dame du Laus...? I will not dwell on the expressions in your letter, I have shed tears of sorrow over them.⁵⁶

Once another novice had made up his mind to depart, however, the words to the novice master became more acerbic.

Although I was expecting for a long time, my dear friend, the apostasy whereof you announce the imminent explosion, this infamy is so monstrous that I can scarcely persuade myself that it be possible. This is the end result of so much patience an support given to a member more imperfect than it is possible to conceive. The circumstance that this man chooses is a refinement of perfidity. God will finish by making him an example for I do not know of a greater outrage to divinity, to fidelity to an oath, to religion which is treated as a plaything.⁵⁷

Fraternal correction

A particular expression of charity to the neighbor, according to Aquinas, is the practice of fraternal correction when necessary.⁵⁸ We have noted de Mazenod's earlier experience of this during his Saint-Sulpice years, and to some extent through his association with the Trappist Brother Maur.

The practice of fraternal correction became formalized within the Society in the 1818 rule, primarily through the inclusion of the spiritual con-

on July 6, 1823; soon afterward, Tempier accepted a position as co-vicar. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 207-8 and 242-56.

⁵⁶ To Fr. H. Bourrelier, August 27, 1821, in *EO* 6.71.

⁵⁷ To Fr. Courtès, October 9, 1823, in *EO* 6.114.

⁵⁸ This may be found in the *Summa* 2-2, q.33, art. 1; see also *DS*, s.v. "Correction fraternelle."

ference (conférence spirituelle, otherwise known as coulpe).⁵⁹ The practice had two parts. The first was the individual disclosure of personal faults against the community rule, beginning with the youngest and proceeding to the oldest, while the second entailed individual self-accusations of faults committed against other members. This latter practice had largely fallen from common use within apostolic communities by the early nineteenth century because of its potential for abuse.⁶⁰

Marcotte suggests that de Mazenod's principal intent for the practice of coulpe contained two goals. One was to strengthen the correct observance of the Society rule, necessary for the overall well-being of any religious society. A second significant reason was for the growth in holiness of its members.⁶¹ The specific practice of individual self-accusation also gave the opportunity for a deeper exercise of fraternal charity.⁶²

The importance of the Eucharist and prayer in fraternal life and ministry

De Mazenod's considerable Eucharistic piety shows its importance within his practice of praying for others and, eventually, for the needs of the Society. At the beginning of his ministry Eugene had appreciated the sense of communion which was possible with those who were physically distant from him, as when he urged his mother to join with him in prayerful observance:

Dear mother, be one with me on Christmas Eve, join in the holy mysteries in Aix while in Amiens, in the most fervent of communities, I celebrate them for you; let each of us for our own part speak our minds to our good Master...⁶³

⁵⁹ Part two, ch. 2, sec. 4, art. 1-15 (1825, 59-61) was evidently a combination of personal inspiration and likely from practices of Vincent de Paul and Philip Neri; see Cosentino, *Histoire...*, vol. 1, 107. Some additional reading for this may be found in E. Marcotte, "Quelques réflexions sur la coulpe oblate," *Ét Obl* 16 (1957):215-235; and *DS*, s.v. "Chapitres des couples."

⁶⁰ Marcotte, "Quelques réflexions ...", 225.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 222-8. The community office of *zelitor* had developed with the advent of the post-Tridentine apostolic societies; this individual was responsible for maintaining common and individual observance of the community rule, as well as indicating the faults of individuals. De Mazenod did not follow this custom, opting instead for the more ancient tenth century monastic practice of self-accusation.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 225-8.

⁶³ To his mother, December 8, 1811, in *EO* 14.96.

A few years later, he assured Tempier that he would remember his friends within the youth sodality at his daily Mass.⁶⁴

This opportunity for communion with others was extended to Eugene's regular periods of Eucharistic adoration. He noted in an 1817 letter to Tempier that their common period of prayer served to unite them despite the distance.

Tell [the novices] they are ever before my eyes, that I think of them, that I love them. Almost every evening I am with you before the Blessed Sacrament when you are saying your evening prayers. I delight in this thought in the chapel of M. Liautard where I go at that hour to adore our divine Master. Think of me at that moment.⁶⁵

In these, we find some early experiences of de Mazenod's early appreciation for the Eucharist as a special meeting place for members of the Society members both near and far away.

Eugene would also pray for the needs of the new Society and for its missionary efforts. His regular Eucharistic visits afforded a few moments in which to share with Jesus his concerns for the community. Reflecting upon his newly-appointed responsibility as superior of the Society, Eugene recognized that his prayer for guidance would be essential to complete them:

My needs have increased in proportion to my duties, to whom shall I go to perform my responsibilities as I should? To no one else than the divine Master who imposed them on me; so, over and above the visit required by rule... I will present myself frequently at the feet of J.C., even if it is only for a few moments.⁶⁶

During his time in Rome while seeking the papal approbation of the Society, Eugene recalled to Tempier that the Society should record and

⁶⁴ "A thousand regards for all friends, great and small. I think of them every day in the holy sacrifice. Let them not forget us." Letter to Tempier, February 24, 1816, in *EO* 6.10.

⁶⁵ Letter of July 25-26, 1817, in *EO* 6.18. In another supportive letter to a novice, Eugene wrote "so let us ever be united in the same spirit. Pray for me who loved you first. For my part, I think of you often before the Lord. Where rules his amiable heart, there let us meet." Letter to Fr. Guibert, March 19, 1823, in *EO* 6.97.

⁶⁶ Summary of 1816 Bonneveine retreat resolutions, probably of May 1818, in *EO* 15.146.

pray for the ongoing success and continued fervor of their early parish mission efforts. This resulted in the compilation of a veritable litany of their first missions, and the practice became a regular obligation of the members.⁶⁷

The Eucharist and prayer, then, had their important place in the ongoing unity and success of the Society. It was one way of uniting the two areas of focus for the early members, the tension between the pursuit of personal holiness and the many demands of ministry to others, known as the “two parts” of the Society life. Resolving the apparent separation was not so easy, as we shall find.

De Mazenod's Pursuit of the “Two Parts” of Oblate Life

Personal salvation versus the salvation of other souls

A notable objective for de Mazenod took the form of a frustrating puzzle over many years, the integration of what have been called the “two parts” of his apostolic life - those two expressions of charity; towards God, loving God in himself through a process of inner transformation towards greater freedom in loving God through prayer, and loving God through loving the neighbor (“loving what God loves” through ministerial activity). Several articles have considered this aspect of de Mazenod’s life and its influence upon the foundation of the Society and it is worthwhile to consider how this two-pronged pursuit of holiness fit into his early vision of apostolic life.⁶⁸

The idea of a two-front approach to apostolic life could possibly lead some individuals to conclude that the two were almost diametrically opposed concerns of interior recollection and intensive pastoral activity. Such was not the case, however. The two aspects of his form of apostolic life may be regarded as having been regulated in such a way that only the emphasis would vary between attending to either the interior spiritual life or giving oneself to the exterior ministerial activity. We shall find that a brief examination of the early rules supports this idea.

⁶⁷ Letter to Tempier, December 9-10, 1825, in *EO* 6.211.

⁶⁸ Some articles written concerning this include *DOV*, s.v. “Action-Contemplation”; E. Lamirande, “Les ‘deux parts’ dans la vie apostolique d’après Mgr de Mazenod,” *Ét Obl* 25 (1966):177-204; see also Taché, *La vie spirituelle...*, 253-8.

The “two parts” were not mutually exclusive

One notes within the original 1816 Rule that members of the Society would alternate in concentrating upon interior spiritual needs and ministry to others.

Thus their life will be spent in prayer, in meditating the sacred truths, in practicing the virtues of religion, in studying Sacred Scripture, the holy Fathers, dogmatic and moral theology, in preaching and in the direction of youth.... The Missionaries will divide their group in such a way that while some strive in community to acquire the virtues and knowledge proper to a good missionary, others are touring the rural areas proclaiming the word of God... When their apostolic journeys are over, they will return to the community to rest from their labors by exercising a ministry that is less demanding, and to prepare themselves through meditation and study for a more fruitful ministry when next called upon to undertake new work.⁶⁹

This was a foundational principal for the new Society, one which remained within the Oblate Constitutions and Rules through the version of 1928.⁷⁰ It appears to echo the behavior of the early apostles who themselves were sent out two by two (Mk 6:7), and would later follow Jesus’ summons to “come away to a deserted place... and rest awhile” (Mk 6:31).

In both the 1818 and 1825 rules, we note that the missionaries were to return to a period of solitude and rejuvenation between mission assignments:

When the missionaries are not on a mission, they will return with joy to the holy solitude of their own house, so that they may employ their time to renew the spirit of their vocation by meditation on the divine law....⁷¹

Then the documents note:

Let them hold no dealings with the world, being careful to fly from it, and not easily allowing it to gain access to them. But this mode of acting will be no hindrance whatever to their zealous fulfillment - in

⁶⁹ Document to the Capitular Vicars, at Aix, 1816, in *EO* 13.2.

⁷⁰ The two principles are found in numbers 288 and 289 of that later rule..

⁷¹ Part two, ch. 3, sec. 1, art. 10, *1826*, 64.

their churches, or elsewhere in their residences - of the various duties of zeal prescribed by the Constitutions.⁷²

These “various duties of zeal” would presumably have included some of the various Society ministries which were conducted at the mission center such as confessions, devotional exercises, catechism instruction, and youth ministry. So we find that at least some opportunity for ministry existed during their sojourn in the mission center, obviously without the rigorous pace of exterior parish mission activity.

As for their spiritual life while on mission assignments, we find that there were indeed some elements of common prayer and observance to be followed along with their daily labors. During their time away on mission, the missionaries were to pray together the divine office and other acts of piety, they were to continue to practice various virtues, live a certain degree of self-denial and other regulated behavior.⁷³ At least some common spiritual practices always accompanied the missionaries during their time away on assignments, while adapted to the demands of their mission.

During the alternating periods of activity and retirement, one notes the opportunities for the cultivation of both their interior life (the elements of personal renunciation and prayer) and exterior ministry (other than rigorous parish mission activity). The lifestyle which de Mazenod proposed in the Society rule simply placed the primacy upon one or the other aspect, depending upon the particular phase in which the missionary found himself, rather than being mutually exclusive. It was an essential means for de Mazenod to address the needs of one’s interior life in the face of the demanding missionary needs, both for the sake of the individual and for those to whom he was sent.

LOVE OF NEIGHBOR FLOWING INTO MINISTRY

Two particular results (or “fruits”) of charity which were important to de Mazenod were zeal for souls and the quality of *douceur*. Let us first consider zeal, since it was more frequently mentioned among his writings during our time period of study.

⁷² Ibid., art. 11.

⁷³ Part one, ch. 2, sec. 2, “Special Regulations for the Missions,” 1825, 24-31.

Zeal versus “Zeal for Souls”

Zeal, within a theological understanding rather than in contemporary parlance, is understood to be a reaction to whatever stands in the way of obtaining that which one loves. This is determined by the quality of one’s desire and freedom to live according to one’s ultimate Good, or union in love with God. For example, a person who finds their happiness in loves of the sensate world will tend to strive in overcoming that which thwarts their realizing “happiness” in that arena. One simple example would be the person who is seriously addicted to alcohol and would move heaven and earth for the apparent happiness of another drink.

A more spiritually mature zeal, perfected as the “ardor of charity” and free from self-serving interest, arises purely from the intensity of our love for God and our union with God in charity. It tends to spill outward beyond our own personal concerns and, when properly directed, will seek the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It presses in two directions; towards deepening one’s relationship with God in one’s interior life, and as a motivation to assist one’s neighbor in realizing their own happiness through overcoming that which stands in the way of it. Since the neighbor’s greatest happiness is understood to be found within the spiritual realm, a person’s growing love for the neighbor should eventually animate that person’s zeal to assist the neighbor in realizing the happiness of a fuller relationship with God and, ultimately, the neighbor’s salvation. This latter expression provides the more specific understanding of what is called “zeal for souls.”⁷⁴

Contrary to its contemporary and popular usages, zeal in spiritual theology is not merely the equivalent of fervor, though in the past it could be equated as such. Zeal is more deeply rooted in the person than passing emotional impressions, springing from the more abiding quality of one’s life of charity with God. Nor is zeal to be associated with the passionate embrace of an ideology or philosophy (as by one who is a “zealot” toward some belief). Zeal for another’s happiness, when shaped by one’s life which is rooted within divine charity, will not be content to merely satisfy the neighbor’s physical or economic needs (however necessary they may be in service to finding ultimate happiness). It will seek to bring about

⁷⁴ To read more of zeal, see *Summa Ia-IIae*, q. 8, a. 4; *DES*, s.v. “Zelo”; *DS*, s.v. “Zèle”; Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, vol. 2, 213-22.

another's ultimate happiness which is to be found in the spiritual sphere, thereby realizing one's ultimate good of fullness of life with God.

As we shall discover, this more refined understanding became evident in the thought of Eugene de Mazenod during the early years of his ordained ministry, although he would also use the word "zeal" in a more generic sense.

De Mazenod and zeal for souls before 1816

Eugene does not specifically mention the word zeal in available letters or documents prior to his ordination. Indeed, the word does not seem to have had a prominent place within the seminary life; a perusal of the *Pietas seminarii* shows a greater interest in the seminarian's task of shedding the "old man" in the hope of realizing the new one in the priesthood of Jesus. The *Examens particuliers* offers at least an occasional mention, in one instance prodding the cleric to have zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.⁷⁵ It has been observed, however, that Saint-Sulpice in 1811 was apparently more concerned with instilling an attitude of interior piety and mortification at the cost of a dampened apostolic zeal.⁷⁶

While de Mazenod's writings offer no reflection upon the concept of zeal, we do find him considering his vocation with a deepening fervor, a general understanding of zeal during the period.⁷⁷

Eugene's personal cultivation of zeal was also a response in gratitude for his own experience of Jesus' saving love for him:

The more I have been and remain a great sinner, the more must I strive to love God and bring others to love him, since notwithstanding my profound unworthiness God has not ceased to pour out on me

⁷⁵ The "Examen de l'esprit ecclésiastique" encouraged the seminarians by asking, "Have we had a special attraction for the virtues which demand the most, a perfect [exercise of] religion, an angelic purity, an ardent zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls...?" Tronson, *Examens particuliers*, 10.

⁷⁶ Pielorz notes that Tronson's abridgement of Olier's original thought was a significant cause of this, noting that "if the seminaries of France, most of which were under the direction of the Sulpicians, did, in fact, give to the Church many *pious* priests, but priests not sufficiently zealous for the salvation of souls, that is proof that Mr. Tronson was successful in his endeavor." (*The Spiritual Life...*, 218). See also J. Gautier's general introduction to *Traité des Saints Ordres*, 58.

⁷⁷ This seems to be the underlying thought as well in the article on Oblate zeal in *DOV*, s.v. "Zeal"; see also H. Goudreault, "Être enflammé d'un zèle ardent pour le salut des âmes," *VOL* 39 (1980):287-302.

some of the greatest graces it was in his power to confer, and I can show my gratitude... only by doing all in my power to love him... and... all my inner resources to bring others to love him.⁷⁸

He would do this through following in Jesus' footsteps of proclaiming the good news and accepting the suffering and rejection which would come his way. After reflecting upon his weakness in following his vocation without God's help, he had already noted during his seminary years:

Yes, Lord, you will give me the strength for this, for you have deigned to inspire my heart with this desire. Armed with the sacred sign, symbol of the victory you have gained over hell... I will trample on your enemies like a roaring lion and snatch back the prey they have seized from you, I will harry them to their last entrenchments...⁷⁹

The desire of spiritual good for the neighbor was on his mind following his ordination as he prepared to return to Aix and settle down to his new life. Writing to his mother, with whom he would live during those first years, he noted that concern for others' spiritual good was part of his obligation of priesthood. Warning her that he would not always be socially available for the usual frivolities of daily life, he wrote:

Before I finish off I want to give you advance warning that, by virtue of my very state in life... I must be left to follow the rule I lay down for myself in line with my duties and obligations as I see them... After the first week or fortnight, nothing else can claim my time but my studies and my neighbor's spiritual good. Were I to come up against any obstacles to these two things, I would be obliged in conscience to flee even the family home, the diocese, the country, the very empire... until I found a place where I might freely exercise these two capital points of my vocation...⁸⁰

We find that concern for the spiritual good of the neighbor was present as de Mazenod entered his priestly ministry, but his thought was more focused upon his sense of obligation.

It is only from early 1813 that the use of the word "zeal" becomes more apparent for de Mazenod within the context of ministry. We know

⁷⁸ Issy retreat, August 1812, *EO* 15.106.

⁷⁹ Spiritual conference of March 19, 1809, in *EO* 14.48.

⁸⁰ Letter to mother, September 24, 1812, in *EO* 15.108.

that his immediate post-ordination months were principally focused upon study and further preparation for his ministry beyond Saint-Sulpice; perhaps he had encountered the more nuanced concept found in the writings of Vincent de Paul or Rodriguez.⁸¹ In the earlier 1813 letter to his friend Forbin-Janson, Eugene noted his friend's energetic work for God's glory and the good of others.⁸² In a following letter to his friend, de Mazenod wrote how the new seminarians' pious association at the Aix seminary had borne good fruit, leading them to a zeal for fraternal correction.⁸³

In the outline notes for his first missionary homily, Eugene encouraged his listeners to energetically seek that which was truly worthwhile:

... what is at issue here? Nothing less than salvation or the eternal loss of our souls... It was God's wish that you would bring to the search for this vital knowledge the urgency that you know how to employ for every other affair... what zeal, ardor to win some temporal advantage!⁸⁴

In a following Lenten homily, de Mazenod noted:

There, my friends, there you have a feeble sketch of the precious fruits that you derive from your coming back to God. So are we not right, for your own advantage to place continually before your eyes your indispensable duty, and to do it even sometimes with a vehemence that zeal for your salvation as much as the freedom of our ministry fully justifies.⁸⁵

While zeal seems to be equated with ardor in the earlier homily, we note that de Mazenod had also developed a more precise understanding of apostolic zeal for souls.

⁸¹ His spiritual director Fr. Duclaux had urged him in February 1813 to study the writings of Vincent de Paul (see Rey, vol. 1, 152. He also showed a familiarity with Rodriguez' work in at least two letters to his sister on December 4, 1808 (in *EO* 14.35) and July 12, 1809 (*EO* 14.57).

⁸² "I experience, in a personal way, a special consolation for the success of the various outlets of your zeal. I thank the good God for it, as if it were I he had made use of for his glory and the salvation of our brothers..." Letter to Forbin-Janson, February 19, 1813, in *EO* 15.113.

⁸³ "You would have to see how their meetings are spent: the humility, charity with which they accuse themselves and make amends, the zeal that is expended there to correct one another and help others to improve..." Letter of May 12, 1813, in *EO* 15.119.

⁸⁴ Homily for Ash Wednesday, 1813, in *EO* 15.114.

⁸⁵ Colloquial homily prior to confession, 1813, in *EO* 15.115.

Eugene's true motivation for his zeal underwent a moment of scrutiny during the December 1814 retreat. Having been worn out by sickness due to his excessive drive and search for the perfection which he envisioned, de Mazenod considered that perhaps those motives were tainted by his own self-seeking:

What would have been the verdict of the scrutator of hearts? That zeal that had brought me to the portals of the grave, was it really pure, really disinterested, I would have liked to believe this myself when I was healthy, but there, at the moment of the mighty manifestation, would I have withstood the test? Did I attribute to myself none of the glory that was due to God for my devotedness? Those praises that were quite undeserved by the slave who acted only because it was his master's will, who acted only in his Master's name, who acted only with his Master's help...? Did not the perfume of that dangerous incense afford some little satisfaction to your self-love? Did you do nothing to draw on yourself these plaudits?⁸⁶

"Holy indifference," that freedom from self-interest in exercising zeal for others' salvation, would be a particular concern for him in the future. It would also be a component of the soon-to-be-founded Society, as the 1818 rule noted the particular danger to preaching missionaries who lacked the essential virtue of humility.⁸⁷

Zeal for souls following 1816

The 1816 rule makes no direct use of the word "zeal" but does mention, however, that one principal end of the nascent Society was the salvation of one's neighbor through preaching.⁸⁸

Both the 1818 and 1825 rules, in contrast, mention zeal at several points. Both rules note that the deplorable condition of the Church struggles in their day had moved priests who were zealous of the glory of God, willing to give their lives, if need be, for the salvation of souls. These priests

⁸⁶ Retreat of December 1814, eighth meditation, in *EO* 15.130.

⁸⁷ Part two, ch. 3, sec. 1, art. 5, *1825*, 63.

⁸⁸ "The end of this Society is not only to work for the salvation of one's neighbor by dedicating itself to the ministry of preaching; its chief aim also includes providing its members with the means necessary to practice the virtues of religion to which they are so strongly attached..." Document to the Capitular Vicars of Aix, January 1816, *EO* 13.2.

are convinced that if zealous priests could be formed, priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue - in a word, apostolic men deeply conscious of the need to reform themselves... there would be ample reason to believe that... people who had gone astray might be brought back...⁸⁹

They were to be men who strove for holiness, who

... were seeking at all times to reach the very summit of perfection... to become humble, meek... filled with zeal, ready to sacrifice all their goods... even their life, for the love of Jesus Christ, the service of the Church, and the sanctification of their neighbor.⁹⁰

Such men were to pledge themselves “... to all the works of zeal which priestly charity can inspire...”⁹¹ The ministerial portion of their life would also be concerned with this, as the missionaries would zealously devote themselves to works such as missions, preaching, hearing confessions, and the other works of the Society.⁹²

Later, in the 1825 petition to Pope Leo XII which requested papal approbation, we find that the members-to-be would devote themselves totally to whatever would promote the greatest glory of God, the salvation of the most abandoned souls, and the service of the Church.⁹³

Summary of de Mazenod’s understanding of zeal

We find in Eugene’s writings during this period that he showed both a general sense for the understanding of zeal, along with the more refined quality which was essential for seeking the salvation of souls. This latter is a product of one’s growing and increasingly purified life in union with

⁸⁹ 1818, 17; 1825, 14.

⁹⁰ 1818, 18; 1825, 15.

⁹¹ 1825, 16.

⁹² 1818, 55; 1825, 63.

⁹³ Concerning the fruitfulness of their early efforts which was behind their expansion, de Mazenod wrote in the first part of the petition to Pope Leo XII that “The extraordinary blessings that God deigned to shower on the efforts of their zeal sparked the desire in neighboring bishops to procure the same benefits for their flocks” (December 8, 1825, in *EO* 13.48). In a later paragraph, he noted the Society members early resolve to commit themselves: “They have resolved to embrace the evangelical counsels and to devote themselves totally to whatever would promote the greatest glory of God, the salvation of the most abandoned souls, and the service of the Church.” (ibid.)

the divine charity-love, and a desired outcome of the missionaries' life of practiced virtue and detachment.

A Second Desired Quality - the Virtue of Douceur

A vague quality to define

It is difficult to precisely define the virtue of *douceur* as understood in nineteenth century French spirituality, since it has undergone a considerable evolution in its historical development.⁹⁴ The quality finds its primary basis in the gospel account of Jesus' instructing his disciples to "take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for *I am gentle and humble in heart...*"⁹⁵ An adequate summary understanding of the virtue is perhaps offered by Gaucheron, who noted that *douceur* may be characterized as "a virtue which permits one to welcome all, and if need be to endure all people and events, with a calmness of soul; a fruit of charity which outwardly manifests an attitude of total kindness."⁹⁶

The cultivation of *douceur* requires a lifetime of effort; it is only through a complete refinement of one's participating in the divine charity that it may be realized, following the transformation of one's deepest human inclinations through daily practice and attentiveness, regular prayer, and self-examination.⁹⁷ *Douceur* was considered to be an essential element of an apostolic life, particularly in winning back tepid souls during

⁹⁴ To read more about the historical development of the sense of *douceur*, read *DS*, s.v. "Douceur." For additional reading on the quality within spiritual life, read *DES* s.v. "Dolcezza;" *Catholicisme*, s.v. "Douceur"; Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Stages...* vol. II, 102-7; E. Hugon, "Le rôle de la douceur dans la vie spirituelle" in *Vie Spirituelle* 18 (1928):541-550; J.-N. Grou, *L'école du Jésus-Christ*, vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1923), 147-152; idem., *L'intérieur de Jésus* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1923), ch. 36. Texts from spiritual writers with whom de Mazenod was familiar would include Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part 3, ch. 8; Alphonsus di Liguori, *La pratica dell'amore verso Gesù*, ch. 12; J.J. Olier, *Introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes*, ch. 10, 111-3.

⁹⁵ Mt 11:29. The NRSV presents the phrase of immediate concern as Ἰᾶ4 ΒΔ'ᾶH ,4·4 6'R 'B,4-DH ("for I-am-humble and lowly") and is popularly translated into English as "... for I am *meek* and humble of heart," but the contemporary sense of "meekness" does not seem to adequately describe the French quality of *douceur*. More problematic for contemporary ears might be the English word "gentle" found in the NRSV translation.

⁹⁶ *Catholicisme*, s.v. "Douceur."

⁹⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Stages...*, vol. 2, 106-7.

the sacrament of penance.⁹⁸

Let us consider the few passages where Eugene used the word, along with some accompanying observations.

His developing sense of douceur

We find no written evidence of Eugene having considered the development of *douceur* within himself prior to 1812 while at Saint-Sulpice. This is noteworthy when one considers that the Sulpician *Pietas seminarii* regarded the quality as a primary one for priests to develop.⁹⁹ Perhaps the lack was another consequence of the greater seminary focus upon piety rather than zeal.

Eugene's December 1814 retreat was a moment when he had to seriously confront a difficult reality of his call - that one dedicated to the salvation of others would always be suffering the tensions of ministerial demands in seeming competition with those of his interior life. He believed that he had not handled this well, but would frequently recommit himself to the effort in personal retreats. For example, his ministry to youth would require some special qualities to develop in addition to regular prayer:

I must fix for myself a rule of conduct with my young people. Work on the virtue of "gentleness," on mortification in the use of my tongue when I am crossed, on humility, self-love, etc., hunt it down precisely when it conceals itself, retrieve myself by prayer, office, mass, preparation, thanksgiving, reading Holy Scripture, pious reading, the examen, in a word leave no stone unturned, for I need reformation in everything.¹⁰⁰

His July-August retreat of 1818 found Eugene coping with the new reality of his preaching society. His life of reparation and inner transformation would indeed be situated within a regulated life, but spent in the outside world of ministry and love of neighbor rather than in the cloister.

⁹⁸ Garrigou-Lagrange notes of meekness that it "is that which is most visible and most agreeable in the practice of charity... in vain will we have zeal for our neighbor, if we are not meek..." in *ibid.*, 103. The same article attributes a saying to St. Francis de Sales, "it is better to make penitents through meekness than hypocrites through severity" (*ibid.*, 104).

⁹⁹ "In well-formed disciples, they will give first place to meekness towards the neighbor and humility of heart towards God..." *Pietas seminarii*, sec. 20, 177.

¹⁰⁰ 1814 retreat, opening reflections, in *EO* 15.130.

As a result, he now had to consider anew the transformation of his life in service to this reality which, besides prayer, would require the cultivation of *douceur* supported by humility and patience:

Since God in his goodness, to furnish me the means to expiate my sins, places in my hands things that are dearest to his glory, clearly I must neglect nothing to acquit myself well of them; but so as to achieve this more surely, I will really persuade myself that I can only bring ruin on his works, and do in fact bring ruin on them, by my pride, impatience, anxiety. It's not as if I attribute anything I do to myself, but even so I am not humble enough.¹⁰¹

So I will work as well on this lovely virtue of meekness. I will encourage myself with the thought that I did make some progress in it; but as occasions became more frequent and more difficult, I have reverted practically to my natural state. Let's hope that with the help of grace I will be more fortunate in the future.¹⁰²

During his May 1818 retreat, Eugene once again noted that his highly animated personality held a tendency to lessen his ministerial effectiveness.¹⁰³ He also noted that *douceur* was a necessary response, this time as a willingness to endure the slights of others:

If I must be vigilant over feelings which do not emanate from an evil source, all the more must I repress those that find their source in pride or some other insufficiently curbed passion; so, when someone treats me with indifference, is lacking in the respect I might think, in worldly terms, to be my due, even if it extends to insulting behavior, etc., it is essential, indispensable, that I endure it meekly.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Annual retreat, at Bonneveine, 1818, in *EO* 15.139.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* It is interesting to note the traditional counsel that one's development of *douceur* depended upon a simultaneous cultivation of humility and ongoing prayer; see R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages.*, vol. 2, 105-6.

¹⁰³ "I will be on guard against my natural vivacity, and I will do everything on my part to stifle the indignation that certain types of behavior arouse in me which wound my sensitivity or are repugnant to natural equity, of which the Lord has given me a heightened sense. Mortification shall be all the more meritorious therefrom." 1818 retreat notes, in *EO* 15.145.

¹⁰⁴ Retreat made in Aix, May 1818, in *EO* 15.145.

He also realized that this attitude was necessary to show among his Society brothers who likewise deserved respect and forbearance.¹⁰⁵

In summary, given the various passages in which Eugene reflected upon the virtue, we find that he recognized the need for ongoing prayer and the practice of humility. This was a particular need for him during struggles with difficult parish pastors who resisted the efforts of the Society; his personal restraint in the face of verbal abuse would have drawn upon his qualities of *douceur*; humility, and ongoing prayer.¹⁰⁶ In considering his need for *douceur*, de Mazenod also recognized a need to continually practice it, as shown through his desire at several moments to be more approachable to others in service to his ministry.

¹⁰⁵ “Accord infinite respect to my confreres. Address them in a very meek and forbearing way.” Resolutions from the May 1818 retreat, in *EO* 15.146. In the following passage, he noted the need to endure others’ shortcomings (French, *supporter*) in community life: “Repress absolutely and totally those first movements of impatience, petty acts of bluntness occasioned, it is true, very often by others’ faults, but which all the same should be corrected with very great care. Put up with the faults of others with charity.”

¹⁰⁶ See J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, 129-44.

Epilogue

FOLLOWING EUGENE DE MAZENOD IN THE PRESENT DAY

DE MAZENOD EMBODIED THE APOSTOLIC VOCATION IN HIS TIME

We have seen in this study that Eugene de Mazenod lived his missionary priestly vocation according to a traditional yet personalized understanding of apostolic life, which found expression in his early ministry years and in the foundation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate between 1812 and 1826. One can easily find some traces of pre-existing tradition within de Mazenod's understanding. His particular moment of Christian history was rich with life accounts and spiritual maxims of numerous saints and notable reform figures including Alphonsus di Liguori, Charles Borromeo, Jean-Jacques Olier, Philip Neri, and Ignatius of Loyola.

De Mazenod revealed his familiarity with many of these in his personal reflections and, indeed, much of their influence may be discerned within his schema for apostolic religious life. His particular response to French Catholic spiritual needs of his time was certainly not a mere echoing of earlier traditional expressions. Within his historical moment, for all its political chaos, Catholic spiritual life in France bore within itself a rich montage of its spiritual tradition. De Mazenod's spiritual program for apostolic life was at once faithful to the French collective tradition, yet his own Spirit-inspired vision made it unique in its personal interpretation and synthesis. It was a blending of strands taken from various sources but uniquely lived through his own example and later passed on in the founding charism for the Missionaries of Provence.

Eugene de Mazenod exercised his ministry as an apostolic man within the Church of his time which was guided most immediately by the Council of Trent. His present-day disciples labor in a different time with a complexity of individual national histories and social pressures, in communion with the Church as the People of God with Jesus Christ as its capstone and articulated by the ideals of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). A

sometimes vexing question can still arise even today for those who are drawn to follow according to the charism of Eugene de Mazenod, either as professed Oblates or among lay Oblate associates who find themselves called and strengthened by the Oblate charism: How might de Mazenod's particular apostolic way be more fully appropriated and integrated today into the lives of his post-Vatican II followers? This final section briefly recalls the essentially missionary and evangelizing nature of the Church and the vocation of all disciples to re-present Jesus Christ in our present-day world, particularly through following the example of Eugene de Mazenod's apostolic way.

THE RISEN CHRIST, EVANGELIZING AND RE-EVANGELIZING

One of the most influential teachings which emerged from the Second Vatican Council was in its re-articulation of the evangelizing nature of the Church. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God's spoken Word to all of creation, by his faithful and obedient life, death, and resurrection, has revealed the way to the fullness of life which is promised to those who embrace the way of Christ as their own. This spoken life-giving Word of God continues to re-echo in every time and place, seeking to reveal in the last days the Reign of God as the New Jerusalem in the brilliance of that "shining City on the hill," animated by the Spirit of the risen Christ and whose Body is intended to be most visibly revealed through the the life and ministry of the Church and her members.

This mission of proclaiming the Good News of the risen Christ is no longer to be regarded as the purview of "professional" ministers of consecrated life and the ordained. All who have been baptized are also charged with proclaiming the life-giving Word of God chiefly through the example of their lives, as well as through other activities in collaboration with the evangelizing ministry of their local bishop. The growing body of lay Oblate Associate ministers seeks to respond to this summons through following the evangelizing charism of Eugene de Mazenod, whether through participating in overseas missions which are planting the gospel in virgin soil, or, closer to home, giving witness to the gospel in coordination with local Oblate foundations.

The 1990 encyclical letter on the Church's missionary mandate (*Redemptoris missio*) notes that the ongoing work of evangelization in the

world which may be summarized in three areas of activity. First, the mission *ad gentes*, to those who have never heard the gospel; second, the ongoing gospel proclamation to those Christian communities in which the Church's ordinary pastoral mission is already established. Missionary Oblates have a distinguished history in both of these fields, and they continue as important areas of concern for Oblates as part of the Church's ongoing missionary activity. The third area involves the case where evangelization also has as its focus the great numbers of baptized individuals who have heard the gospel, but for whatever reason no longer embrace it and have opted to distance themselves from the communion of faith. This latter group, an especially notable concern within the more developed nations of the world (though not confined to them), is the focus for what Pope John Paul II termed the "new evangelization"¹⁰⁷ and has become an energetic area of activity for the Church in all of America.

Re-evangelization of southern France and re-kindling the religious life of its people were the primary concerns of Eugene de Mazenod during the first half of his ministerial life and remained a concern during his years as bishop of Marseilles. It was toward re-evangelization that the earliest Missionary Oblate society directed its energies and toward which de Mazenod exhorted his men to strive in becoming "truly apostolic men." The Missionaries of Provence did so by accepting ministerial responsibilities especially suited for this need, choosing itinerant parish missionary preaching and the more pastorally flexible shrine centers rather than accepting fixed and more restrictive parish responsibilities. Their catechetical efforts toward education in the faith for children and young adults, their availability for the sacrament of reconciliation while striving to be welcoming, non-judgmental, and pastorally flexible within the moral guidance of Catholic doctrine, all of these were in service to re-awakening the faith life of their people. At their best, the Missionary Oblates of today strive to allow these ideals to shine forth in their present day ministries, seeking to be animated by the fullness of their original charism within a broader and, as a result, an oftentimes more restricting range of ministries.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ "The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People" (*Christifideles Laici*) (Rome, 1988).

¹⁰⁸ For further reading on the prophetic dimension of ordained priesthood within Oblate and other consecrated life, see J. LaBelle, "To be a Missionary Oblate Priest Today: a new vision in a new ecclesiology." *Oblatio* 2 (2012): 219-229.

OBLATES ARE SENT TO “PROCLAIM JESUS AND HIM CRUCIFIED”

Missionary Oblates and Oblate Associates, in seeking to be animated by the apostolic ideals of Eugene de Mazenod in the present day, may find a deeper appreciation for the Oblate charism through reflecting upon some notable attributes of de Mazenod’s “apostolic way” in light of Vatican II and some postconciliar documents and other writings.

“Know this Jesus whom we preach” - Jesus within de Mazenod’s Apostolic Program

In considering de Mazenod’s image of apostolic life, the centrality of the person of Jesus stands out clearly within his spiritual program and provided his cornerstone. De Mazenod’s embrace of Jesus as the core of the Missionary Oblate charism is more than a pious element; Eugene’s love for the Savior literally became his orienting focus, the lodestone for every aspect of his existence.

We have seen that de Mazenod’s ability to express the filial love of Jesus for his heavenly Father may be appreciated as directed along three basic axes. His numerous devotions each played their part in deepening his awareness and love for Jesus through his prayers and adoration, which sought union with the triune God through loving the Son; his life of notable practiced virtues were in service to realizing Jesus’ filial love, evident through a disciple’s fullness of life and spiritual freedom which were proper to one proclaiming the Good News; and de Mazenod and his spiritual sons showed its concrete practice in the crucibles of communal and ministerial settings. These three areas of focus towards God in prayer, towards the self in virtuous living, and towards other people, offer a basic structure for understanding the dynamic exercise of his apostolic life program.

Vatican II affirmed that all Christians are called to the pursuit of holiness. The constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 40) notes that they are called by God,

according to His own purpose and grace.... They are warned by the Apostle to live “as becomes saints” (Eph. 5:3), and to put on “as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience” (Col. 3:12).... In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength according as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. In this way they can

follow in His footsteps and mold themselves in His image, seeking the will of the Father in all things, devoting themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor.

The Missionary Oblate charism has always sought to reproduce this in the lives of de Mazenod's followers. The Oblate *Constitution and Rules* has likewise continued to reproduce the message of the Founder's initial introduction to the original 1818 collection, exhorting its disciples to realize the fullness of life in Christ within their lives. "And how should men who want to follow in the footsteps of their divine Master Jesus Christ conduct themselves...? They must strive to be saints."

The vocation to become as Christ is the concern of each baptized Christian, of course; each of us shares a common summons to share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal missions of Jesus' life, and participate by their lives of growing holiness in the fundamental evangelizing mission of the Church. This is pursued along the avenue of our particular vocational call to the lay state, consecrated religious life or in ordained ministry. Lay apostolic workers, with their ability to be present in every corner of secular society, bring a specific attribute to this overarching mission which only they can provide. Those lay faithful who are called to the vocation of matrimony and family bring yet an additional element into their life of evangelical witness - their matrimonial life is meant to be a visible sign of the never-failing love of Christ for his people, in a love which is continually challenged to renew itself through mutual self-sacrifice. Whether as married or as single individuals, Oblate lay associates in nourishing and directing their spiritual lives along the apostolic path of Eugene de Mazenod, with the desire to renew and strengthen their basic interior rootedness to the person of Jesus who already is present in their lives and continually invites them to an ongoing gift of self toward others.

Jesus as the proper and worthy center of life for members of apostolic consecrated life is noted in the document for the March 1980 document from the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes. *The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life* affirms the desirability and rightful place of a contemplative attitude in all forms of religious life; the section "Guidelines for Institutes of Active Life" notes the need for active religious to find a way to integrate their interior life with their external apostolate. Citing the earlier words of John Paul II, the document states:

...their first duty, in fact, is that of being with Christ. A constant danger for apostolic workers is to become so much involved in their work for the Lord, as to forget the Lord of all work.... This prayer, personal and communitarian, will come about only if the hearts of religious reach a high level of vitality and intensity in dialog with God and in union with Christ, Redeemer of humanity. (nos. 4-5)

Consecrated religious, including Missionary Oblates, are called to strive for this “union with Christ” as the foundational part of their “consecration for mission” as noted in the 1996 post-synodal apostolic exhortation on consecrated religious life (*Vita consecrata*). The document observes that, while all the baptized share in the call to follow Christ, “... it is true of those who, in the manner that characterizes the consecrated life, are called to follow Christ ‘more closely,’ and to make him the ‘all’ of their lives. The task of *devoting themselves wholly to “mission”* is therefore included in their call.” (no. 72, emphases original).

The Oblate *Constitutions & Rules* builds upon this in its second constitution, identifying Oblates as men set apart for the Gospel who are ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus, and that “the desire to cooperate with him draws us to know him more deeply, to identify with him, to let him live in us.” Indeed, our self-gift to Christ and to Christ in others is at the very heart of the evangelical counsels. (C16, 20, 24)

Oblates ordained to the ministerial priesthood bear within their particular vocation an additional urgency to develop a vibrant relationship with Jesus, the One whom they are called to “re-present” in their ministries of word and sacrament. All baptized members of the Body of Christ are consecrated to share in the person of Jesus as the unique and self-sacrificing High Priest; those ordained to ministerial priesthood are called to make Jesus present in their lives through fulfilling their sacramental and ministerial responsibilities which only they can fulfill. The Vatican II document on the ministry and life of priests (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2) notes that “... whether engaged in prayer and adoration, preaching the Word, offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, ministering the other sacraments, or performing any of the works of the ministry for men, priests are contributing to the extension of God’s glory as well as to the development of divine life in men.” Priests are called, as all the baptized, “to be perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect...” while being bound to God in a special way through their presbyteral consecration to be “living instruments of Christ

the eternal priest”. Also, “because of their intimate union with Christ and their holiness of life, these men can say with the Apostle: ‘It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20).’” (12).

A Dynamic and Cultivated Openness to the Transforming Word of God

De Mazenod’s relationship with Jesus was a deliberate, conscientious program directed to cultivate his love for the Savior, and he strove to overcome anything in his personal life which stood opposed to this. While some of his spiritual program can be seen to contain elements from the the sixteenth-century French School of spirituality, elements of de Mazenod’s spiritual program were more directly shaped by later interpretation and influences from his Sulpician seminary formation. The classical Bérullian importance placed upon the Incarnate Word was present within de Mazenod’s own; for Eugene, however, it was perhaps more practically and directly expressed through his devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the lives of many like-minded saintly examples. His Marian devotion between 1812 and 1826, while perhaps being more ordinary than exemplary, shared at least one common element with his other devotions to saints; that of fostering his own attitude of adoration of God through deepening his love for Jesus. This underlying focus of devotion found expression and was strengthened by Eugene’s various “duties of piety” through prayer, his meditative practice of *oraison*, devotion to the Eucharist, spiritual reading, and other exercises.

De Mazenod’s love for Jesus, rooted in his younger experiences of piety and hastened by his pre-seminary experience of being accepted by his Savior in spite of his self-perceived weaknesses, was the foundation for his subsequent striving to grow in this love. Much more significant than an affective love, Eugene had the goal of so loving Jesus that his own capacity to love would be transformed into Jesus’ own. Jesus’ love was filial in its total availability to the Father’s divine plan; de Mazenod sought to embody this very relationship of love, cultivating a personal liberation from all that would impede it in order to identify with Jesus’ salvific love for all people. Eugene’s program for apostolic life was rooted in his own early experiences of God’s love for him, and had the principal objective of further deepening and refining this love returned, both to God interiorly and in loving others as God loves them.

His deep experience of having been forgiven and continually loved by God was also an essential foundation stone within his subsequent spiritual

program, as evident through his ongoing testimony of gratitude during his early ministry years. This personal experience and relationship with Jesus, cultivated through practices including regular Eucharistic visits and meditation (which fostered his growth in virtue), should not be minimized in their importance for his apostolic spirituality. By extension, the quality and fervor of one's loving relationship with God through a loving knowledge of the Son should be carefully considered as an important aspect of de Mazenod's spiritual way.

The qualities of zeal for souls and *douceur*, noted in the previous chapter, were themselves indicators of an Oblate missionary having grounded himself within the divine love. Long hours devoted to busy parish mission activities, patience and availability to those who approached him for reconciliation, tolerating insults from the recalcitrant and hard-hearted, all were tests of these qualities which depended not so much upon the resources of the missionary but rather upon his ongoing oneness with the passionate love of Jesus for God's sons and daughters.

The present Oblate Constitutions and Rules notes that Missionary Oblates will always be close to the people they serve, and that they should be daring when necessary to proclaim the Good News. (C8) Oblates fulfill this through their life in community which for this reason are apostolic in character, and that each member's zeal is influenced by the quality of their fraternal charity. (C37)

Personal Example of Transformation in Christ is an Essential Element of Evangelization

Eugene de Mazenod's life of ever fuller participation within the divine love, realized through his growing love for Jesus, was to be experienced by others through the example of his personal life and his various relationships with others. This additional testimony offered a second voice to the Missionary Oblate in his vocation to preach the Good News of God's salvific love for all people. The two principal areas for this activity were fraternal (principally within his religious community), and pastoral (among those whom he served).

A guiding principle for the cultivation of fraternal love among the early Missionary Oblates might be summarized by the well known phrase, *ubi caritas, Deus ibi est*. God's active presence among them was to be made visible through the community's shared unity in love and spirit, sig-

nified through their “one heart and one soul.” The community members’ routine opportunities for ongoing self-sacrifice within daily community life, their obedient submission to their common rule of life, their desire to be “one with the Church” in their cooperation with her pastors, each contributed to the milieu for a fruitful existence of the Holy Spirit among them, the same Spirit who exists in the self-giving dynamic between the creative love of the Father and the filial love of the Son.

It is perhaps too easy for many contemporary apostolic workers to become so focused upon the call to ministry, the expression of their particular “mission,” that they can slowly and imperceptibly give lesser attention to the transforming God working within themselves. Indeed, this latter element is what we might call the “kernel” of their mission - their own experience of God who has touched their heart and impels them to go forward proclaiming God’s saving love to others. This inner activity of God’s word in the minister is an essential precursor - with no living and productive experience of God, there can be no mission to others. The ongoing activity of the Paschal Mystery in the life of an apostolic worker provides a more convincing foundation for any subsequent ministry which they may realize.¹⁰⁹ Theodore Cardinal McCarrick noted in his 2003 keynote address at the North American Institute for Catholic Evangelization (NAICE) that Mary Magdalene’s experience of having seen the risen Christ preceded and sent her running to the other disciples to proclaim “I have seen the Lord.” It is essential that modern evangelists embrace this.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is fundamental. We all must build on that. Without it there is nothing. We must have seen the Lord. We must have seen him in the Gospels. We must have seen him in the Sacraments. We must have seen him in the gathering of the people at Mass, in the *ecclesia* of God. We must have seen him in the faces of God’s wonderful good people. But once we have seen him, once we know the wonder, the beauty, the glory of his Presence in our world, we can’t keep it to ourselves, and that’s what it means to be a missionary.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ A. Paul Dominic, “Mission before Mission: God’s Mission within Us,” in *Review for Religious* 52(1993):120-122. (119-130)

¹¹⁰ Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, “The Call to a New Evangelization,” in *Ministry through the Lens of Evangelization: major presentations from the North American Institute for Catholic Evangelization* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004), 8.

For Missionary Oblates, witnessing to the transforming activity of the Paschal mystery is no less necessary for them in their various ministries, from a personal as well as communal perspective. The 1992 Oblate general chapter document *Witnessing as Apostolic Community* notes that “Christian witness is most truly manifest in the lives of those who experience Jesus Christ both personally and communally. Such persons have discovered the ‘pearl of great price’ (Matthew 13:46) and have found a true center for their lives; they are truly free! By becoming disciples who follow Jesus, they can by that fact better share in his mission as apostles.” (no. 15) Concerning the importance of community transformation (which depends upon the quality of conversion within individual members), the document in no. 12-13 also states that:

We are reminded that “we achieve unity in our life only in through Jesus Christ” (C.31). We are therefore called to a deepening of our relationship with him, both as individuals and as communities... as we become “one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32), our communities will become more and more apostolic; by the quality of the witness they give, they will “bear fruit that lasts.” (John 15:16)

The Lifelong Project of Cultivating Oblate Discipleship and Growth in Virtue

It is also evident from this study that de Mazenod’s desire to transform his own loving ability into that of Jesus involved the cultivation of certain virtues and qualities. These virtues were concretely practiced within his apostolic life, serving to deliberately shape his apostolic lifestyle and challenge his ongoing growth in virtue. He placed a notable importance upon particular moral virtues and other concrete practices which were to express those of faith, hope, and charity. Sometimes the practices reflected a high degree of expectation, such as in the cases of humility and obedience, underscoring that Eugene promoted higher rather than lower expectations for his disciples to attain. These practices, illustrating the true sense of an ascetical life in its proper understanding, were performed in the interest of cultivating an ever fuller life of charity. They sought to produce ever greater fruit through a deeper degree of love for others whether in community or ministry.

De Mazenod’s particular group of virtues which were important to him during this time also suggests a more distinguishing imprint upon

the long tradition of apostolic life. An interesting area of further study would be to consider the continuing importance of these particular qualities and their emphasis within the Missionary Oblate congregation, and to investigate their long-term importance. Whatever may be the result, de Mazenod's particular constellation of virtues could conceivably serve in identifying his uniqueness among founders of religious institutes. Just as the mention of poverty tends to suggest the charisma of Francis of Assisi, obedience is quickly associated with Ignatius of Loyola, and "humility and simplicity" are considered as primary for Francis de Sales, Eugene de Mazenod's own emphasis upon several distinct qualities tend to delimit him from other founders, perhaps aiding to distinguish his own unique lived experience within the wider apostolic life tradition.

Much of contemporary Christian discipleship literature is reticent to consider the seemingly daunting prospect of deliberately sought interior transformation as a lifelong project. Acceptable in principle, such a pursuit can easily fall victim to a present-day readiness to accept "good enough" in place of "better." Realities such as a dearth of qualified spiritual companions or directors, lessened appreciation for the sacrament of reconciliation, and a sometimes confusing sea of spiritual growth literature (much of it of limited useful substance), can leave many intent Christian disciples with an attitude of resignation as to the pursuit of ever more mature Christ-like discipleship. Nevertheless, all Christian disciples are called to pursue the fullness of life in Christ, the fruit of conversion; *Christefideles laici* 16 notes that:

It is ever more urgent that today all Christians take up again the way of the gospel renewal, welcoming in a spirit of generosity the invitation expressed by the Apostle Peter "to be holy in all conduct" (1 Pt 1:15)... Everyone in the Church, precisely because they are members, receives and thereby shares in the common vocation to holiness. In the fullness of this title and on equal par with all other members of the Church, the lay faithful are called to holiness: "All the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (*Lumen gentium*, 40); "All of Christ's followers are invited and bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment of their own state of life. (ibid, 42).... Life according to the Spirit, whose fruit is holiness (cf. Rom 6:22; Gal 5:22), stirs up every baptized person and requires each to

follow and imitate Jesus Christ (emphasis original) in embracing the Beatitudes; in listening and meditating on the Word of God; in conscious and active participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church; in personal prayer; in family or in community; in the hunger and thirst for justice; in the practice of the commandment of love in all circumstances of life and service to the brethren, especially the least, the poor, and the suffering.

As regards Oblate life, the 1986 general chapter document *Missionaries in Today's World* recalls that a life of ongoing transformation into Christ is essential for our mission: "Life-long conversion renewed daily is indispensable if our witness is to be credible, free from inconsistency, contradiction or falsehood." (18)

Oblate Charity and Virtues are Honed in the Crucible of Daily Life for the Mission

This study of de Mazenod's life has illustrated more clearly the two interacting principles which were operative in his spiritual life; his quest to be interiorly rooted in the divine love, and his exterior practice of virtue which further challenged his growth in Christian maturity. His example also illustrates an important insight into the relationship between fraternal life and mission, perhaps an additional reason behind de Mazenod's counsel for a life of practiced charity among his disciples.

As Eugene lay dying in the days before May 21, 1861, the story is recounted how his gathered disciples asked his final desire for his Congregation, to which he replied "Practice well among you charity...charity... charity... and beyond, zeal for the salvation of souls."¹¹¹ This often-repeated anecdote of the Missionary Oblate founder could conceivably be taken to infer a choice between two areas, as if practiced fraternal charity within the community and exterior ministry were two isolated concerns. What is evident from the present study, however, is the interrelationship which exists between the two fields, and that the quality of one's outside activity is dependent upon the quality of one's more immediate charity within the community. Indeed, the more precise understanding of zeal as "zeal for souls" places a responsibility upon the disciple to give special attention to

¹¹¹ "Pratiquez bien parmi vous la charité... la charité... la charité... et au dehors, le zèle pour le salut des âmes." Reported by Joseph Fabre, O.M.I. (1824-1892) in *Circulaire no. 9* (May 26, 1861), in *Circulaires administratives* vol. 1 (1853-1885), 10.

his broader life of practiced charity, so to cultivate this necessary quality in all its purity and freedom from self-interest; the other practiced virtues, likewise, both reflect a disciple's ongoing life of charity and encourage him to further growth.

When seen in this light, we find that the life of community has service to the mission as its end, and the quality of one's exterior zeal and ministry is shaped by the quality of one's fraternal relationships and observances. De Mazenod's final words to his disciples may be seen as offering a sort of formula for relating community life and mission. In this way, we also note that the element of integration among the three expressions of love (oblatory, fraternal, pastoral) will each exert some influence upon the other two. Thus would God's love, revealed in the lived example of Jesus' life of self-giving for the sake of others, be known in the world.

Vatican II, in its recognition that the pursuit of Christian holiness was the responsibility of every baptized person, also noted that any Christian vocation offers the way and indeed provides much of the grist for realizing this. The decree on the apostolate of laity in the Church (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 4) insists that one's union with Christ is to include every aspect of life; neither family concerns nor other aspects should be considered as beyond the divine ability to realize God's glory through it. *Christifideles laici* reiterates this in stating that "every area of the lay faithful's lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God who desires that these very areas be the 'places in time' where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others... [and]... for a 'continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity.'" (59)

The various communities of consecrated religious life participate in the ongoing evangelical mission of the Church in the world, each according to its respective founding charism. *Vita Consecrata* 72 underscores that mission is indeed the concern of every consecrated religious, and so even their life expressed in community are in service to this:

Indeed, more than in external works, the mission consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness. This is the challenge, this is the primary task of the consecrated life! The more consecrated persons allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more Christ is made present and active in the world for the salvation of all. Thus it can be said that consecrated persons are "in mission" by virtue of their very consecration, to which they bear witness in

accordance with the ideal of their Institute.



Religious life, moreover, continues the mission of Christ with another feature specifically its own: fraternal life in community for the sake of the mission. Thus, men and women religious will be all the more committed to the apostolate the more personal their dedication to the Lord Jesus is, the more fraternal their community life, and the more ardent their involvement in the Institute's specific mission...

This is no less true for Missionary Oblates, as our community life is meant to provide an irreplaceable voice of witness in service of our ongoing call to evangelize. Our community life should be rooted in our common Oblate religious vows, and be an expression of how we struggle to live de Mazenod's ideal of "one heart and one soul." *Missionaries in Today's World* reminds us that "the most fundamental sign for us missionary Oblates is always the community. Community life centered around the vows is a protest against the abuses of a consumer society, the search for domination and the glorification of sex. The vow of perseverance is a challenging symbol of fidelity in a world incapable of permanent commitments." (no. 47)

In conclusion, Eugene de Mazenod's vision of the Missionary Oblate vocation offers a template for the harmonious shining outward of this love. An Oblate's life of discipleship is meant to bear fruit in both personal life through growth in virtue and in fraternal life through the evidence of the "one heart and one soul." This in turn shapes the quality of one's love shown through a zealous pursuit of others' salvation. Jesus will thus be credibly perceived at the Missionary Oblate's center, signaling the Risen One who is present in the Church and continually bringing into fullness the ever-unfolding Reign of God.

Appendix

TABULATION OF SUGGESTED VIRTUES AND HUMAN QUALITIES IN THE WRITINGS OF EUGENE DE MAZENOD DECEMBER 1811 - 1826

Below is an alphabetical index of references from de Mazenod's written sources which mention each virtue or characteristic. They are divided into two source groups, letters (*LM*), and non-letter documents of de Mazenod (*DM*), each group subdivided by year. Many are to be found in *Écrits Oblats (EO)*, in which case the location information is given. Otherwise, typewritten transcripts of his original French letters and notes (from original manuscripts or other sources) may be found in the Oblate congregational archives in Rome. In some instances, a given source offered separate considerations for a given virtue/quality, in which case the multiple entries are noted.

A valid "mention" of a virtue or quality was accepted when de Mazenod either mentioned the virtue/quality or offered some obvious personal opinion or insight regarding it.

CHASTITY -*LM* none; *DM* - none.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD - *LM* (1811) Dec. 8 to Mme. de Mazenod. (1816) July-August to C.-A. de Mazenod, *EO* 15. 137. (1817) Aug. 22 to Tempier, *EO* 6.21. (1819) Nov. 22 to Tempier, *EO* 6.48. (1820) Sept. 14 to Albertas, *EO* 15.153. (1821) Nov. 16 to Régusse. (1822) Mar. 8 to Courtés. (1823) Mar. 30 to Jourdan, *EO* 6.99. (1826) Jan. 20 to Tempier, *EO* 7.219; Feb. 16 to Tempier, *EO* 7.224.

DM (1813) Mar. 28 parish colloquial on confession, *EO* 15.115. (1814) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.130 [3 entries - Introduction (p. 78), 14th medit.,

17th medit.]. (1816) youth congregation journal, *EO* 15.135; July-Aug. retreat, *EO* 15.139.

DOUCEUR (MEEKNESS) - *LM* none.

DM - (1814) Dec. retreat preamble, *EO* 15.130. (1816) July-August retreat, *EO* 15.139. (1818) May retreat, *EO* 15.146.

HUMILITY - *LM* (1813) Apr. 9 to Forbin-Janson. (1814) July 19 to Forbin-Janson. (1817) July 31 to Min. de l'Intérieur; Aug. 12 to Tempier, *EO* 6.20. (1821) Mar. 14 to Courtès, *EO* 6.64; June 27 to Albertas. (1822) Aug. 15 to Tempier, *EO* 6.86; Dec. 9 to Courtès, *EO* 6.90. (1823) Apr. 2 to Courtès, *EO* 15.100; Apr. 13 to Mme. de Mazenod. (1824) Jan. 27 to Marcou, *EO* 6.128; June 16 to Bernard. (1825) Nov. 26 to Tempier. (1826) Jan. 10 to Tempier, *EO* 7.217; Jan. 11 to Tempier; Feb. 16 to Tempier, *EO* 7.224; May 31 to Courtès.

DM (1811) Dec. 1-21 retreat, *EO* 14.95 (2 reflections); Dec. 25-27 reflections, *EO* 14.100 (2 reflections). (1812) August retreat entry, *EO* 15.106 (2 entries); Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.109 (2 entries). (1814) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.130 [4 mentions - introduction and 1st meditation, 14th meditation, 20th meditation]. (1816) July-Aug. retreat, *EO* 15.139; Nov. 24 journal entry. (1825) Dec. 16 journal entry, *EO* 17; Dec. 31 journal entry, *EO* 17.

MORTIFICATION - *LM* (1816) Nov. 20 to Tempier, *EO* 6.15.

DM (1812) Dec. Rule from retreat, *EO* 15.109; reflection on mortification between 1812-1814, *EO* 15.111. (1814) Dec. retreat, 16th meditation, *EO* 15.130. (1816) retreat notes, *EO* 15.139; retreat resolutions, *EO* 15.146. (1818) May retreat, *EO* 15.145.

OBEDIENCE - *LM* (1817) Nov. 4 to Tempier. (1818) Dec. to Tempier. (1820) Apr. to Bausset. (1821) Jan. to Rauzan; Jan. 12 to Bausset; Mar. 13 to Tempier, *EO* 6.63; Mar. 14. to Courtès; June 18 to Tempier, *EO* 6.68; Sept. 19 to Bourrelier, *EO* 6.72. (1822) Apr. 29 to Tempier, *EO* 6.82. (1823) Mar. 30 to Jourdan, *EO* 6.99. (1825) Oct. 12 to Tempier; Dec. 9 to Tempier, *EO* 7.211. (1826) Mar. 9 to Tempier, *EO* 7.229; Oct. 2 to Mie; Oct. 11 to Mie; Nov. 26 to Tempier.

DM (1814) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.130 [2 entries - 17th and 18th meditations]. (1816) July-Aug. retreat, *EO* 15.139. (1821) Oct. retreat, *EO* 15.155.

PATIENCE - *LM* (1815) Oct. 23-24 to Forbin-Janson, *EO* 6.5. (1817) Nov. 24 to Tempier, *EO* 6.30. (1819) June 25 to Tempier; Oct. 12 to Tavernier, *EO* 15.151. (1823) Apr. 13 to Mme. de Mazenod. (1824) May 28 to Honorat, *EO* 6.139. (1826) Jan. 11 to Tempier.

DM (1815) 1815-1816 comment following one for Dec. 8, journal of youth congregation, *EO* 16. (1816) July-August retreat entry, *EO* 15.139. (1818) May retreat, *EO* 15.146; June 23 journal of youth congregation, *EO* 15.147. (1826) Mar. 23 journal entry.

PENANCE - *LM* - (1811) Dec. 22 to Duclaux. (1813) May 1 to C.-A. de Mazenod. (1814) Dec. 7 to C.-A. de Mazenod. (1816) July 8 to C.-A. de Mazenod, *EO* 15.137; Aug. 8 to C.-A. de Mazenod. (1826) Feb. 27 to Tempier.

DM - (1811) Dec. 1-21 priesthood retreat, *EO* 14.95. (1812) journal entry, *EO* 15.102; Aug-Sept. journal, *EO* 15.107; Dec. reflections, *EO* 15.109 (2 reflections). (1813) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.121; journal entry of resolutions between 1813-1815, *EO* 15.122. (1814) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.130 (6 reflections - meditations 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16). (1816) July retreat, *EO* 15.139; *Journal de la mission de Marignane* (2 entries - Nov. 24 and Dec. 8). (1818) May retreat, *EO* 15.145 (2 reflections).

POVERTY - *LM* - (1812) June 26-30 to Mme. de Mazenod. (1815) Oct. 23-24 to Forbin-Janson, *EO* 6.5; Dec. 13 to Tempier, *EO* 6.7. (1816) Nov. 20 to Tempier; Dec. 15 to Tempier, *EO* 6.15. (1817) Nov. 17 to Fortuné de Mazenod, *EO* 15.143. (1819) Jan. 6 to Viguier; Nov. 16 to Tempier, *EO* 6.47; Dec. 16 to Bausset. (1823) April 2 to Courtès. (1824) Feb. 9 to Honorat. (1825) Jan. 11 to Martin; Jan. 15 to Honorat; July 1 to Tempier, *EO* 6.190. (1826) Jan. 28 to Tempier; Feb. 2 to Courtès, *EO* 7.222; Feb. 12 to Tempier, *EO* 7.223; Mar. 30 to Tempier, *EO* 7.233; Apr. 5 to Tempier, *EO* 7.237.

DM - (1812) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.109. (1814) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.130. (1818) May 18 retreat, *EO* 15.145; 1818-1821 reflection, *EO* 15.150. (1821) Late Oct., *EO* 15.155.

ZEAL - *LM* (1812) Sept. 24 to Mme. de Mazenod, *EO* 15.108. (1813) Feb. 19 to Forbin-Janson, *EO* 15.113; Apr. 9 to Forbin-Janson, *EO* 15.116;

May 12 to Forbin-Janson, *EO* 15.119; Dec. 13 to Tempier. (1814) Sept. to Forbin-Janson. (1815) Sept. 15 to C.-A. de Mazenod, *EO* 15.134; Oct. 28 to Forbin-Janson. (1816) July, to Cannizzaro, *EO* 15.136. (1817) Aug. 21 to Mme. de Mazenod; Sept. 16 to Fortuné de Mazenod; Nov. 17 to Fortuné de Mazenod; Nov. 24 to Tempier, *EO* 6.30. (1818) June 15 to pastor of Salerne, *EO* 13.13; Aug. 1 to Mme. de Mazenod, *EO* 13.10; Oct. 30 to Rausan, *EO* 13.19. (1819) Mar. 7 to Aix mission house, *EO* 6.41; Nov. 22 to Tempier, *EO* 6.48. (1820) July 31 to Chappuis, *EO* 13.31. (1821) Nov. 17 to Honorat, *EO* 6.75. (1823) Mar. 18 to Sumien, *EO* 6.96. (1825) June 22 to Bishop Miollis, *EO* 13.46.

DM - (1811) Dec. retreat, *EO* 14.95. (1812) Aug. retreat, *EO* 15.106. (1813) Mar. 3 sermon notes, *EO* 15.114; sermon notes of Mar. 28, *EO* 15.115; Apr. 25 youth journal entry, *EO* 15.117. (1814) Dec. retreat, *EO* 15.130 (2 reflections - 8th medit., 13th medit.). (1817) retreat notes, *EO* 15.144. (1818) June 23 youth association journal entry, *EO* 15.147.

TABULATION OF RESULTS FOR SELECTED VIRTUES

Virtue/quality	Number of Mentions from 12/1811 - 12/1815	Total Mentions before 1816	Number of Mentions from 1816 - 1826	Total Mentions, 1816 – 1826
Humility	<i>LM</i> = 2 <i>DM</i> = 12	14	<i>LM</i> = 15 <i>DM</i> = 4	19
Obedience	<i>LM</i> = 0 <i>DM</i> = 2	2	<i>LM</i> = 17 <i>DM</i> = 2	19
Poverty	<i>LM</i> = 3 <i>DM</i> = 2	5	<i>LM</i> = 16 <i>DM</i> = 3	19
Zeal	<i>LM</i> = 8 <i>DM</i> = 7	15	<i>LM</i> = 14 <i>DM</i> = 2	16
Confidence in God	<i>LM</i> = 1 <i>DM</i> = 4	5	<i>LM</i> = 9 <i>DM</i> = 2	11
Patience	<i>LM</i> = 1 <i>DM</i> = 1	2	<i>LM</i> = 6 <i>DM</i> = 4	10
Penance	<i>LM</i> = 3 <i>DM</i> = 13	16	<i>LM</i> = 3 <i>DM</i> = 5	8
Mortification	<i>LM</i> = 0 <i>DM</i> = 3	3	<i>LM</i> = 1 <i>DM</i> = 3	4
Meekness (<i>Douceur</i>)	<i>LM</i> = 0 <i>DM</i> = 1	1	<i>LM</i> = 0 <i>DM</i> = 2	2
Chastity	0	0	0	0

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. HANDWRITTEN SOURCES

Only a portion of De Mazenod's original writing has been preserved. The majority of what is available in original handwritten form is stored in the General Oblate Archives in Rome, catalogued according to the following subgroups:

DM - Documents of de Mazenod (including retreat notes and resolutions, class notes from his seminary years, writings concerning the Society and the Oblate Congregation, in chronological order according to literary form.

FB - Fonds Boisgelin (from the family of Eugene de Mazenod's only sister, Charlotte-Eugénie-Antoinette, who had married Marquis Armand de Boisgelin. The Oblates have secured all of those documents which concern the Founder and his uncle, Bishop Charles-Fortuné de Mazenod.

JM - Journals of de Mazenod (November 26, 1825 to May 1, 1826 ("First Roman Journal"); also January 10, 1837-December 17, 1840; April 18, 1844 to September 2, 1844; April 10, 1845 to September 12, 1845.

LM - Letters to and from de Mazenod (catalogued alphabetically according to the correspondent)

Yenveux - Les SS. Règles. Fragments of the Founder's writings arranged in order corresponding to the articles of the *Rule*, compiled by Alfred-Jean-Baptiste Yenveux, O.M.I.

All of de Mazenod's writings from whatever source, both primary and secondary (such as those available only from older biographical works), have been carefully transcribed and bound in chronological order (thirty-two volumes). Many of these are reproduced in the series *Écrits oblats I* (twenty-two volumes), edited by Y. Beaudoin.

Other pertinent documents include the *Registres de délibérations des Chapitres Généraux* and the *Circulaires administratives O.M.I. (1850-1885)*.

II. OTHER OBLATE SOURCE MATERIAL

The following printed sources offer reproduced versions of specific written documents of Charles-Joseph-Eugene de Mazenod, O.M.I., and were used in this study, listed in alphabetical order:

_____ “Constitutions et Règles de la Société des Missionnaires de Provence.” *Missions* 78 (1951):9-160.

_____ “Journal du Fondateur.” *Missions* 5 (1866):127.

_____ “Règlements et Statuts de la Congrégation de la Jeunesse Chrétienne établie a Aix par l’Abbé de Mazenod au commencement de l’année 1813. Premier Règlement.” *Missions* 145 (1899):19-25.

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