

The letter of the Superior General for the Extraordinary Missionary Month

October 2019

L. J. C. et M.I.

Dear Missionaries,

"Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on mission in the world." This is the theme for the Extraordinary Missionary Month called by Pope Francis: "I have asked that the whole Church revive her missionary awareness and commitment as we commemorate the centenary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV (30 November 1919)." As Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, vowed and lay people, living this missionary charism inspired by St. Eugene, we are provoked by these words of Pope Francis. They remind us of our 2016 General Chapter call to leave nothing undared in reaching out to the new faces of the poor.

In this Extraordinary Missionary Month and beyond it, I bring before you some considerations:

1. Eugene's missionary heart went to those least touched by the Church, those neglected, forgotten and abandoned by ordinary pastoral care. Are we convinced that our world needs to know the Good News? Do our lives reveal this Good News? What can we do to go beyond caring for those who already come to us? How are we reaching out to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him?
2. The present Synod for Bishops on the Pan-Amazon Region has a daring theme and a courageous methodology which Pope Francis has chosen. We hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth in unison, calling for concerted pastoral, social and economic efforts for the life of the people and the ecology of the region. Of the 8 countries and French Guyana that constitute the Pan-Amazon Region, we Oblates are in six of those countries and in French Guyana.

- I have asked each Region of the Congregation to indicate one Oblate for the challenging mission in the Pan-Amazon Region.

- Many Oblates are also present in some of the countries of the Congo River Basin: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroun, Zambia and Angola. As missionaries in both the Pan- Amazon Region and the Congo River Basin, can Oblates join forces for the life of the peoples and the ecology of these two regions?

3. Even before his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*, the Holy Father had been drawing our attention to the plight of our planet. Fr. Joshua I. Kureethdam, SDB, told the Union of Superiors General on May 22, 2019, that there may be only 11 years left before a tipping point is reached and the destruction of the planet will be irreversible. The urgency of acting now cannot be over-emphasized. A helpful tool for ecological conversion for our communities comes from VIVAT International: "ECO LIFE and ACTION". Please download it to discern how we can act in favor of the integrity of creation. Go to: <http://vivatinternational.org/eco/>.

4. In this Extraordinary Missionary Month, I appeal to you, Major Superiors and formation teams, to foster the missionary passion of Eugene de Mazenod in our men in first formation. I also appeal to the Major Superiors to revive the spirit of Mazenodian generosity and audacity by identifying some missionaries to be sent *ad extra* through an obedience from the Superior General. Units will be blessed for being generous.

5. Oblates at the local level promote many activities which reflect a commitment to social justice, to the art of peace-making, and to the question of the environment. Yet, we generally still see JPIC ministry (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) as separate from pastoral work. This Extraordinary Missionary Month calls us to integrate the social doctrine of the Church in all our ministries and pastoral activities. I invite Units to take up again the OMI JPIC "Companion in Mission" produced by the JPIC General Service of the Congregation in order to awaken this ministry as an integral part of evangelization. Please download: <https://www.omiworld.org/wp-content/uploads/OMI-JPIC-CiM-ENG-June-29.pdf>

The following words from *Maximum Illud*, referring to missionaries, reflect the heart of St. Eugene, who insisted that we be missionaries to the poor and saints: "But, above all, as we have already said, it is a holy life that is indispensable for those who are getting ready for the apostolate. Indeed, it is necessary that the one who preaches God be, in fact, a man of God". We ask Mary Immaculate to intercede for us so that our missionary passion is reignited to embrace the calls made to us in this Extraordinary Missionary Month and that, by God's grace, we become saints.

Thank you for your commitment to live the fullness of the Oblate charism in its missionary zeal and desire for holiness.

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI
Superior General