



# Vision for Oblate Mission with Youth

*Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate*





## Context

We, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, want to be challenged by young people. We want to listen to the young people and hear their needs so that by walking the journey of faith with them we become Missionary Disciples of Christ together. In that common mission the Oblate charism unites us even in the diversity of our contexts.

This idea reaches back to the very foundation of the Congregation. Indeed, one of the very first ministries of the founder, St Eugene de Mazenod, was to respond to the needs of young people. More recently the 34th General Chapter acknowledged this by including 'Ministry to Youth' as a traditional ministry in Rule 7b of the Oblate Constitutions and Rules. In response to this, the first Oblate Congress on Youth Ministry was held in Sydney, Australia, in 2008. It recognized that to be truly an Oblate Mission, it had to be a mission with youth and not merely directed to or at youth.

The second Oblate Congress on Oblate Mission with Youth, was held in Aix-en-Provence, France, in 2016. At this Congress, while building on the past, the participants recognized the need for a clear vision and framework to guide Oblate Mission with Youth, as well as creating more practical documents such as General Norms, Formation Material and other resources to assist Oblates in their mission with young people.

In this mission we want to return to the example of St. Eugene who calls us to help each other become **first human, then Christians and lastly Saints**, continually realizing afresh his insight that this is our true Oblate heritage and common vision.

## How to use this document

The purpose of this document is to help create a common vision for Oblates and leaders working with youth and guide them to a common objective found in our charism.

This vision and framework are intended to be a guide that will be flexible and adaptable to the local context. This guide is designed to affirm existing models of mission with young people, provide direction, and encourage local creativity within the Oblate Charism.

## Three Goals of Oblate Ministry with Young People

*Following St. Eugene De Mazenod's inspiration we are guided by three goals:*

***In becoming Human***, we endeavor to accompany young people towards their integral growth, to help them recognize their great dignity and that of others.

***In becoming Christians***, we strive to lead young people to experience and share the love of God in Jesus Christ crucified; and to mature in faith. In order to actively participate, as a community, in the mission of the Church.

***In becoming Saints***, we commit ourselves to journey with young people towards becoming fully human and fully alive; to help them live as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ through the Oblate charism; and to discover and respond to their vocation.



## ***In becoming Human, we endeavor to accompany young people towards their integral growth, to help them recognize their great dignity and that of others.***

Young people are at an important time in their lives and their journey of faith, no matter what their cultural or socio-economic circumstances may be. Their journey is characterized by asking questions and searching for truth.

Young people need to be nurtured in developing a sense of self-worth, understanding that they are created and loved by God, whose dream for them contains a concrete vocation and future. As Oblates we assist them through prayer, leading by example, guidance and providing solid foundations for character and moral development. Young people, striving towards personal and spiritual growth encounter obstacles and wounds. In cooperating with the Savior and imitating His example, we commit ourselves principally to the Evangelization of the poor with their many faces. (cf. C&R 1) We acknowledge a young person's fragility and poverty; in our mission with them we seek to help them come to a positive self-knowledge, one of the entirety of the self in our journey to wholeness.

Young people's first experience of relationships and community begins through their family and the society in which they grow up. Acknowledging this, we seek to help young people in their search for authentic relationships, personal responsibility and guide them to be leaders in their communities, co-responsible for each other.

While working in so many diverse parts of the world, we acknowledge that there are also universal obstacles that may impinge on becoming fully human and alive – such as poverty, discrimination and social injustice. The Oblate mission with youth needs to address these issues, to give both a personal response to those who are suffering, and a wider approach to address the causes. (cf. C&R 9)

Like Eugene De Mazenod, who on Good Friday in 1807 recognised his dignity and the dignity of others before the cross, our mission with youth should be a witness 'to the cross of Jesus Christ'. This is central to our mission so that young people might recognize their dignity and the dignity of others. (cf. C&R 4)

## ***In becoming Christians, we strive to lead young people to experience and share the love of God in Jesus Christ crucified; and to mature in faith. In order to actively participate, as a community, in the mission of the Church.***

Community is at the very heart of who we are as Oblates of Mary Immaculate; 'the community of the Apostles with Jesus is the model of our life.' (C&R 3) At the first Oblate Congress on Youth Ministry, in 2008, the Oblates recognized that to be truly an Oblate Mission, young people could not simply be receivers, but agents themselves of the mission. Therefore, Oblate mission with youth is characterized by building community.

Through an experience of Oblate community, the young person should discover the wider Catholic faith community, Christ's body, the Church. 'We coordinate our missionary activities with the overall pastoral plan of the local Churches where we work. Our efforts will be characterized by a genuine desire for unity with all who consider themselves followers of Jesus' (C&R 6).

Responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community includes all the different realities where a stronger link to God can be nurtured. Young people should be encouraged to discover and own their Catholic faith, to develop and share their God-given talents for the mission. We seek to encourage them to enter into dialogue with the different social contexts among which they live: secular society, other faiths and different cultures and to incarnate Christ's message in their everyday lives.







Oblate communities should strive to be places that welcome young people and give them a sense of belonging, of feeling at home within the Church. Young people are more likely to gain a sense of identity in the community when they are fully engaged as members, living their lives according to the pattern of Christ's life (cf. C&R 2).

In our Mission with Youth, the Oblates will spare no effort to awaken or to reawaken the faith in the people to whom we are sent, and we will help them to discover 'who Christ is.' (C&R 7) We assist young people to discover 'who Christ is' in the journey of 'becoming Christians', through witness and activities, but most importantly 'through proclaiming the Word of God which finds its fulfilment in the celebration of the Sacraments and in service to others.' (C&R 7)

The natural response to discovering our Christian identity is to share this new experience of 'Good News' with others and in serving others. Oblates will help young people to see the needs of others and seek out new ways to bring the Word of God to those around them, which 'calls for daring' and as a result, becoming missionaries themselves. (C&R 8)

In the transition from Humanity to Christianity, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important part of our mission with young people. Our role, as the founder reminds us, is to be 'ministers of God's mercy.' (cf. Letter to Father Guigues, February 20, 1837)

***In becoming Saints, we commit ourselves to journey with young people towards becoming fully human and fully alive; to help them live as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ through the Oblate charism; and to discover and respond to their vocation.***

The Oblate Mission with Youth seeks to empower young people to discover their human dignity, embrace their identity as Christians in a faith community and mission, discern their vocation and recognize the Oblate charism as a way of discipleship that leads to sanctity.



St John Paul II in his message to young people at World Youth Day in Rome 2000 makes this challenge clear to the youth. 'Young people of every continent, do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium! [...] The Lord wants you to be intrepid apostles of his Gospel and builders of a new humanity.' St Eugene de Mazenod also encourages his Oblates: 'Let us firmly impress on everyone that we must be holy if we are to live the life of a saint, to accomplish the great work that God in his mercy has entrusted us...' (Letter to Fr Aubert – 8th Feb 1858) We empower young people in the journey to sanctity through helping them discern God's call in their lives and through this become witnesses to God's holiness, justice and love.

We need to find positive ways for young people to experience personally the demands and the adventure of being missionaries, to 'hear and make heard the clamour of the voiceless.' (C&R 9) Therefore, action in our local context on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity of creation is a fundamental part of our Oblate Mission with Youth.

Mary Immaculate, the patroness of the Congregation, is an example of discipleship as the way to sanctity. Open to the Holy Spirit, Mary receives Christ in order to share Him with the World. (cf. C&R 10)

