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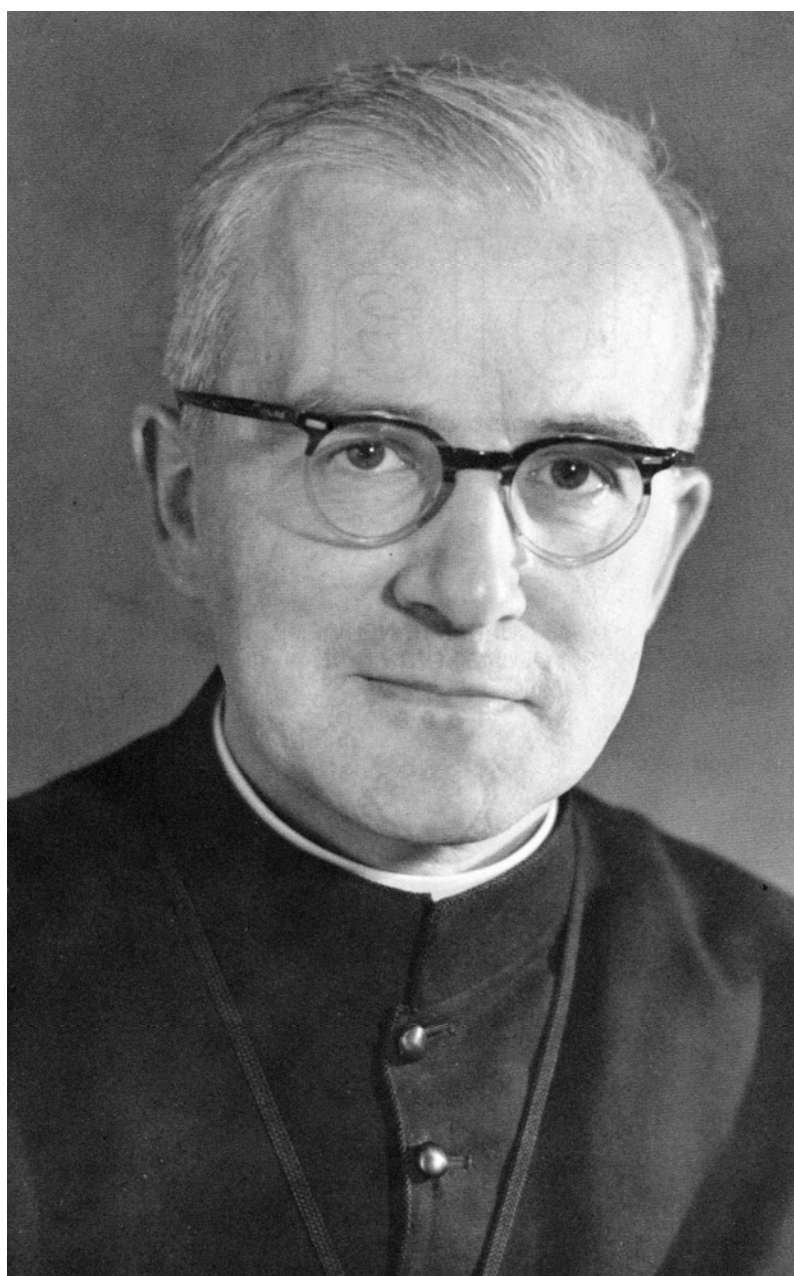
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## Le père Maurice Gilbert, o.m.i.

(Fondateur de la Revue «*Études Oblates*»)

Le 8 juin 1989, le père Maurice Gilbert nous quittait pour un monde meilleur. La Congrégation perdait un ouvrier des plus méritant, une de ses grandes figures. Éducateur, supérieur de scolasticat, prédicateur de retraites, conférencier, conseiller spirituel, il s'est identifié surtout par son grand intérêt pour les études sur la Congrégation. C'est au scolasticat Saint-Joseph d'Ottawa que naît son amour pour les études oblates, grâce au *comité d'histoire de la Congrégation*. Au scolasticat de Rome il prend l'initiative de fonder un *comité d'études oblates*. Deux textes en particulier ont été le leitmotiv de toute cette activité. Un texte du Fondateur: *Puissions-nous bien comprendre ce que nous sommes* et l'article 544 de nos Saintes Règles: *que les jeunes oblats puissent plus abondamment à sa source même (le supérieur général) l'esprit de la Congrégation qui vivifie le corps tout entier*. Dès ses premières années de professorat au Scolasticat Saint-Joseph d'Ottawa, il songe à fonder une revue qui mettrait à profit l'imposant contenu de nos archives, espérant que la riche sève qui coulerait en ses pages porteuses de vie oblate, pénétrer l'âme de ses frères, la vivifie, l'unisse plus étroitement au cep sacré de notre famille oblate et lui ferait porter des fruits abondants de vertus et d'apostolat. Le projet est présenté au père Léo Deschâtelets, supérieur. Amère déception! Le père Deschâtelets qui semblait le mieux préparé à entrer dans ces vues n'y est pas favorable. Le père Gilbert ne se laisse pas abattre. Transféré au scolasticat Notre-Dame de Richelieu en 1941, année centenaire de l'arrivée des oblats au Canada, le projet de la revue lui revient. Appuyé par le père Philippe Scheffer, supérieur, une demande est présentée au conseil provincial qui n'hésite pas à donner son placet. La revue publie son premier numéro en janvier 1942. À tous les trois mois la revue *Études Oblates* publiera des travaux de recherche sur nos Saintes Règles, sur le Fondateur, sur notre spiritualité, sur nos méthodes d'apostolat, sur l'histoire de nos missions, etc.

En 1974 la revue change de directeur et prend un nouveau nom. Le père Gilbert, voyant sa santé affaiblie, doit remettre en d'autres mains la responsabilité de la revue. Le père Gaston Carrière le remplace et la revue s'appellera *Vie Oblate Life*, voulant ainsi insister davantage sur la *vie* de la Congrégation et lui donner un caractère plus vital et existentiel. Cependant le père Gilbert continuera, jusqu'à la fin de sa vie, son intérêt et sa collaboration à la revue. Son travail a été immense. Ses publications dans la revue — articles, chroniques, éditoriaux, comptes-rendus, notes, etc., ont été colligés et forment au delà de trois volumes reliés, au delà de 1000 pages de texte. En plus de la revue il avait créé les *Éditions des Études Oblates* comportant les trois séries suivantes: Bibliothèque oblate (13 vols.), Archives d'histoire oblate (23 vols.) et «Études Oblates» (22 vols.).

La revue *Vie Oblate Life* fêtera son cinquantenaire l'an prochain; elle n'aurait pas existé sans le père Gilbert. La revue a répondu pleinement aux espérances formulées par les autorités oblates; pour le père Gilbert ce fut une réponse toute de cœur, d'intelligence et d'esprit oblat. En terminant je cite quatre vers d'une poésie qu'un confrère lui adressait:

À l'étude et l'amour de la famille oblate,  
 Votre exemple a poussé plus avant nos désirs  
 Tandis que d'une main pieuse et délicate  
 Vous aimiez nous montrer ses riches souvenirs.

LA DIRECTION

# Father Joseph Gérard, o.m.i.

## The Missionary

SOMMAIRE — Après avoir rappelé 1. la vision et la pratique de la mission «ad gentes», 2. les critères pour le choix de ces missions, 3. le secret de leur succès, l'auteur nous montre pourquoi le Fondateur a accepté les missions du Natal. La formation missionnaire du père Gérard a été plutôt rudimentaire et imprégnée des attitudes et préjugés des missionnaires de son époque. Cependant le père Gérard avait ses méthodes à lui qui ont contribué à ses succès: attention aux individus, foi en une instruction solide, la conversion est affaire de bon comportement plutôt que de vérité, accent sur la prière et les offices religieux. L'auteur nous explique pourquoi les missions du Natal ont été un échec. Les Oblats laissent le Natal pour se rendre au Basutoland où leurs efforts ont été couronnés d'un grand succès.

### 1. The First Solemn Baptism

The first solemn baptism which Gérard recorded in his Roma diary, 8 October 1865, was a very important day for the missionary Church in Southern Africa

*Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, laetemur et exulemus in ea.*

At long last, the day has come, forecast in all eternity, when the Lord would reveal His love and shower his mercy upon the poor Basuto.

*Omnes gentes adorabunt eum*

Today, the holy Church of Jesus Christ was to receive in her bosom, the first fruits of gentility on these barren lands of Africa.

*Illuminare Jerusalem*

So many years of expectation, of failure, made this day a marvelous one, and such a novelty to us. Yes, thanks to the mercy of God, who from heaven, saw our disgrace, among all missionaries of the world. Thanks to the protection of Mary Immaculate. Thanks to the prayers of our brothers in Europe and elsewhere, God, at last, has visited us visibly, taking possession of a few privileged souls, who are his chosen ones, among the Basuto.

Up until the arrival of the Oblates in Southern Africa the life of the Catholic Church does not show many signs of its missionary nature. Firstly, the Catholic Church was only legally allowed to exist in these parts with the acceptance of religious toleration in 1804. Up until then, the

few Catholics among the settlers were ministered to by missionaries who disembarked at Cape Town en-route to other lands.

The first Bishop of the Cape of Good Hope and the neighbouring islands of Madagascar, Mauritius and Australia was Dom Edward Bede Slater, appointed Vicar Apostolic in 1814 and who resided in Mauritius. He was succeeded by Bishop Griffith in 1838 who was the first Vicar Apostolic to reside at the Cape. At the latter's suggestion a second Vicariate was established in the Eastern Colony and Bishop Devereux appointed. That was in 1847.

It was Bishop Devereux who sent priests northwards to determine the nature of the missionary work in the hinterland to the north of his Vicariate as well as establish the number of Catholics among the settlers and he petitioned the Congregation for the spread of the Faith to entrust the area to the north to a missionary congregation which would have the necessary personnel and finances to launch the first missionary activity of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa.

Those were the events in summary that preceded the arrival of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate on January 19 1852: to them was entrusted the missionary territory from the Kei River to the Zambesi; from the Indian to the Atlantic oceans.

The solemn baptisms I began telling you about were the first, which took place in Lesotho thirteen years later. Let Father Gérard say the rest:

The day of the great feast has come! Everything has been taken care of. The good Sisters of the Holy Family worked over-time, all week, to decorate the Chapel, the banner and standards, etc. And above all, the garments of the neophytes to be. The good Fathers of the community had been very zealous and skilful in arranging the decorations. At 9 am all was in readiness. The aspect of the chapel was magnificent, and quite dignified. A rich shawl formed a canopy over the altar; bolts of printed cloth were hung all round the walls. The banners of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of St. Helen. On the background of the chancel, was the banner of Jesu. Along the nave, were lesser ones.

The altar was so brilliant, one would have thought it was gilt. Finally, Moshoeshoe arrived about 10 o'clock with some 30 Basuto. After refreshments and tidying up, he was led to the Sister's house, where the catechumens were, and whence the procession was to start. The Cross, carried by Rev. Fr. Bartholemew, opened the procession. With him came the Basuto College, consisting of two boys, Sekhonyana's sons. Behind, in rows of two, with flags, came very small children, led by hand, by the Sisters.

Next came older ones, dressed in black, carrying palms. Then the Queen and one of her daughters, the other being a catechumen. The non-elected catechumens followed,

wearing their ordinary robe of penance. More children in white, carrying flags. Finally, the elected catechumens, Jonas being the only man among them. Behind them walked Moshoeshoe, leaning on one of his sons, and lastly, His Grace closed the procession, wearing the cope and mitre, and bearing the crook.

The procession got under way with the chant of "Batho re thabile". At first, there was some confusion in the ranks of the children, unaccustomed to the "Mokoloko" (procession). Everything was soon in order, however, and the procession moved along in the meadow bordering the road the Sisters follow to come to the Chapel. At the door of the chapel, the procession halted, and the order was regulated, in which the throng was to enter. The chapel was three times too small for the crowd that had gathered to witness the event.

The procession entered in order, singing hymns. Our catechumens were moved to tears, many others were also seen and heard weeping.

O what solemn and touching pomp for the poor hearts that had not yet felt the influence of the grace of God and of the rites of the Holy Church. Undoubtedly, it was for them an anticipation of heaven, with its joys and raptures. Soon, was sung the catechumens' hymn, expressing so well their eagerness, on the soft tunes of "My sweet Jesus". Then, began the very holy rites of baptism according to the Roman Ritual. All attendants were following attentively the proceedings which we endeavoured to translate in Sesuto. They were so beautiful and significant. We will give the impressions of those present, later. One ceremony that we could have performed with advantage, is the prostration of the elect, on the floor, as it is done for ordination, they would have been deeply impressed. We simply asked them to genuflect.

The solemn moment was drawing; the questions were asked: Do you renounce to Satan? What are you soliciting from the Church of God? The firm way in which our dear children replied indicated that they were seriously decided and convinced.

At last came the moment the Angels awaited so keenly, that they would have new brothers and sisters in God. That moment, so sweet to these souls, thirsty for the divine dew of heaven, the holy and sanitary water that purifies. And how we, also, wished for it, so eagerly, for so many years!

At last, all is well, the love of our God has triumphed. He greets these poor captives of gentility. He removes their chains, cleanses their souls in the water of salvation, gives them the white robe of innocence, espouses these dear souls, endowing them with the virtues of faith, hope and charity — Those are the riches He grants them as a dowry, with the title of children of God, brothers of Christ. They receive at this moment, their title to the heavenly heritage.

The holy water was poured on the foreheads, shining with happiness. They feel a joy never known before. The Sisters acted as Godmothers, Jonas' Godfather was Mr. Hayes, from Maritzburg, a benefactor of the mission. I represented him by proxy. Here are the names of the neophytes on the day of their second birth in God: Joseph (Jonas); Maria (Ma Mohale) Josefina (Lihlong); Magdalena (M'a Phumane), Elizabeth (Ma Qhoboshokane); Katarine (Moi); Anna (Ma Kimela).

After the ceremony, the hymn "letsatsi le letle". The procession formed again, to escort the neophytes to the convent to the singing of "Maria a bokhabane". Arriving

there, they received His Grace's blessing, and payed their respects to the King. The feast continued with a banquet, including as guests, the neophytes with their parents, and the queen and her daughter, Liabeng. Towards evening we had the consolation of baptising Lucia, Maria's grand-daughter, a charming little girl, who looked more like an angel. Joseph was her Godfather, and Josefina, her Godmother, which produced a good effect on the attendants. Afterwards, we admitted 'Ma Motoa and 'Ma Takane to the catechumenate.

Long ago, 'Ma Motoa had told me that she wished to become a convert, even though God took away from her, her husband and eldest son, within a year. She is sincere and very firm, although she is a Motobele and the daughter of a great sorcerer.

(Father Gérard's Roma Diary Pages 34-36; October 1865)

## 2. Father Gerard's Missionary Formation

Here I propose to examine the missionary tradition of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in which Father Gérard was formed.

### 2.1 Eugene de Mazenod's vision and practice regarding the Missions: "Ad Gentes".

Against the background of Eugene's own conversion and his life experience moulded around that conversion experience which took place on Good Friday 1807, when he experienced personally the meaning of Christ having died for him, the priest and the Oblate are cooperators with Christ in the continuation of his salvific ministry. He thus dedicated himself to go to the most abandoned in the Church firstly, then later, in the world, to extend to them the concern of Christ.

At first, in imitation of Christ, he and his companions established themselves as a religious family, modeled on the unity of Christ and his apostles. Our Constitutions remind us of this (C3). In imitation of Christ and his companions, through their unity of life, they gave themselves to reforming the Church. Later on, again in imitation of the apostles, they went out to the four corners of the world.

Eugene de Mazenod and his companions experienced the call to preach the Gospel to the poorest. At first they understood these to be the abandoned and degenerate Christians in the country areas of the South of France; later they discovered that the fullness of evangelisation also consisted in proclaiming "to the pagans the inestimable mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3: 1ff)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vie Oblate Life*, 42:2-3, pp. 127-136.



## 2.2 De Mazenod's criteria in choosing missions "*ad gentes*"<sup>2</sup>

1. Except for the mission to Algeria, he always answered requests from bishops and the Holy See to send missionaries. And, with the exception of Algeria, all the places the Oblates accepted flourished.

2. He did not send Oblates in the wake of the French colonisers as most French founders of the time had done, and we find that the Oblates went to countries mainly under England's influence.

3. He accepted to go to those mission territories where the people were in every sense 'poor', and missionary bishops seeking for priests and missionaries knew that they would only find a response from de Mazenod if they had work to offer among the poorest of the poor.

## 2.3 De Mazenod's secret of success in the missions "*ad gentes*"<sup>3</sup>

1. He chose Oblates who showed those "special signs of having such a sublime calling, and who, under the influence of grace, feel drawn to this ministry," Oblates "yearning to spread the faith; generous; eager; resolute and energetic; strong and steadfast in the face of difficulties; gentle with others; in good health, and strong enough to take on hard work as well as to endure hardship<sup>4</sup>."

2. He included in each group one saintly religious: in Allard's group the saint was to be Logegaray and in the second group it was Gerard. The former apostatised, much to Mazenod's distress; the latter is to be beatified.

3. The Oblate missionary was to be at the local bishop's disposition and de Mazenod looked upon fellow bishops as fathers with him of his missionaries. They were to show great respect to, and have sincere affection for, their Ordinary, and must be fully obedient to him in all that concerns their external ministry<sup>5</sup>.

4. De Mazenod kept in constant touch with his Oblates through correspondence and insisted on their writing to him regularly.

5. At the head of each mission de Mazenod tried to place an Oblate who was "dedicated, experienced, filled with the Spirit, strongly attached

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<sup>2</sup> *Vie Oblate Life*, 36:1-2, pp. 49-51.

<sup>3</sup> *Vie Oblate Life*, 36:1-2, pp. 49-51.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix to C & R on Foreign Missions, 1853.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

to the Congregation, imbued with my own spirit." This latter meant "among other things, being kind to and gentle with the missionaries; being concerned about their health and their families... and being interested not only in the local church but also in the Congregation's growth<sup>6</sup>."

While we may ask why the Founder chose M<sup>sr</sup> Allard and even insisted on his choice when Allard did not fulfil many of these qualities above, it is important to note that Gerard gave Allard every respect and cooperation.

One last point under this heading is the following:

6. To be sent "ad gentes" meant just that; hence he wrote to Allard: "Really one hardly sends out a Vicar Apostolic with a goodly number of missionaries just to look after a few scattered settlements of long time Catholics. A missionary works for the conversion of non-believers<sup>7</sup>.

To the Oblates in England he insisted that they work for the conversion of the protestants, and to Fr. Guigues at the time Superior in Canada (later Bishop) he insisted on Oblates being sent among the Indians. Similarly in Ceylon.

#### 2.4 Conclusion: meaning of evangelisation

1. The great need for salvation;
2. To teach who Jesus Christ is; to reveal who Christ is; to discover who Christ is;
3. To awaken and reawaken the faith;
4. To see the world in a new way.

### 3. The Reasons for Accepting Natal

1. De Mazenod and the Oblates desired to establish themselves in Africa, the focus of such a mission was Algeria, where they established a mission in 1847 but withdrew in 1849 because there were no results in that predominantly Moslem country.

3. At the time of considering withdrawing from Algeria the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith invited the Oblates to take responsibility for the evangelisation of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa.

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<sup>6</sup> Founder to Fr. Pierre Aubert: 2 Feb. 1847.

<sup>7</sup> Founder to Bishop Allard: 10 Nov. 1857.

3.3 There is evidence that the first Oblates thought Southern Africa was like Northern Africa; besides choosing Southern Africa in the place of Algeria, de Mazenod also included in the first group of Oblates Fr. Sabon whose Algerian experience made him an experienced African missionary.

3.4 De Mazenod's express goal in accepting the Vicariate of Natal was the evangelisation of the indigenous peoples.

#### 4. The Oblates arrive in Natal: March 1852

Bishop Allard led the first party of Oblates to Natal; he was de Mazenod's second choice; the first choice, Father Charles Bellon refused for health reasons.

Bishop Guigues in Canada did not think that de Mazenod had chosen the right person for Vicar Apostolic; "on the grounds of Allard's too stern and rigorous disposition<sup>8</sup>.

The other members of the Oblate group were Fathers Sabon, Dunne, Deacon Logegaray and Brother Compin. The level of perseverance of the group was not very high; within the first year Father Dunne and Brother Compin had already returned to France, and Fr. Sabon took a number of years to settle in and on a number of occasions requested to return to France. Deacon Logegaray was ordained priest soon after their arrival in Natal in July 1852; he apostatised during 1855.

Bishop de Mazenod was very critical of Allard and held him responsible for the high number of defections due to his rigidity and harshness.

At first newly arrived Oblates ministered solely to the white settlers in Durban and Pietermaritzburg; it was only when the second party arrived, among whom was Deacon Joseph Gerard, that the mission to the indigenous peoples commenced.

While much criticism is levelled at Bishop Allard, it should also be noted that in Natal, unlike other missionary undertakings of the Oblates in other parts of the world, the Oblates were pioneers for the Catholic Church and were not able to learn from the methods and experiences of other missionaries in the area; it would have been unthinkable to consult the protestant evangelisers. In addition finances were almost non-existent and one of their first tasks was to establish some viable infra-structure for their

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<sup>8</sup> *Catholic Beginnings in Natal and Beyond* by J.B. Brain; p. 28.

support. So while de Mazenod was impatient for results among the indigenous peoples, I don't believe he really understood the situation in that part of Africa; he was handicapped by his Algerian preconceptions.

## 5. Father Gerard's Rudimentary Missionary Education

At 19 years of age, during Joseph Gerard's second year in the major seminary at Nancy, two Oblates came to the seminary, one to lead the annual retreat, the other, a Canadian missionary to tell of his missionary adventures. Joseph Gerard found there an invitation to be a missionary as well as recognition of Mary whom he learned to love in his home environment.

Once he had completed the studies prescribed for a diocesan priest in France, he joined the Oblate novitiate and made his first profession in 1852. His Novice Master had said of him:

"I am convinced that the Lord wants Brother Gerard to be a saint. The grace of God is at work in his spirit. His devotion continues to deepen together with the spirit of self sacrifice and love for his companions. He lives in the presence of God at all times, without forgetting God's presence for a moment. His humility is great; he considers himself the least of all."<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the influence of de Mazenod and the Oblate Congregation, which I have underlined above, another person who had a tremendous influence on his missionary formation was Father Laval in Mauritius, with whom he stayed for three months en route to Durban.

"From this shining example Father Gerard learnt the "method" for his future missionary activity as apostle of Basotho; like this experienced master he will not turn... to the big crowds but always first to the individuals,... and his catechetical instructions in the families will surpass those of his master in perseverance and in length<sup>10</sup> "

In his article<sup>11</sup> Father Bernard Albers notes six weaknesses in Father Gerard's missionary methods:

1. His conviction of the superiority of the European culture and civilization;
2. Lack of appreciation and understanding of the African way of life and religious traditions;

<sup>9</sup> Naledi ya Tloutle by H. Thommerel, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Aime Roche, OMI... *UND SEINE LIEBE DOCHE*, Wurzburg 1956; p. 35. Fr. B. Albers, OMI: *Vie Oblate Life*, pp. 239-240.

3. Their religious convictions;
4. And the importance of their political and social structures;
5. His rejection of circumcision and polygamy;
6. His attitude towards the Protestant Church.

These were the attitudes of all missionaries of those times, but there were some particular strengths of Father Gerard's methods which contributed to his success among the Basotho<sup>12</sup>:

1. Father Gerard's method of individual contact; his fellow priests called him the 'fisherman with the line'; he believed less in mass conversions and concentrated instead on each and every single soul caught on his 'fishing-hook'

"Once caught the people could be sure that they would be followed by the loving and untiring care of their 'fisherman' not only up to the time of their baptism but throughout their lives. He was always more worried about the solidity of his Christians than about their number...

This apostolate to the individual found its highest and clearest expression in the way he cared for the sick and aged and dying, spending long hours and whole nights at their 'bedside', praying, instructing, comforting<sup>13</sup>."

2. His belief in thorough instruction;
3. Conversion was not only a question of truth but of right behaviour;
4. The stress he placed on prayer and religious services;

"Retreats, vigils, visits of the Blessed Sacrament, rosary, and stations of the cross, contemplation of the passion of Christ, processions, fasting, public penance, kissing the floor; he kept on adding new forms of piety in order to fight against the temptation of getting used to the Christian life<sup>14</sup> "

5. "His biggest asset however was his personality. His deep faith, his intense prayer life, his ascetical life style, his zeal for souls, his relentless efforts, his love for the abandoned; in other words, his example was the most powerful weapon against paganism and sin... Nobody knew the language better than he; no one was more familiar with the attitudes and the good and bad habits of the proteges with whom he was in constant contact. It was his personality more than anything else which, humanly speaking, makes understandable the success of his work<sup>15</sup>."

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<sup>12</sup> Noted by Fr. B. Albers, OMI, *ibid*, pp. 241/2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 241.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 242.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 243.

Fr. Thommerel tells of a conversation that took place, a few days before Father Gerard's death, with Chief Maama which shows how he was a single-minded pastor, forthright and demanding like the prophet described in Ezekiel Ch. 32.

"Chief Maama... I thank you for coming to visit me in my illness. I am near the end of my life. I am at peace about my imminent death. I have completed the work that God gave me as my particular share. There is nothing which prevents me from dying in peace. As regards yourself, Chief, if it happened that you were to die at this moment, how would your affairs stand? You have not listened to God who has planned important things through you. You requested me to baptise your children and I did so. They have all left the path (of faith) because of you, led astray by your heathenism. You have misled them by your bad advice. Because of this, Chief, I am sure that if you had to die now, your damnation will be terrifying. Recall the saying of Napoleon... 'if I were given five minutes I would try to overcome my enemies'. Now, Chief, this is your five minutes which God gives to you to save your soul 16."

## 6. The Oblates in Natal: A Scenario for Failure

Their obstinacy is deplorable and must be the cause of great distress to you. After so many years and not a single conversion, it is frightful! Still one must not be discouraged. The moment will come when the merciful grace of God will seem to explode and your kaffir church will take shape. For that it may be necessary to strike deeper among the native tribes. If you should find some who have not been indoctrinated by Protestants and who have not had contact with whites, you should probably succeed better...<sup>17</sup>

I contend that the first efforts of the Oblates in Natal were destined to failure for the following reasons:

1. The Oblates were breaking new ground, the first Catholic missionaries among the Zulu. In other missionary territories de Mazenod counselled the Oblates to consult the experienced missionaries that they found in the territories to which they had been sent. In Southern Africa these missionaries were Protestants and it was unthought of at the time to consult them.

2. In heroic attempts to go among the Zulu peoples to bring the good news, there was an unfortunate lack of understanding of the effects of colonialism on the Zulu people. One example could be the application of the Oblates (after the failure of the first St. Michael's attempt) for forty youths, refugees from Zululand in the Natal colony. While the usefulness

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<sup>16</sup>Naledi ea Thloutle, pp. 77/78 — in Sotho; (my own translation).

<sup>17</sup>Bishop de Mazenod to Fr. Gerard 4.8.1860: quoted in *Failure & Vindication*: p. 347. Ed. Fr. St. George, OMI.

of the scheme appeared to be a chance to evangelise Zulu youth with the goal of reaching others through them, the disadvantage was to take part in the hated indenture system which was a benign form of slavery. Thank God the application never came to anything<sup>18</sup>.

3. The first Oblate efforts revealed a lack of understanding of the social and political structures of the Zulu, hence, at the first establishment of St. Michael's, when Chief Dumisa demanded payment for the building of huts, they interpreted the situation as showing that the dispositions of the people were unfavourable<sup>19</sup>.

They were contesting the right of the Chief to take taxes in the colony of Natal.

4. The second attempt at St. Michael's was the setting up of a mission farm or mission reserve which I will try to explain in fuller detail in a moment. Although many other Churches made use of the same system, on the whole it was a failure in that the missionary effort was hijacked by the Colonial Government, the missionary became a local government official, and the goal of the system was to break the traditional structures and to civilise the Zulu in terms of Western civilisation. The system made the missionary also a colonial official.

5. Other reasons for the failure in their first attempts could be their haste to get converts and de Mazenod's impatience with them for being so slow; the sense that their culture was superior and that prevented them from seeing any good in the culture and practices of the Zulu.

## 7. St. Michael's: A Mission Reserve

The system of the mission reserves was introduced into Natal after 1855 as a result of the success of the location system which commenced in the decade before.

Basically an area of approximately 500 acres was awarded to the mission for missionary purposes, and adjacent to that approximately five thousand acres was awarded to the mission as a trust for the Zulu people who would settle there<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup>J.B. Brain, p. 52.

<sup>19</sup>St. George, p. 264. <sup>20</sup>Cf J. Brain, p. 54.

In effect this meant that a new land structure was being established which drew the people away from their traditional chiefs and brought them under the authority of colonial officials and magistrates. It should not be overlooked that the land allocated in this way was once the dominion of the Chiefs who were now being threatened with the loss of their subjects.

It was on such a mission reserve that the Oblates established St. Michael's (the second) in 1858. The Bishop resided there and his diary records that at first the people showed a lot of interest in the presence of the Oblate missionaries. Also interesting to note, the diary has many more entries in respect of the daily affairs of the mission reserve and reports of complaint to the local magistrate etc. I find that this supports my contention that Allard had become unwittingly a government official and in that regard he was his true self; demanding, perfectionist and strict to the letter of the law.

The new Chapel at St. Michael's was opened in July 1859. The attendance of the Zulu people steadily increased; a climax was reached in September when Allard records in his diary the presence of 180 people. In November Allard records that the numbers are still rather large but the people did not apparently understand that a change of behaviour was expected of them. No one, as yet, had asked for baptism.

It was this impatience to baptise that seemed to drive the Bishop and Fr. Gerard on to look for another site for a mission in February 1860. It was on this latter journey that Allard witnessed how the residents of the former St. Michael's, the Amalele, greeted Father Gerard with great affection when the Bishop and missionary arrived at the place where they and their Chief had settled in 1856. It was decided to open a second station there dedicated to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, and the building of a small chapel commenced in July 1860.

## 8. Natal: "Doorway to Lesotho"

"In April 1861, ten months after the opening of Our Lady of Seven Dolours, Father Gerard wrote to tell de Mazenod that their success had not been great. There had been a few infant baptisms, administered to sick children under pretext of washing them, but no adults had come forward and 'kaffirs who had shown the greatest friendliness, showed on the occasion of the epidemic, the greatest reluctance, nay the greatest opposition to me when I began to talk to the sick...' He continued by remarking that 'the Protestants called our coming here a great folly, to what they called a real 'hole', but the folly of the Cross is the wisdom of God'. The Zulus could see that the missionaries had no ulterior motives, no hope of monetary gain or comfort, but had come only



to teach them to love God. What was required, he was convinced, was not to instruct people, but to "rebut the captious arguments they use, in order to remain in infidelity<sup>21</sup>."

Bishop Allard and Father Gerard set out on a long tour to try and find people who might be more ready to receive them and accept the Gospel. The first journey was made in August 1861 before they had received the news of the death of Bishop de Mazenod, and the second journey the following year took them to Moshweshwe, and the Basoto people.

It would be good to note that an Oblate remained at St. Michael's until 1863 — Fr. Bompert. Then followed a period of twenty years when no missionary resided there although the Catholics maintained their claim to the mission reserve. It was in 1882 that Bishop Jolivet reopened the mission sending Father Baudry there with Father Mathieu. In 1890 the mission was signed over to the Trappists (later Mariannhill missionaries)<sup>22</sup>.

## 9. The Oblate Beginnings in Lesotho

The Natal experiences were Gerard's introduction to Missionary life in Southern Africa and when a new start was made among the Basotho, he most of all, had learned from the mistakes of the first ten years.

The successful opening of the Catholic Mission at Motseoa-'M'a-Jesu on November 1st, 1863, was followed by a long period of dormancy. Father Gerard, who had quickly learned the Sesuto language, visited the people in their homes, explaining why he and the bishop had come to their country, teaching the truths of the Faith to all who would listen and urging his listeners to attend the chapel on Sundays. At first they came in numbers to enjoy the ceremonial and in Nyasaland likewise the White Fathers found that the Mass with "its Latin, vestments, incense and, to the African, its occult character" made the greatest impact. At the Christmas service that year Father Gerard "had a very numerous assistance" but the following February saw the number present at Sunday devotions decrease and Father Gerard hoped that the falling off was due to the necessity of keeping the birds from the ripening harvest and not to the dislike of truths he preached to them<sup>23</sup>.

Gerard seemed to be much more at home with himself and the missionary situation, as this extract from his diary suggests:

*First admission to the catechumenate.*

On December 25, 1864, we deemed it possible to admit to the catechumenate the first two persons who were longing to join the Church. They had first expressed their

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<sup>21</sup> J. Brain, *ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> Catholics in Natal II: J.B. Brain, pp. 101-102.

<sup>23</sup> J. Brain: Catholic Beginnings in Natal & Beyond (I), p. 84.

wish on July 24. Having tested them during this time, they being put to the test by relatives (and by themselves), facing exterior temptation, we decided to admit them, inaugurating at the same time the catechumenate in Basutoland. The occasion was a festive one, especially as, because of the arrival of the good Father Hidien, on the previous day, he impressed most favourably, and strengthened the courage of the regular attendance who were happy to see the increasing number of new comers. The chapel and the rectory had been decorated, and Mass was celebrated in the presence of some 200 Basuto.

Women attendants balanced the male, which has now become customary. Since the Ritual does not include a special ceremony for admission to catechumenate, we created the following one: Having read the Gospel, the priest came down from the altar and explained the meaning of catechumenate: then, addressing each of the catechumens: Lihlong, daughter of Sekhonyana, son of Moshoeshoe and Ntholo daughter of Mahole, and 'M'a Mohale, wife of Mothakhesi.

Each one in particular was asked what she was asking for today from the priest of the Holy Catholic Church.

Each one replied: "Father, I ask you: May I be admitted to the catechumenate?" The priest then enquired if they believed each article of the Creed, which he repeated in succession.

Then, reminding them that the observance of the commandments was essential to enter eternal life, he asked them solemnly if they would observe the commandments? The reply was "Yes, by the grace the Lord will grant us".

Following that, the hymn: "Maria a bokhabane" was sung with great enthusiasm and the two catechumens, knelt to recite the Creed aloud<sup>24</sup>.

Here we find for the first time a reference to the creation of liturgical rites which served to instruct the people into the stages of the catechumen-ate. As he has done among the Zulu. Gerard continued to use the hymn as an important source of instruction.

One of the most important factors in the success of the Basothomission was Gerard's friendship with Moshweshwe, so unlike the almost crass non-recognition of the Chief, which we find in Allard's records of the Natal missionary attempts. This friendship with the Chief

deepened and especially during the Boer siege of Thaba Bosiu in 1865 when Gerard demonstrated his solicitude for the Chief and his people against the most difficult odds<sup>25</sup>.

The tears that Father Gerard shed at the death of Moshweshwe in 1870, are enough to demonstrate how much he had grown to love the man; and part of the grief was that the great Chief had died without baptism:

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<sup>24</sup> Gerard's Roma Diary, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> "Father Joseph Gerard": G. O'Hara p. 22.

On the morning of March 11th, the unfortunate man appeared before his Judge. I was on my way to see him, when I met an envoy who told me that he was no more. How deep was my grief, and all our neophytes, likewise. His poor soul! I continued on my way to the mountain, to offer my condolence to Letsie and to Masupha. It was Friday. The Protestants were planning to celebrate the baptismal feast on Sunday. All the Majakane were coming from all directions to the mountain. This feast of baptism was only in their imagination. Did they expect to impose on the King in this manner? The fact is that Moshoeshoe had constantly refused to choose their religion, and he died without baptism. The ministers were not there, nor his brother Jobo. The ministers, to save appearance and avoid confusion, tried to make believe he was a Christian. They embellished and joined together the few words he had said, casually to flatter them, or satisfy them, or, in the sense of the Basuto who say: *Ke lumetse*, a word that means, I do not deny the existence of God. That is all<sup>26</sup>.

Gerard's diary records the opening of the second mission station among the Basotho in 1868:

St. Martha's feast was marked by the solemn blessing of St. Michael's chapel. It had been decorated with care by Father Hidien. Very neat, with stations of the Cross, colourful pillars. The King, with Mr. Bowker, the police commander, and the Catholic policemen. About a thousand Basuto were present. The singing of "*Factumest silentium*" was beautifully rendered. Everything was very well done. Of course, the schools and neophytes were there. In the afternoon, we baptised Felicit's child under the name of Christiana. We all felt the meek influence of St. Michael, to give us the virtue of humility and zeal for the law of God<sup>27</sup>.

Gerard's diary notes continuously the individual attention and emphasis on instruction that Gerard gave his converts. Here we find the "line-fisherman" in action. And it was this method that enabled him to lay the firm foundations for the future. Catechumens continued to enrol and persevered to baptism and thereafter. Father Gerard maintained personal contact with each of them throughout their lives.

Already in 1867 two women offered themselves as postulants to the Holy Family Sisters, and Gerard formed two sodalities, one for children, and the second for women who had broken from polygamous unions in order to become Christians. These latter paid special attention to catechising.

In Lesotho at the time the Oblates were able to concentrate on their work as missionaries and evangelisers, without being coopted as Government officials as had been the case in the mission reserves in Natal. Furthermore, they ministered to a people not under Colonial Government as was the case in the South of Natal where they had established their first mission endeavours.

<sup>26</sup> Fr. Gerard's Roma Diary, p. 102.

<sup>27</sup> Fr. Gerard's Roma Diary, p. 80.

The Basutoland mission, like its Natal counterpart, had a considerable number of internal problems in its first ten years of existence. The rigorous discipline which Bishop Allard enforced caused restlessness and unhappiness among the young priests and brothers, while Father Gerard complained that some of his neophytes had expressed the desire to make their confessions to another priest rather than to him. The Bishop found fault with the mother superior of the Holy Family Sisters, Mother Marie Joseph Angot, and she defended herself energetically<sup>28</sup>.

Externally the problems encountered were similar to those of the French Protestant missionaries. Tribal customs were a strong temptation to the new and untried Christian or catechumen and led to many disappointments. In 1858, for example, the Protestant missionaries complained that there was a return to tribalism among their adherents and that Moshesh was once again consulting witchdoctors. They had been disappointed by the defection of Moshesh's son Molapo and by many less important converts who after receiving baptism and appearing to be firm in their Christian faith, had returned to their old customs, especially polygamy. The most serious and permanent defection from the Missions Evangeliques de Paris occurred in 1872 when a large group of converts at the Hermon mission station, about 158 in number, renounced the control of the missionaries and decided to make their own regulations. Theal believed that Basuto nationalism was the root cause of their action and members of this group founded the Ethiopian movement. Another difficulty in the early years was that of combating superstition and the misinterpretation of Christian teaching and rituals. When Father Gerard took in old and destitute people to care for them, the uneducated tribesmen could see no reason for anyone to offer these services to unknown people and spread stories about his ulterior motives. The celibacy of the Catholic priests and brothers does not seem to have been a great obstacle in the eyes of the Basutos. The Catholics suspected the Protestant missionaries of spreading stories about their sexual depravity supposedly hidden under the mask of celibacy, but apparently Moshesh himself pointed out that Christ had remained unmarried while on earth.

The most serious case of defection from the Catholic mission was that of Moshesh's niece Helena who almost ruined the St. Michael's mission project in its first months of its existence. Helena was the wife of Sekonvane and the leading personality in the settlement of Matsikeng. Her daughter Josephina (formerly Lihlong) was one of the first two catechumens and was baptised in October 1865. Helena was baptised in January 1866 after only two months instruction because of her "striking conversion" and because her elevated social position made her an example to others. Helena was apparently annoyed that Father Gerard could not send a permanent priest to her village and that he had not prevented an outbreak of typhoid fever which almost claimed the life of her daughter. Taking her children with her she returned to St. Michael's and, assisted by the Protestant missionaries who had opened a mission nearby, she launched a virulent and partially informed attack on Catholicism. Father Gerard prayed continually that he would not lose all his catechumens to Helena and finally decided to accept the challenge of the Rev. Theophile Jousse to a sort of open debate. To help Father Gerard overcome the serious charges made by Helena a few of the nuns agreed to settle at St. Michael's to work among the newly converted women and eventually

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<sup>28</sup> J. Brain, *ibid*, p. 89.

the trouble died down and Helena's influence waned. Soon afterwards similar problems beset Roma where there was a revolt against the nuns and their school. Many of the pupils returned home to join in the initiation ceremonies, discarding their crucifixes, rosaries and medals and all that they had learned of Christian virtues. The sisters were greatly depressed about this failure but Father Gerard persuaded them to open a novitiate and insisted that they persevere even after all the postulants save one returned home. He organised a Corpus Christi procession for the catechumens and neophytes, instructed and preached and prayed, and finally the disturbances ceased. Father Gerard, writing in June 1870, could say: "La mission est toujours dans un état de souffrances, tentations au dedans et au dehors<sup>29</sup>."

After Allard's resignation in 1874, as a result of the report of the visitor, Fr. Martinet, Bishop Jollivet was appointed his successor and he sent Gerard to found a new mission, St. Monica's, in Leribe. He remained there until 1897, when he returned to Roma. At St. Monica's life proved hard and challenging and the important elements of Gerard's missionary method emerge: his dedication to the missionary work at expense to himself and his life of prayer: the people said he ate prayer; these had been a constant in Gerard's life. When he and Allard left Natal in 1861, disillusioned and discouraged, he was still able to say that if God wanted him to start his missionary life all over again he would choose to start in Kaffraria (the name for Southern Natal and adjoining territories to the south). Similarly when in Roma he was met with failure, especially defections on the part of his converts, he looked at his own inadequacies and sinfulness as he had always done; these were the source of such infidelity. St. Monica's especially shows forth the fruit of the "suffering servant", the man whose food was to pray and suffer. When Bishop Cenez recalled him to Roma in 1897, Gerard left St. Monica's with 759 members. Prayer and suffering were the indispensable tools for the missionary Gerard.

My last point would concern the vocations ministry. Though Father Gerard himself made no direct moves for the formation of priests, in his life time the success with young women started very early when the first young women joined the Holy Family Sisters. It was too soon to expect vocations to the priesthood when so many obstacles had to be overcome first, the main one being education. Soon after his death, however, the first minor seminary was opened in Roma.

Edward RIsI, o.m.i.

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<sup>29</sup> J. Brain, *ibid*, pp. 89-91.

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# La formation oblate face aux défis de la mission d'aujourd'hui

SUMMARY – The present study has two parts. The first treats of today's mission and the second of the missionary formation. In the first part, mention is made of the roots and the particularities of our missionary charism, of the newness of the contemporary mission and the new areopagi of the mission. The second part tells us what is required in the missionary formation to meet today's challenges. We are told of the Oblate as a person completely dedicated to Christ, a missionary, a man of communion, of study, of meditation and of discernment. The Oblates are "like pilgrims, walking with Jesus in faith, hope and love." (C3D)

(N.B. Those who would like the English text of this article have only to ask *Vie OBLATE Life*, 175 Main Street, Ottawa, Canada, K1S 1C3)

## Introduction

Les responsables du Bureau Européen de la Formation m'ont demandé de vous exprimer ce que j'attends de la formation. Il est normal que l'on m'adresse une telle demande: la Constitution 49 ne dit-elle pas en effet que «l'oeuvre de la formation (...) est confiée à la sollicitude et à la vigilance du Supérieur général».

Pendant plusieurs mois, au cours de mes voyages et au milieu d'activités multiples, j'ai gardé ce thème et surtout cette assemblée dans mon coeur et dans ma prière. J'ai relu les interventions magistrales de mon prédécesseur, le P. Fernand Jette, surtout les trois textes fondamentaux publiés dans *Le Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée*<sup>s</sup>, que je vous invite à relire et à méditer. Il y a là toute la sagesse d'un homme spirituel, responsable apprécié de notre Congrégation, dans une période des plus délicates.

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<sup>1</sup> Fernand JETTE, *Ce que j'attends de la formation*, in *LE MISSIONNAIRE OBLAT DE MARIE IMMACULÉE — Textes et Allocutions 1975-1985*, Rome, 1985, pp. 205-219; Jésus-Christ, premier formateur de l'Oblat, *ibid.*, pp. 221-237; La formation oblate d'après les Constitutions et Règles, *ibid.*, pp. 239-257.

Ma première idée était de développer certains aspects importants de la formation, comme ce que j'attends de chaque étape, ou certaines lignes de force de son cheminement, telles que l'accompagnement, la croissance dans le charisme spécifique, le rôle des éducateurs, etc., ou encore le contexte communautaire de la formation (communauté locale, provinciale ou internationale) et ses caractéristiques telles que la confiance réciproque.

J'ai choisi de parcourir un autre chemin, en réfléchissant avec vous sur la formation face aux défis de la mission moderne. En effet, la formation doit préparer des missionnaires authentiques, des hommes apostoliques (cf. CC 45 et 46) pour la mission dans le monde moderne, où les défis sont partout semblables. Notre spiritualité même est profondément missionnaire: la perception du Christ comme Sauveur, notre relation à lui comme coopérateurs, notre type de prière et d'ascèse. Dans la troisième lettre aux Oblats en formation, ce thème a été une préoccupation dont j'ai parlé<sup>2</sup>. J'aimerais maintenant porter un regard plus vaste sur la mission en insistant sur sa nouveauté et sur la formation qui en découle. Mon entretien aura deux parties: je parlerai d'abord de la mission puis de la formation.

## I. La mission aujourd'hui

### Notre spécificité oblate et les nouveaux défis de la mission

En présentant les défis de la mission je veux m'arrêter sur trois aspects: l'enracinement de la mission oblate ou ses grands objectifs, la nouveauté de la mission contemporaine et les nouveaux «aréopages» de la mission d'aujourd'hui.

Notre mission s'insère dans un charisme vivant, un charisme qui croît avec l'expérience de l'Église et la prise de conscience qu'elle a d'elle-même. Elle a des racines qui ne sont pas seulement source d'inspiration, mais qui, aussi, indiquent des objectifs clairs.

Les Instituts religieux sont nombreux dans l'Église et différents les uns des autres selon le caractère de chacun (cf. PC, 7, 8, 9, 10); mais chacun d'eux, avec la collaboration «d'hommes et de femmes remarquables», apporte sa vocation particulière comme un don suscité par l'Esprit (cf. LG, 45, PC, 1, 2), et reconnu authentiquement parla hiérarchie.

Le «charisme des Fondateurs» (Évang. Nunt. II) se révèle comme une «expérience de l'Esprit», transmise à leurs disciples, pour être vécue par ceux-ci, gardée,

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<sup>2</sup> Marcello ZAGO, *La mission oblate* — Lettre aux Oblats en formation première, Rome, le 8 décembre 1988, in Documentation OMI, 164/89, avril 1989.



approfondie, développée constamment en harmonie avec le Corps du Christ en croissance perpétuelle. «C'est pourquoi l'Église défend et soutient le caractère propre des divers Instituts Religieux» (LG, 44; cf. CD, 33; 35, 1; 35, 2, etc).

Ce «caractère propre» comporte également un style particulier de sanctification et d'apostolat qui crée une tradition déterminée, de telle sorte qu'il est possible d'en analyser convenablement les éléments objectifs.

En cette période d'évolution culturelle et de rénovation ecclésiale, il est donc nécessaire que chaque Institut conserve son identité avec une assurance telle qu'on puisse éviter le péril d'une situation insuffisamment définie qui porterait les Religieux à s'insérer dans la vie de l'Église d'une manière vague et ambiguë, sans se référer suffisamment à leur caractère propre<sup>3</sup>.

## I.1. Racines et spécificité de notre charisme missionnaire

I.1.1 Pour le Fondateur, l'idée initiale de mission était l'évangélisation des pauvres des campagnes et des quartiers populaires des villes. L'objectif d'une telle activité est la rechristianisation des classes populaires, «le retour des masses à l'Église»<sup>4</sup>. Aujourd'hui on parlerait de «deuxième évangélisation». Voici les conclusions du P. Gilbert à ce sujet:

Au terme de cette brève recherche, on peut conclure que, pour Eugène de Mazenod en tant que Fondateur — comme évêque sa pensée assumera toutes les dimensions de sa mission — l'évangélisation en France consiste à faire connaître Jésus-Christ et étendre son Royaume dans les âmes, par des missions et retraites aux populations pauvres et abandonnées, par une prédication simple et adaptée. Dans le même esprit s'ajoute un soin particulier à accorder aux jeunes, aux prisonniers, aux immigrés et aux autres groupes marginaux et défavorisés. Enfin, pour consolider cette œuvre d'évangélisation, s'ajoute l'apostolat auprès du clergé et même la direction des Grands Séminaires.

Pour être fidèle au Fondateur, il faut, par amour du Christ et de son Église, chercher par tous les moyens à rejoindre les plus abandonnés, c'est-à-dire les moins atteints par les structures ordinaires de l'Église, pour leur apporter avec la Parole de Dieu le salut en Jésus-Christ<sup>5</sup>.

Vingt-cinq ans plus tard commence l'engagement des Oblats, non seulement dans de nouveaux territoires géographiques, mais aussi avec un nouvel objectif: «l'évangélisation des non-chrétiens» où l'accent est mis

<sup>3</sup> *Mutuae Relationes*, n. 11, Congrégation des Religieux et Instituts Séculiers et Congrégation des Évêques, Vatican 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice GILBERT, *Le Fondateur et l'évangélisation en France*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 42, 1983, pp. 111-126. — Paul POUPARD, *Le Bienheureux Eugène de Mazenod et les premières missions des missionnaires de Provence, 1816-1823*, in *XIX Siècle, Siècle de grâce*, Paris 1982, pp. 65-98.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice GILBERT, *ib.*, p. 126.

sur la première évangélisation<sup>6</sup>. La priorité pour l'évangélisation des non-chrétiens en ces pays est évidente dans les écrits du Fondateur<sup>7</sup>.

Il y a dans ce nouvel engagement un approfondissement du charisme oblat:

Ils ne sont pas apparus seulement pour la rechristianisation, mais pour continuer d'une manière directe la mission même du Christ qui est venu évangéliser et sauver tous les hommes et susciter la vie de Dieu en chaque créature<sup>8</sup>.

Il s'agit de deux objectifs du même charisme missionnaire, comme l'affirme le Fondateur vers la fin de sa vie:

Il me semble voir dans chacun d'eux un apôtre appelé par une insigne faveur de la miséricorde de Dieu, comme ceux que se choisit Notre Seigneur à son passage sur la terre, pour annoncer en tous lieux la bonne nouvelle du salut; en Europe pour réveiller les pécheurs qui ont oublié ou qui n'ont pas compris qu'ils étaient chrétiens; dans les régions lointaines pour annoncer et faire connaître Jésus-Christ et ouvrir la porte du ciel à tant de peuples infidèles qui sans les nôtres n'auraient jamais connu ni aimé Dieu<sup>9</sup>.

Les convergences du congrès de 1982 sur l'évangélisation donnent une synthèse historique solide.

Le Fondateur avait des priorités précises, mais non exclusives, qui tenaient compte des opportunités et des limites missionnaires concrètes, des capacités des personnes, des exigences de la Congrégation<sup>10</sup>

Les finalités de l'évangélisation sont exprimées par le Fondateur dans une trilogie: la conversion et le salut des hommes, le bien de l'Église ou l'extension du Règne du Christ, la gloire de Dieu.

I.1.2 Les premiers Oblats ont accepté la vision du Fondateur et ont cherché à réaliser les objectifs qu'il proposait selon leurs situations et leurs

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni SANTOLINI, *L'évangélisation «ad gentes»: la vision et la pratique du Fondateur*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 42, 1983, pp. 127-139.

<sup>7</sup> Pour le Canada: lettres au P. Guigues, 5 déc. 1844, in *Écrits Oblats*, I, pp. 115-117; 24 mai 1845, ib., pp. 123-126; pour l'Algérie: lettre à l'Évêque d'Alger, 5 janv. 1849, ib., IV, p. 167; pour le Sri Lanka: lettres au P. Semeria, 17 janv. 1850, ib., IV, p. 47; ib., IV, p. 52; 12 mars 1851, ib., IV, p. 7-58; 31 janv. 1857, ib., IV, pp. 137-138; pour le Natal: lettres à M<sup>sr</sup> Allard, 10 nov. 1857, IV, pp. 139-141; 28 oct. 1859, ib., IV, pp. 213-215; Journal, 27 mars-1<sup>er</sup> avril 1850 (A. REY, *Vie de M<sup>sr</sup> de Mazenod*, II, pp. 331-332).

<sup>8</sup> Giovanni SANTOLINI, ibid., p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> Lettre au P. Mouchette, 17 nov. 1859, *Écrits Oblats*, XII, p. 115.

<sup>10</sup> *Sommaire du Congrès sur les Oblats et l'Évangélisation* in *Vie Oblate Life*, 43, 1983, pp. 356-357.

Il Cf. la série d'articles d'Émilien LAMIRANDE sur *les ministères dans la Congrégation au temps du Fondateur*, in *Études Oblates*.

possibilités<sup>12</sup>. La continuité historique n'a pas été étudiée méthodiquement, exception faite de l'animation des Supérieurs généraux<sup>13</sup>, des prises de position des Chapitres généraux<sup>14</sup> et des rapports récents de 1978 et 1980 faits par les différentes Provinces et l'enquête sociologique de 1972<sup>15</sup>. Dans cette dernière étude nous pouvons noter des tendances qui expriment des aspects de la vie du charisme<sup>16</sup>. Sur ce point la synthèse du congrès donne aussi une idée assez bonne des convergences<sup>17</sup>.

I.1.3 Cette double priorité de la première et de la deuxième évangélisation s'est enrichie selon les besoins et selon la conscience ecclésiale en relation avec la mission. Lorsque nous les comparons à la vision missionnaire du Fondateur, quelques exigences sont tout à fait nouvelles, comme le dialogue inter-religieux<sup>18</sup>; d'autres sont perçues dans une perspective toute nouvelle, comme l'inculturation, le rôle des laïcs, l'engagement pour la justice<sup>19</sup>.

Au cours des dernières années, on a eu recours à des expressions comme mission ad intra et ad extra, ou mission ad gentes, expressions qui dénotent des réalités géographiques ou religieuses qui ne sont pas sans ambiguïté. De fait l'Église peut se trouver partout, même si c'est à des degrés divers, dans des situations de première et de deuxième évangélisation, où peuvent se trouver des Oblats autochtones ou étrangers. L'ambiguïté des termes se trouve également au niveau ecclésial.

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12 Cf. dans *Vie Oblate Life*, 42, 1983, pp. 141-172, les articles sur la réponse des Oblats, leur façon d'entrevoir l'évangélisation et leur pratique: en France (Yvon BEAUDOIN); en Angleterre (Austin COOPER); à Ceylan (Robrecht BOUDENS); au Canada (Gaston CARRIÈRE et Romuald BOUCHER); aux États-Unis (Bernard DOYON et Clarence MENARD).

13 Donat LEVASSEUR, *L'évangélisation et les Supérieurs généraux de la Congrégation*, ib., pp. 307-320.

14 Jozef PIELORZ, *Les Chapitres généraux de 1818 à 1861 et l'Évangélisation*; Aloysius KEDL, *Les Oblats et l'Évangélisation dans les Chapitres généraux de 1867 à 1966*; Francis GEORGE, *L'Évangélisation et les Chapitres généraux de 1972 à 1980*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 42, 1983, pp. 273-306.

15 Marcello ZAGO, *L'Évangélisation chez les Oblats aujourd'hui*, ib., pp. 341-352.

16 Ib., pp. 351-352.

17 *Congrès sur les Oblats et l'Évangélisation—Sommaire*, ib., pp. 356-363.

18 Selon le Fondateur, ou la mission chez les non-chrétiens débouche sur leur conversion ou elle doit être abandonnée. «Si on ne conservait pas l'espoir d'y parvenir (la conversion) il faudrait renoncer à cette mission»; lettre à M<sup>re</sup> Allard, 28 oct. 1859, *Écrits Oblats*, IV, p. 215.

19 Le Fondateur voyait le besoin de s'adapter afin d'être proche des gens et aussi pour devenir un des leurs, pour se familiariser avec leur langue; il a entrevu également le besoin de certaines conséquences sociales de la «rechristianisation», v.g. la restitution des biens, pour laquelle il a institué des tribunaux de restitution; il a entrevu le besoin d'une plus grande participation des laïcs, dans ces tribunaux par exemple.

I.1.4 Les nouvelles Constitutions et Règles ont clairement exprimé les objectifs et les priorités de la mission (cf. CC 5, 7) en y intégrant les nouvelles dimensions comme le dialogue (cf. CC 6, 8; R 8), l'engagement pour la justice (cf. C 9; RR 8, 9, 144), l'inculturation (cf. CC 7, 104; RR 8, 29, 32, 37, 59, 70), la formation et l'engagement des laïcs (cf. RR 6, 13, 27, 28)<sup>20</sup>.

Les nouvelles Constitutions ont aussi mis en évidence les pauvres comme étant les destinataires privilégiés de la mission oblate (cf. CC 5, 8, 45, 73, etc.), la nature et la fin principale de l'évangélisation: faire connaître le Christ et son Royaume (cf. CC 5, 7, 9). Et cela se trouve tout à fait dans la ligne de la tradition oblate authentique<sup>21</sup>.

I.1.5 Le Chapitre de 1986, fidèle aux racines du charisme et aux appels actuels, a énuméré six défis que doit relever l'Oblat dans l'aujourd'hui du monde s'il veut être évangéliste authentique. Il a indiqué non seulement la situation des destinataires (les pauvres, le monde sécularisé, la diversité des cultures), mais aussi les relations à établir avec les autres ouvriers de l'évangélisation (avec les laïcs, dans l'Église, en communauté apostolique)<sup>22</sup>.

I.1.6 Le Conseil général s'est engagé à rénover et à dynamiser l'identité missionnaire oblate dans quatre domaines privilégiés d'intervention: la mission, la formation, la communauté et le leadership<sup>23</sup>.

## 1.2 La nouvelle réalité de la Mission<sup>24</sup>

Appelés à une mission nouvelle - Les nombreux et rapides changements du monde constituent de nouveaux appels pour la mission. La nouvelle prise de conscience de l'Église sur sa vie et son rôle dans le monde, ouvre des perspectives nouvelles à la mission. Celle-ci acquiert des aspects nouveaux en raison de ses objectifs et de ses activités, à cause des

<sup>20</sup> Paul SION, *L'Évangélisation dans les différentes éditions de nos Constitutions et Règles*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 42, 1983, pp. 321-339.

<sup>21</sup> Émilien LAMIRANDE, *Les pauvres et les âmes les plus abandonnées*, in *Études Oblates*, 20, 1961, pp. 3-19; Gaston CARRIÈRE, *Les bénéficiaires de notre pensée missionnaire*, *ibid.*, 31, 1972, pp. 283-311; Herménégilde CHARBONNEAU, *Les pauvres et les âmes les plus abandonnées d'après Mer de Mazenod*, *ibid.*, 36, 1976, pp. 127-133.

<sup>22</sup> Chapitre général de 1986, *Missionnaires dans l'Aujourd'hui du Monde*, Rome, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Session plénière du Conseil général, 19 janvier-17 février 1987, *Nos Projets pour la Congrégation*, in *Acta Administrationis Generalis O.M.I.*, X, 1987, pp. 63-65; Session plénière du Conseil général, 8 juin- 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 1987, *Vos réponses à notre projet de planification*, *ibid.*, pp. 93-96.

<sup>24</sup> Cette deuxième partie est extraite d'un document que j'ai préparé en vue d'une consultation nationale italienne sur les missions, le 18 avril 1989.

coresponsables et de ses acteurs, des lieux où elle s'exerce et des méthodes employées.

L2.1 Les objectifs de la mission s'élargissent. L'Église doit inviter à la conversion et doit construire des communautés chrétiennes, mais elle doit aussi faire en sorte que tous les hommes atteignent le Royaume de Dieu et s'y acheminent dès maintenant. L'Église, à travers son agir et son être, a un rôle salvifique même envers ceux qui n'en font pas partie ou n'entrent pas dans ses rangs.

L2.2 La mission se traduit par de multiples activités, complémentaires de par leur nature, mais parfois sélectives en raison de contingences historiques. Le culte de Dieu, le service de la charité, le témoignage et l'annonce explicite, l'inculturation et l'évangélisation des cultures, le dialogue respectueux progressif, la promotion de la justice et des valeurs évangéliques sont quelques aspects de l'activité missionnaire elle-même (cf. le document *Mission et Dialogue* du Secrétariat des Non-Chrétiens, de 1984).

1.2.3 Les artisans et les sujets de la mission se sont multipliés et diversifiés. La mission est la responsabilité de toutes les Églises locales, dans leur propre milieu et à la dimension de l'Église universelle. Les vocations spéciales rendent explicite et valorisent la vocation missionnaire de tous, soit dans l'Église d'origine soit dans les Églises nouvelles. Les laïcs eux-mêmes sont appelés et envoyés dans la vigne pour servir la personne, et la société (cf. *Christifideles laici*, nn. 36-44) et pour annoncer l'Évangile (cf. *ibid.* nn. 33-35) dans la communion missionnaire (cf. *ibid.* n. 32).

1.2.4 La mission se déploie partout. L'activité missionnaire s'exerce surtout parmi les peuples et dans ces contrées où l'Église n'est pas implantée ou ne s'est pas suffisamment développée. De plus, aujourd'hui le champ de la mission s'est étendu en raison de l'émigration qui a conduit des groupes humains importants et influents dans des pays traditionnellement chrétiens. Il s'est étendu aussi en raison des moyens de communication, des lieux privilégiés de rencontre comme les institutions universitaires et internationales. Je suis convaincu que l'activité missionnaire auprès des musulmans s'exercera en Europe plus que dans leur habitat arabe, pourvu que nos Églises locales exercent ici leur mission de façon dynamique, tout en étant conscientes des situations et des influences internationales qui s'y jouent.

1.2.5 La mission est nouvelle par ses méthodes. Elle doit s'exercer dans le respect des personnes et des cultures, dans un dialogue de

compréhension et de promotion de valeurs authentiques, dans le témoignage ancré dans la croissance de l'identité propre. Aujourd'hui la mission se réalise davantage par osmose à travers tous les chrétiens que par l'action de quelques spécialistes, même si ceux-ci sont toujours nécessaires.

**I.2.6 Missio Dei** — La nouvelle réalité de la mission prend racine dans cette conscience que le Christ ressuscité continue par l'Esprit sa mission salvifique dans le monde à laquelle il associe son Église. Il a ses étapes et ses moments que l'Église doit discerner et avec lesquels elle doit collaborer avec générosité. La présence et le dialogue peuvent être une étape de sa mission même si en apparence ils ne débouchent pas sur la conversion et la constitution de communautés chrétiennes. La disponibilité d'autres groupes et d'autres peuples à se mettre à la suite du Christ constitue un moment privilégié de la mission.

La mission est un appel non seulement à la disponibilité et à la générosité mais aussi à la sainteté des chrétiens et des communautés pour répondre à l'appel de son amour salvifique adressé à toute l'humanité et y collaborer.

**I.2.7 La nouveauté de la mission**, dont j'ai développé quelques aspects, exige l'adaptation aux diverses situations (MR, 17-18) et la fidélité au charisme spécifique (cf. MR, 10-12). Tous les «ordres ou états» du Peuple de Dieu ont des caractéristiques propres qui se manifestent dans la façon de vivre la vocation chrétienne propre et la mission ecclésiale propre. Les Congrégations religieuses existent avec des charismes distincts et complémentaires (cf. MR, 10-11). Il ne s'agit donc pas de faire tous la même chose à l'intérieur des Églises locales, mais de contribuer chacun selon son charisme propre. Le charisme des Oblats exige dans toutes les formes de ministère une préférence pour l'annonce explicite de la Bonne Nouvelle.

### **I.3 Les nouveaux Aréopages de la Mission**

L'apostolat missionnaire de saint Paul a trouvé des méthodes et des défis nouveaux parmi les Grecs. L'Aréopage où il leur adresse la Bonne Nouvelle est le symbole des chemins et des défis nouveaux auxquels la mission doit faire face.

La mission s'exerce toujours dans le concret de l'histoire et des situations. La fin est toujours le Royaume de Dieu dans son expression eschatologique et historique dont l'Église est le signe et le sacrement. L'activité

par excellence est toujours l'annonce de la Bonne Nouvelle, qui est le Christ, mais cette fin et cette activité passent à travers des médiations privilégiées dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. J'en indique sept: le dialogue, l'inculturation, la promotion humaine, le «village global», le témoignage, la charité, la spiritualité.

1.3.1 Nous vivons dans un monde pluraliste, en contact avec d'autres Églises et d'autres religions, dans des sociétés animées par des cultures humanistes ou sécularisées. Dans ce contexte, le dialogue est le chemin de la mission. Le dialogue est une attitude globale et une activité spécifique. Il dit respect et cheminement vers les personnes et les groupes. Il est promotion des valeurs authentiques et donc chemin vers le salut. Il est disponibilité et croissance réciproque. Il suppose et favorise l'identité propre. Dans ce contexte survient normalement le témoignage de sa propre foi. Ainsi le dialogue n'est pas séparé de l'évangélisation ou n'en est pas exclu.

Dans certains milieux il est la seule façon pour l'Église d'être présente. Pour le chrétien il jaillit naturellement de l'Évangile et croît en proportion de sa relation personnelle avec le Christ.

1.3.2 L'Église, de par sa nature, est un sacrement, c'est-à-dire un signe et un instrument de salut, de l'amour de Dieu pour l'homme, d'unité entre les hommes et avec son Dieu. Pour cette raison l'inculturation est essentielle à la mission. L'inculturation est une exigence universelle de la mission parce qu'elle favorise non seulement la communicabilité du message, mais elle fait de la communauté ecclésiale elle-même le signe et l'instrument de salut et donc une réalité qui interpelle.

Elle prend des connotations diverses selon les contextes culturels. Dans les cultures religieuses, surtout asiatiques et populaires, elle doit incarner les mêmes valeurs religieuses. Elle doit répondre aux défis locaux et universels, mais toujours changeants. Elle doit tenir compte du passé, s'ouvrir à l'avenir et s'ancrer dans l'essentiel.

1.3.3 Le monde moderne souffre de nouvelles et anciennes injustices, de profondes différences socio-économiques, de nombreuses atteintes aux droits humains. L'Église doit être le levain de la transformation à opérer. La promotion humaine est le service à l'humanité, l'incarnation des valeurs évangéliques, la voie pour l'évangélisation. Le dépassement des conditionnements personnels, locaux et internationaux, exige non seulement la dénonciation prophétique mais aussi la conversion du cœur et la transformation des valeurs culturelles et des structures sociales, ce qui est le fruit de la relation avec le Christ (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn. 18-20).

I.3.4 Le village global comme milieu d'échange et de communication à un niveau planétaire est un nouvel aréopage pour la mission. Les contacts, non seulement à travers les moyens techniques modernes et les communications sociales, peuvent rejoindre les personnes même si les frontières nationales sont fermées aux missionnaires. Les institutions internationales, les centres d'étude et de rencontre, les services réciproques, les migrations temporaires ou permanentes sont les nouveaux milieux de la mission. L'avenir de l'Église au milieu de tant de peuples peut se jouer précisément au cœur de cette situation.

L3.5 Le sens de maturité des peuples et des personnes, l'estime pour leurs propres valeurs, la possibilité de choix personnels donnent une importance aux contacts interpersonnels et au témoignage. Le témoignage interpersonnel fait tomber les barrières et rejoint les personnes. Il faut qu'il devienne une dimension de la présence de telle sorte que l'Évangile passe presque par osmose. L'Église primitive, même si elle avait des envoyés, a répandu l'Évangile surtout par osmose. Un tel témoignage est efficace seulement s'il est enraciné dans une conviction personnelle (l'identité chrétienne) et dans la charité fraternelle.

L3.6 La charité est le «sacrement social» fondamental de la mission, comme le Christ est le «sacrement primordial» de la vie de l'Église. Elle est l'attitude théologique et anthropologique qui doit animer toute activité et toute relation. Aujourd'hui elle trouve des formes concrètes dans l'accueil et la promotion humaine, partout et avec des répercussions de plus en plus grandes.

L3.7 La spiritualité est enfin un nouvel aréopage pour l'annonce évangélique. Non seulement en Asie où il est le premier critère d'évaluation de toute religion, mais aussi en Occident et en Amérique latine où beaucoup cherchent des lieux et des maîtres pour croître intérieurement. La prolifération de mouvements spirituels non chrétiens est un indice d'une telle recherche.

## II. Une formation missionnaire pour répondre aux défis d'aujourd'hui

La mission chrétienne se joue partout. Elle peut et doit se réaliser avec la coopération de tous, même si elle a toujours besoin d'ouvriers spéciaux. Pour cette raison la formation missionnaire de tous devient une



urgence ecclésiale; de même s'impose une formation adéquate des animateurs et des spécialistes d'une telle mission. Qu'il me soit permis de rappeler quelques exigences d'une telle formation.

Il faut une découverte toujours plus claire de la dimension missionnaire de chaque vocation chrétienne. Tout chrétien est un envoyé, un témoin, un coopérateur dans la construction de l'Église et du Royaume. Une telle conscience doit croître avec l'approfondissement de l'identité chrétienne propre et avec l'accroissement de l'influence sociale propre. Dans un monde pluraliste l'identité chrétienne croît par le dialogue, la confrontation et le témoignage.

Il faut que chaque communauté chrétienne découvre sa dimension missionnaire, soit en relation avec son propre milieu géographique, soit en relation avec les autres peuples, avec le monde, avec l'Église universelle. Vivre le Christ, pour la communauté, signifie lui rendre témoignage et le servir «hors-les-murs», c'est-à-dire au-delà des pratiquants, des membres de son Église, et même en dehors de son milieu propre.

Si ce sont là les grandes orientations de la mission aujourd'hui pour l'Église, orientations dans lesquelles doit s'insérer notre participation missionnaire spécifique, quelle doit être la formation première de nos candidats aujourd'hui? Si chaque chrétien, chaque communauté doit former à la mission à laquelle tous sont appelés à apporter leur propre contribution, quelle sera notre préparation à nous, Oblats, qui y sommes appelés à titre de spécialistes?

Notre formation doit s'appuyer sur quelques piliers essentiels, qui ne nous sont pas exclusifs, mais qui, pour nous, prennent des nuances et des accents particuliers. J'en indique six: la radicalité évangélique, le sens missionnaire, la maturité humaine et chrétienne, la capacité de communion, la formation doctrinale, le discernement, auxquels — en guise de conclusion — j'ajoute un rappel pratique sur l'expérience pastorale et une modalité essentielle sur le cheminement de la formation. Ce sont des points d'arrivée, mais ce sont aussi des jalons grâce auxquels on mesure, évalue le cheminement de la formation. Ce sont des façons d'être à travers lesquelles doit croître tout Oblat<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Administration Générale, *Normes Générales de la Formation Oblate*, Rome, 1984; Mario CAMARDA, *La formazione del Oblato negli scritti del Beato Eugenio de Mazenod*, Roma, 1982.

## II.1 L'Oblat, un passionné du Christ

La formation oblate commence exactement lorsque naît une expérience du Christ et, plus la vie du candidat se centre, s'intègre et s'unifie dans la relation personnelle avec le Christ, plus elle s'approfondit. Si cette relation personnelle avec le Christ n'existe pas, la formation reste superficielle et l'édifice est dépourvu de bases solides<sup>26</sup>.

Pour cette raison, l'article principal sur le noviciat (cf. C 56) porte sur l'expérience du Christ et les diverses façons de la vivre<sup>27</sup>. De même tous les articles des Constitutions se rapportent d'une façon ou d'une autre à cette relation avec le Christ, depuis le premier article sur l'appel missionnaire, jusqu'à ceux qui parlent de la suite du Christ (cf. CC 1, 4), des vœux et de la vie de foi, de la communauté (cf. CC 3, 37, 40), de la mission (cf. CC 5, 6, 7, 9), de la formation (cf. CC 45 et ss.), et de l'exercice de l'autorité (cf. C 73, 80).

La vie oblate doit être christocentrique puisqu'elle est missionnaire. Il n'y a pas de mission chrétienne en dehors du Christ, expérimentée, et à qui le missionnaire rend constamment témoignage. La mission est une façon d'être avant (non pas au sens temporel) d'être une façon d'agir. Le missionnaire est un coopérateur plus qu'un instrument. Il y a unité entre être disciple et être missionnaire (cf. C 1) et de plus, ces deux aspects croissent ensemble. Les nouvelles Constitutions mettent cette unité en évidence, exprimant ainsi le sens profond de la vie religieuse apostolique.

Le Christ est perçu comme Sauveur<sup>28</sup>. Chaque charisme religieux met en relief un aspect de la vie du Christ (cf. Lumen Gentium 46). L'approche est tout à fait missionnaire: Sauveur pour toute l'humanité, par sa vie et son ministère. L'aspect salvatorien du Fondateur, enraciné dans son expérience du Vendredi saint, exprimé dans l'image de son sang

<sup>26</sup> Fernand JETTrÉ, *Jésus-Christ, premier formateur de l'Oblat*, in *Le Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée*, Rome, 1985, pp. 221-237. Maurice GILBERT, *La vie spirituelle du Scolastique et la Règle*, in *Études Oblates*, 12 (1953), pp. 39-55.

<sup>27</sup> J'ai commenté cet article lors de la deuxième rencontre avec les Maîtres de novices; cf. Bureau Européen de la Formation, *Actes de la deuxième rencontre européenne des Maîtres de novices OMI*, Grottaferrata, Rome, 1-6 février 1987, pp. 11-18. — Sur le même thème, cf. *Première lettre aux Oblats en formation*, Rome, le 25 janvier 1987, Documentation OMI, 149/87, pp. 1-4.

<sup>28</sup> Les études sur le caractère salvatorien de la spiritualité oblate ne manquent pas: Émilien LAMIRANDE, *Le sang du Sauveur. Un thème central de la doctrine spirituelle de M<sup>gr</sup> de Mazenod*, in *Études Oblates*, 19, 1960, pp. 3-27; Angelo D'ADDIO, *Eugène de Mazenod et le Christ*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 38, 1979, pp. 169-200; Maurice GILBERT, *Introduction d la spiritualité oblate*, ibid., 43, 1984, pp. 210-230.

répandu pour nous, trouve une expression heureuse dans l'article 4 des Constitutions. Pour cette raison l'expérience du Christ à travers la croix et l'épreuve est essentielle dans la formation; l'Esprit donne sans cesse la possibilité de la vivre.

Les modalités de la mission sont à l'image du Christ, la présence et l'inculturation sont en relation avec son incarnation, le service est en rapport avec son caractère de serviteur, le prophétisme en rapport avec sa nature d'envoyé.

Les voies de cette expérience du Christ sont multiples, comme sont infinies les manifestations de son amour pour nous et celles de l'expérience humaine. Les Constitutions soulignent le caractère missionnaire de toute notre vie. Par exemple, l'expérience à travers la Parole de Dieu, l'Eucharistie et la liturgie (cf. C 56) trouve des dimensions éminemment missionnaires (cf. C 33). Vient ensuite l'expérience du Christ à travers les hommes et les événements (cf. C 56) vécue comme une prière (cf. C 32). Le travail apostolique est «l'occasion d'une rencontre avec le Christ qui, par eux, se donne aux autres et, par les autres, se donne à eux» (cf. C 31); il est un lieu de croissance dans cette «amitié avec le Christ» (cf. C 56). La vie de communauté est une autre façon de faire l'expérience du Christ et de lui rendre témoignage (cf. C. 3, 37). Il existe une correspondance entre l'expérience du Christ et le dynamisme missionnaire (cf. C 45, 37). La relation avec le Christ exige une conversion continue, une croissance constante, une mise au point quotidienne à travers le changement des situations et des appels. Ainsi l'apostolat, comme la prière, devient contemplation et communion avec le Christ.

Cette spiritualité christocentrique et missionnaire est importante, non seulement pour être témoins dans la première et dans la nouvelle évangélisation, mais surtout dans les nouveaux aréopages comme le dialogue, l'inculturation, la justice, le témoignage, la spiritualité, dans lesquels l'annonce doit se faire avec spontanéité, simplicité et presque par osmose, et doit toujours se réaliser dans l'accueil des personnes, dans le respect des valeurs qui trouvent leur source dans le Verbe.

La relation avec le Christ introduit dans la vie trinitaire. C'est l'Esprit qui fait connaître et croître pleinement dans le Christ.

Ce même Esprit forme le Christ en ceux qui s'engagent sur les traces des Apôtres. Plus il leur fait pénétrer le mystère du Sauveur et de son Église, plus il les incite à se vouer à l'évangélisation des pauvres (C 45).

Il existe une unité non seulement entre spiritualité et formation, mais aussi entre spiritualité et mission. Et le tout (formation-spiritualité-

mission) est d'abord don et œuvre de l'Esprit, don qui appelle notre réponse et notre collaboration.

## II.2 L'Oblat, un missionnaire

L'Oblat ne peut être que missionnaire, peu importe ce qu'il est appelé à faire ou puisse faire à chaque moment de sa vie. Il est missionnaire comme Oblat, c'est-à-dire en vivant le charisme spécifique et en étant solidaire de la mission de la Congrégation. Les caractéristiques de la mission oblate sont exposées dans les Constitutions, les défis sont régulièrement soulignés ou étudiés par les Chapitres ou les congrès provinciaux<sup>29</sup>.

Pour nous, la formation missionnaire doit être : christocentrique, ecclésiale, universelle, kérigmatique, avec une préférence pour les pauvres, positive, créative.

a) La «missionnarité» chez l'Oblat ne peut jaillir et s'alimenter que de l'amour du Christ qui a tant aimé les siens jusqu'à donner sa vie pour eux (cf. I Jn, 4,10). «À travers le regard du Sauveur crucifié nous voyons le monde racheté de son sang, dans le désir que les hommes en qui se poursuit sa passion connaissent eux aussi la puissance de sa résurrection»

(C 4). Il faut être mû, non pas par une idéologie ou par une vision humaine, mais par un regard de foi qui s'identifie à celui du Christ, par des attitudes d'amour qui «le rendent plus apte à aimer avec le coeur du Christ» (R 12).

b) Il faut aussi que «l'appel de Jésus Christ (soit) perçu en Église à travers les besoins de salut des hommes» (C 1). Il doit exister une perception ecclésiale des exigences du salut<sup>30</sup>. Le Seigneur en effet appelle et envoie son Église et nous envoie en elle. La mission ne nous appartient pas; elle est du Christ, elle est confiée à son Église (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 14). La mission oblate croît, se réalise, se modifie à l'intérieur de la mission ecclésiale. Vivre la communion avec les pasteurs, en accepter les enseignements et les orientations sont des exigences missionnaires (cf. C 6). Dans la formation il est important de favoriser cette attitude ecclésiale

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Normes générales de la Formation oblate, Rome, 1984, chap. I; Martin QUERÉ, *Monseigneur de Mazenod et le Missionnaire Oblat*, in *Études Oblates*, 20 (1961), pp. 237-249; Albert PERSAN, *M<sup>r</sup> de Mazenod pour le recrutement et la formation des missionnaires*, in *Euntes Docete*, 13 (1960), pp. 328-357.

<sup>30</sup> Sur le caractère ecclésial du charisme oblat cf. MAMMANA Giuseppe, *Eugène de Mazenod et l'Église*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 41, 1982, pp. 3-23, 139-164, 249-276.

dans les rapports avec l'Église, qu'elle soit universelle ou locale. De cette attitude naît la capacité d'accueillir et la volonté de «répondre aux besoins les plus urgents de l'Église» (cf. C 7).

c) Le mandat missionnaire à intérioriser est de par sa nature universel. Tout missionnaire doit avoir le cœur ouvert sur le monde, donner sa vie pour le salut du monde, même s'il doit s'incarner dans un peuple déterminé, comme le fit le Christ. La formation doit aider à surpasser l'esprit de clocher et les multiples barrières culturelles, intellectuelles et psychologiques qui nous enferment dans des horizons nationalistes (cf. R 59). L'information internationale, surtout sur la présence oblate dans le monde, et une expérience interculturelle durant la période de formation, peuvent apporter en cela une aide valide. La découverte des besoins missionnaires, même en dehors de la culture propre et de son propre peuple, est un signe d'authenticité. Lorsque dans un groupe en formation personne ne se déclare volontaire pour l'extérieur il me vient des doutes sur la formation oblate, de même lorsque personne ne veut demeurer dans son pays, ce qui maintenant est plutôt rare.

d) La mission de l'Oblat est orientée vers l'annonce explicite du Christ (cf. C 7). Il faut que la formation crée cette disponibilité à évangéliser sans laquelle on est en droit de mettre en doute l'authenticité de la vocation<sup>31</sup>, et dans le même temps elle doit rendre apte à «présenter l'Évangile de telle sorte qu'il atteigne et touche le cœur de leurs contemporains» (R 60). La capacité de témoigner sa propre foi, en communauté et au dehors, est une aide pour croître dans sa propre vocation, et un signe d'aptitude missionnaire. La participation aux ministères de l'évangélisation, spécialement les missions populaires, durant la formation fait normalement vibrer les jeunes et les confirme dans leur vocation propre<sup>32</sup>.

e) Les pauvres aux multiples visages sont les destinataires de la mission oblate (cf C 5). L'authenticité de notre service à leur égard peut être vérifiée par deux attitudes pratiques: la disponibilité à leur annoncer le Christ et la capacité d'assumer un style de vie simple. L'insertion dans un milieu pauvre et le contact avec des groupes de pauvres pourront les aider à acquérir ces attitudes. L'amour qu'on aura pour les pauvres aidera les

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Fernand JETTÉ, *Ce que j'attends de la formation*, in op. cit., pp. 215-216.

<sup>32</sup> L'expérience de l'annonce directe à travers les missions populaires a un grand impact chez les candidats venant de milieux culturels divers comme le Paraguay, l'Argentine, l'Uruguay, l'Italie.

jeunes à comprendre les exigences de la justice et à les intégrer dans leur activité missionnaire propre<sup>33</sup>.

f) Pour être missionnaire dans le monde actuel, il faut enfin que le candidat développe deux autres attitudes: la créativité et la capacité d'accueillir ce qui est positif. Dans un monde en rapide mutation, dans une société pénétrée de courants et de groupes divers, il faut en percevoir les valeurs inhérentes, anciennes ou nouvelles, pour convaincre et construire. Il faut aussi de la créativité et «l'audace d'ouvrir des voies nouvelles afin que le message du salut atteigne tous les hommes» (CC 8 et 46). Il est fini le temps d'encourager et d'exiger un conformisme privé de dynamisme. Il faut favoriser l'initiative et la coresponsabilité dès la formation première.

### II.3 L'Homme apostolique

La maturité humaine et chrétienne est une exigence inéluctable pour l'Oblat. Pour être missionnaire il faut surpasser l'égoïsme, et, tout en acceptant ses propres limites, chercher à croître dans l'ouverture aux autres et dans le sens de la responsabilité<sup>34</sup>.

Les vœux ont pour but de créer un être nouveau, l'homme évangélique, qui réagit presque instinctivement comme le Christ. Notre ascèse sera missionnaire (cf. C 4, 34, 63).

Considérant les défis de la mission aujourd'hui nous devons dire que l'homme apostolique doit se caractériser:

par la capacité de vivre avec les gens et d'aimer le pauvre  
mais comme une personne consacrée;

par la capacité de s'adapter et de s'inculturer tout en  
préservant l'essentiel;

par la capacité de dialoguer et d'apprécier les valeurs et les  
positions de l'autre tout en conservant l'identité propre;

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Gregorio IRIARTE, *Formación para la Vida Religiosa dentro del contexto latino-americano*, in Selección de Estudios Oblatos, Roma, 28 (1989), pp. 3-18, et Raymundo SCHOENSTEIN y Vicente LOPEZ, Hacia un nuevo estilo de formación desde los pobres, *ibid.* pp. 19-48.

<sup>34</sup> Ici on ne se réfère pas à l'homme apostolique dans le sens du Fondateur pour qui ce terme implique la radicalité de la suite du Christ et la coopération zélée à sa mission. Cf. Maurice GILBERT, *Sur les traces des Apôtres*, in Études Oblates, 16 (1957), pp. 293-301; Giovanni SANTOLINI, *L'Évangélisation «ad Gentes»: la vision et la pratique du Fondateur*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 42 (1983), pp. 129-132.

- par la capacité d'accueillir ce qui est positif sans l'absolutiser;
- par la capacité de vivre les tensions sans perdre le calme.

Cette maturité permettra de créer d'abord des attitudes intérieures plutôt que de fournir des techniques, comme la capacité d'écoute, d'observation, de sympathie, de jugement équilibré... Il faut harmoniser les diverses dimensions de la vie humaine, chrétienne et religieuse (cf. C 50). Même si l'intégration de la personnalité sera le fruit de notre engagement pour toute la vie, il faut qu'elle ait une consistance suffisante dès la fin de la formation première. Pour cette raison le candidat doit cultiver l'autodiscipline et la confrontation avec ses éducateurs et sa communauté.

#### **IL4 Homme de communion**

Une exigence nouvelle pour le missionnaire est celle d'être un homme de communion, d'acquérir le sens de la collaboration, la capacité de collaborer à l'unique mission confiée à l'Église et réalisée avec la participation de charismes divers et complémentaires.

L'Église en effet est une réalité charismatique, un corps pourvu de dons spécifiques et complémentaires pour l'édification mutuelle et l'avènement du Royaume. Les relations se réalisent et se qualifient dans la communion (Synode de 1985) qui jaillit de la charité.

La vie religieuse même est considérée par Vatican II comme un ensemble de dons distincts et complémentaires qui témoignent de la richesse multiforme du Christ et qui embellissent son Église (Lumen Gentium, 46).

Le Chapitre de 1986, en indiquant comme champs privilégiés de notre activité la mission avec les laïcs, dans l'Église et en communauté apostolique, souligne que l'Oblat doit être un homme de communion, et donc un homme qui sait collaborer<sup>35</sup>.

En ce qui concerne la formation, trois domaines peuvent être mis en évidence:

- a) L'Oblat doit reconnaître et respecter son identité propre ainsi que celle des autres. On n'attend pas de lui la réalisation de tous les aspects de la mission; il y a des charismes spécifiques pour répondre

<sup>35</sup> Cf. le document du Chapitre général de 1986, *Missionnaires dans l'Aujourd'hui du Monde*, nn. 68-137.

à chacun des besoins. L'exhortation sur le laïcat, Christifideles laici, indique quel est l'apport spécifique des laïcs, sujets à part entière de la mission. Cela vaut aussi pour les divers charismes religieux et missionnaires. Le renouveau de la Congrégation dépend du respect de l'identité propre et de celle des autres.

- b) Dans une telle perspective il est important de cultiver chez les candidats la capacité d'écoute, d'échange, de communication, etc. Il faut les habituer à la collaboration dans le travail et dans la vie. Et tout cela dans un climat de respect et de charité, et non de condescendance ou de manipulation.
- c) La vie de communauté doit être le lieu d'apprentissage de la communion et non le ghetto de la séparation. L'Oblat est appelé à vivre la communauté à divers niveaux: avec les confrères, avec l'Église locale et universelle, avec les participants à la même activité ou apostolat, avec l'école, avec la paroisse, etc. La communauté oblate doit être un apprentissage de la communion réciproque, un lieu où l'on apprend à collaborer, où l'on expérimente l'Église, elle doit être un signe et un modèle de communauté ecclésiale. Pour cette raison la communauté de formation doit être une famille plus qu'une structure, un partage plus qu'une tâche à exécuter.

Je crois que certains missionnaires ne savent pas travailler avec les laïcs et ne savent pas animer une communauté ecclésiale parce qu'ils n'ont jamais fait une expérience authentique de communauté.

### 11.5 Homme de réflexion et d'étude

Penser que le missionnaire d'aujourd'hui n'a pas besoin d'une formation solide, d'une capacité de réflexion et d'étude est non seulement une illusion mais une erreur néfaste. Dans un monde compliqué et changeant, la mission a besoin d'hommes préparés intellectuellement, capables de discerner et d'étudier les grands problèmes, créateurs dans l'ouverture de voies nouvelles. La bonne volonté ne suffit pas. Je pense, par exemple, que l'inculturation stagne par manque de capacité de réflexion et d'étude chez les ouvriers de la mission.

Pour ce qui regarde les exigences de la formation, je soulignerais les aspects suivants:

- a) La formation biblique est essentielle pour notre ministère d'évangélistes.



- b) Dans les questions théologiques il faut une relation sereine avec le Magistère.
- c) Tout candidat doit acquérir une capacité d'identifier et d'étudier les problèmes, une aptitude à apprendre à partir de l'expérience et à réfléchir personnellement (cf. RR 59, 65).
- d) La préparation initiale doit donner une formation solide, que chacun pourra ensuite compléter selon les exigences des situations dans lesquelles il se trouvera. Durant le premier cycle de théologie, par exemple, on ne peut s'adonner à une étude détaillée des religions, des cultures, des missions, etc. mais on a besoin d'acquérir une vision christologique et ecclésiologique qui permette d'aborder ces réalités. Le danger encore aujourd'hui n'est pas de prolonger le temps des études, mais de l'abréger.

Pour la Congrégation il serait utile, nécessaire même, de préparer et d'avoir des Oblats spécialisés dans les secteurs cruciaux de la mission aujourd'hui: la Parole de Dieu, la communication de la foi, l'inculturation, le dialogue, la justice, etc. Une telle spécialisation pourrait s'effectuer à divers niveaux. Dans les universités romaines il existe une vingtaine de spécialisations en vue de la licence. Il peut y avoir aussi une spécialisation acquise progressivement par la réflexion et l'étude personnelle. Cependant il faut aussi favoriser une spécialisation plus technique.

À propos de la spécialisation, deux critères me semblent importants: elle doit être en accord avec notre mission et être au service de la mission.

La complémentarité des spécialisations peut enrichir une Province et la Congrégation.

## II.6 Homme de discernement

Le discernement a été indiqué comme la tâche prioritaire dans la formation<sup>36</sup>. Le discernement spirituel est «l'aptitude acquise dans l'expérience, à reconnaître les mouvements qui viennent de Dieu pour les accueillir, et les mouvements qui viennent du monde ou du démon pour les rejeter<sup>37</sup>.» Il est essentiel à la croissance spirituelle de la personne.

Il existe aussi un discernement missionnaire, qui est la lecture des signes des temps, l'aptitude à distinguer les semences du Verbe des effets

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Fernand JET-FÉ, *Jésus, premier formateur de l'Oblat*, in op. cit., pp. 235-237.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

du mal. Dans l'histoire, les sociétés, les religions, les institutions il existe des réalités ambiguës, véhiculaires de grâces et de péchés. Le prophétisme exige cette lecture dans la foi et le discernement (cf. C 9).

Un tel discernement peut être enrichi et rendu plus sûr par la communauté (cf. C 26), en ce qui concerne tant les personnes (cf. CC 51, 53, 55), que la mission (cf. CC 72, 81, 105, 111).

## II.7 L'expérience apostolique dans la formation

Souvent j'ai suggéré que l'expérience missionnaire, interculturelle, avec les pauvres, est importante. Aujourd'hui on ne conçoit plus la formation première séparée de l'apostolat, qui en est une dimension. Cette expérience pastorale accompagne la formation consacrée surtout à la dimension intellectuelle. Dans ce cas il est important de trouver un équilibre opportun, pour ne pas appauvrir l'étude mais au contraire la motiver, et de faire une évaluation personnelle et communautaire. De plus, souvent on réalise une immersion missionnaire à plus long terme — de quelques mois à un ou deux ans — dans d'autres contextes culturels. Sa réussite dépend de la préparation antérieure du candidat et de l'accompagnement qu'il y trouvera. L'expérience est positive en divers contextes culturels et à divers moments de la formation.

Une telle expérience non seulement peut éprouver la vocation spécifique et préparer à l'apostolat, mais doit aussi aider à intégrer divers éléments dans l'unité de vie.

## II.8 Un pèlerinage

Je conclus par une image prise dans les Constitutions, qui m'est chère et qui décrit bien le processus de la formation, ainsi que la nature et la méthode de la mission. «Tels des pèlerins, ils font route avec Jésus dans la foi, l'espérance et l'amour» (C 31).

La formation est un processus de croissance personnelle, par lequel le missionnaire s'identifie chaque jour avec la personne, la mission et la vie du Christ. C'est un cheminement avec Lui. Pèlerins avec Lui et avec les autres, Oblats et non-Oblats... C'est un cheminement théologique.

Les éducateurs font aussi partie du groupe de ceux qui cheminent: pèlerins avec Jésus et avec leurs frères plus jeunes. Toujours en croissance.

Marcello ZAGO, o.m.i.  
Supérieur général  
Rome, juin 1989

# The Oblate "Establishment" in Rome

– II –

## *Establishing the First Oblate House in Rome 1861-1863*

SOMMAIRE – Du vivant du Fondateur les démarches pour un établissement à Rome se sont toutes avérées des échecs. Le père Joseph Fabre, nouveau supérieur général, revient à la charge, car on juge important que les oblats aient, à Rome, un représentant officiel permanent auprès du Saint-Siège. Ce désir s'est accentué lors du conflit de M<sup>gr</sup> P.F. Cruice, évêque de Marseille, avec l'administration générale des Oblats. Le père Vincens se rendant à Rome pour discuter de ce conflit a de la difficulté à se loger. Il se met à la recherche d'une maison que les Oblats pourraient occuper pendant leurs séjours dans la ville éternelle. Au chapitre général de 1862 on considère comme une nécessité absolue de s'établir à Rome. Le cardinal Guibert négocie avec le cardinal Lavigerie l'achat de locaux appartenant au gouvernement. Lors d'une audience accordée au père Fabre le pape approuve l'établissement des Oblats à Rome. Par un rescrit du 20 février 1863 le Saint Siège autorise le supérieur général à établir à Rome un bureau pour le procureur auprès du Saint-Siège.

A first article in this series described the effort put forth by B1. Eugene de Mazenod to open an Oblate house in Rome. Such an Oblate establishment in Rome was explicitly considered during the years between 1826 and 1833, and the purpose envisaged for it varied. What in 1826 was probably conceived as a house of Oblate mission preachers, became in 1832 a house related to seminary formation and, in 1833, a common seminary for the six suburbicarian dioceses of Rome. The seminary element did not necessarily exclude that of mission preaching.

Though our sources are completely silent on the matter, it is possible that the Founder in his last years may have begun to entertain the idea of having an Oblate in Rome as the Congregation's official representative to the Holy See.

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<sup>1</sup> Some Oblate writers state this as a fact, which statement, however, they do not substantiate. Such, for example, are: SCHARSCH, Philippus, O.M.I., *Geschichte der Kongregation*

With the expansion and development of the Congregation in France, England and Ireland, Canada and the United States, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and South Africa, the questions that the Superior General of the Oblates had to treat with the Holy See increased in number. In such a context, it was normal that the idea of a regular channel of communications between the Congregation and the Holy See would arise.

The Founder himself had come to Rome in 1851 in order to have the important changes to the Oblate Constitutions and Rules made by the 1850 General Chapter approved by the Holy See. He was for the last time in Rome from October 27 to December 31, 1854, on the occasion of the definition of the Immaculate Conception. On each of these two trips to Rome, he attended also to other business that related to the Oblate Congregation. Such occasional trips could not suffice for this purpose in the long run, however.

The felt need of having a standing official representative of the Oblate Congregation to the Holy See, resident in Rome itself, intensified with the conflict that erupted in 1861 between Bishop Patrice-FrancoisMarie Cruice, the immediate successor of Bishop de Mazenod to the see of Marseilles, and the Oblate General Administration. In fact, it can be said that the firm decision to establish such an agency in Rome was made in the context of this conflict.

### Father Tempier's 1861 trip to Rome

In October 1861, Father Tempier made a rapid trip to Rome, one that has left so little trace that it can almost be seen as a secret trip. We know

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*der Oblaten der Unbefleckten Jungfrau Maria*, vol. II.1 (1953), p. 4: "The Founder had already nourished the thought of opening a House in Rome and to establish therein a stable representative to the Holy See" (Author's translation). For the first part of this statement, Father Scharsch offers as source reference *Missions...*, III (1864), pp. 142 and 285. Neither of these references are relevant to his statement, for they refer to a situation in Father Fabre's time.

COSENTINO, Giorgio, O.M.I., *Storia della Provincia d'Italia ossia la Nostra Congregazione in Italia dai suoi inizi al 1950*, Santa Maria a Vico, 1950, p. 30: "The first foundation in Italy was made in Rome and is due to the fact that the Holy See is located in this city. Indeed, it was fitting that in Rome, at the centre of ecclesiastical and religious affairs and near the Chair of Peter, we should not find ourselves in an inferior condition to so many other religious Congregations, and that we should at least have a house in which would reside in a stable manner an official representative of the Congregation to the Holy See. The Founder had thought of this; but he died without having been able to make this a reality" (Author's translation).

nothing about this trip except that it took place in October 1861. We do not know the exact dates of this trip, the duration of his stay in Rome, where he resided there, whom he saw and spoke to while in the city, nor what he discussed with anyone. As Father Beaudoin notes, it was "a swift trip, one so discreet that we know nothing about it except for a few allusions to it in some letters, cf. Fabre to Jeancard, Nov. 9, 1861; Rey II, 8702."

Father Beaudoin does hazard to suggest a possible motive for Father Tempier's quasi-clandestine trip to Rome. On the same page of *ÉCRITS OBLATS*, Father Beaudoin writes: "To achieve his goal, the Bishop (i.e. Cruice), who was well-known in the Government circles in Paris from whence he had come, threatened to obtain the dissolution of the Congregation in France and to demand that Rome withdraw the pontifical approval (it had given to the Oblate Congregation). Is it to prevent this blow that Father Tempier made a mysterious and rapid trip to Rome in the month of October 1861?"

A further purpose in this trip could have been to seek clarification and advice regarding Cardinal Donnet of Bordeaux's claim that the affiliation of the Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux with the Oblates was against canon law.

It should be remembered that Father Tempier had made two previous trips to Rome, either in the Founder's company (1851) or alone (1832). We can reasonably assume that he was familiar with the Founder's contacts in Rome, and it is most likely these contacts that he renewed in 1861. Among these would certainly have been Cardinal Bamabb, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, to whom the Founder himself had frequent recourse. The situation in Marseilles was grave enough to warrant a trip to Rome in order to inform key people there about what was afoot; it was important to do this while Bishop de Mazenod's own reputation in Rome was still fresh and alive.

Even though we have so little knowledge about this trip to Rome, we can reasonably infer that it had its part in promoting the idea that the Oblate Congregation needed its own official agent in Rome to look after its interests at the Holy See.

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<sup>2</sup> *ÉCRITS OBLATS*, II. I, 179, footnote 9. (Author's translation).

<sup>3</sup> *ÉCRITS OBLATS*, II.1, 179. (Author's translation).

## The conflict between Bishop Cruice and the General Administration

Father Tempier's trip to Rome may have been motivated by the conflict that had developed in Marseilles between Bishop Cruice and the Oblate General Administration. This grave situation is the background and a major factor in the process whereby the decision to have a permanent Oblate presence in Rome was eventually taken. Father Vincens trip to Rome in 1862 and that of Father Fabre later in the same year cannot be properly understood except in the light of that conflict. An outline of the highlights of this tragic situation is relevant here<sup>4</sup>.

Bishop Cruice was appointed to the see of Marseilles on June 18, 1861. While still in Paris, he came under the influence of certain clergy and others from Marseilles who had been against Bishop de Mazenod's administration of the diocese and were also adverse to the Oblates who, they felt, had for too long been too powerful in diocesan affairs and, moreover, had unjustly benefited from diocesan funds. Sectors of the civil authority, both in Paris and in the Prefecture of Bouches-du-Rhône, shared this view and urged the Bishop-Elect to ask for a detailed accounting of the Marseilles finances covering the whole of Bishop de Mazenod's

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<sup>4</sup> This tense relationship between certain elements of the diocese of Marseilles and the Oblates, between Bishop Cruice and the Oblate General Administration has been described in greater or lesser detail by the following:

REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Histoire de Monseigneur Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod, Évêque de Marseille, Fondateur de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Marseille, 1928, vol. II, pp. 868-892. Father Rey's account includes substantial quotations from certain sources, is a bit incomplete, and indulges in some moralizing. It lumps together all monetary and property negotiations without too much concern for the chronology of events nor the distinct agreements reached.

ORTOLAN, Théophile, O.M.I., *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, Paris, vol. III, 16-28. This study offers little information and an abundance of moralizing, is incomplete, lumps together various events and ignores chronology.

SCHARSCH, Philippus, O.M.I., op. cit., pp. 6-10. This is an orderly summary, sober in character, and perhaps slightly severe in its assessment of Bishop Cruice.

LEFLON, Jean, *Eugene de Mazenod, Évêque de Marseille, Fondateur des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée 1782-1861*, Paris, 1965, vol. III, pp. 508, 803-804 (English edition: vol. IV, 40-41, 338). This is a detached statement of the salient facts, tersely expressed.

LEVASSEUR, Donat, O.M.I., *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Montréal, 1983, vol. 1, pp. 176-178 (English edition: vol. 1, pp. 188-190). This is a brief, sober outline summary.

BEAUDOIN, Yvon, O.M.I., *Les relations entre M<sup>gr</sup> Cruice et les Oblats en 1861-1862, le renvoi du grand séminaire de Marseille*, in *Etudes Oblates*, 21 (1962), 281-317. This is an excellent study of the climax of the Cruice-Oblate conflict; it is systematic, detailed, well documented, chronological and quite complete.

38-year-long administration of the diocese. Bishop Cruice agreed with such an unusual procedure and persisted in carrying it out.

Ordained in Paris on August 25th, Bishop Cruice entered Marseilles on September 1st. Within the first ten days he changed all but one person in his entire diocesan administration and also made some moves which boded ill for the Oblates at the shrine of Notre-Dame de la Garde and at the Major Seminary. The Oblates, already uneasy before Bishop Cruice's arrival in Marseilles, now became more and more preoccupied about their future in the diocese of Marseilles.

There were also some signs that Bishop Cruice would contest the provisions of Bishop de Mazenod's will<sup>5</sup>. Fathers Tempier and Joseph Fabre had been designated in the will as the heirs and as such, inherited all of Bishop de Mazenod's goods that the will did not explicitly bequeath to others. It was understood that they would make a just and equitable distribution of this "inheritance" once they had effectively received it. Bishop Cruice's contention was that Bishop de Mazenod had willed goods belonging to the diocese to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Besides the question of money, the Founder's reputation and honor as well as that of the Oblates was at stake.

Father Tempier, Vicar General of the Oblate Congregation until the General Chapter could elect a new Superior General, had convoked the Chapter for December 4, 1861, to be held at the Oblate Scholasticate of Montolivet. Amid the growing conflict and tension, he now decided that it would meet in Paris instead.

In November 1861 Bishop Cruice became most aggressive. In Father Beaudoin's words:

Bishop Cruice... strongly influenced by his collaborators, immediately assumed a clear and radical position: he would in practice refuse to recognize his predecessor's will for the latter had bequeathed what did not belong to him but to the diocese and thus excessively benefitted the Oblates. He remained firm in these ideas and throughout his entire administration he refused to carry out the legal formalities for accepting the legacies which were destined for even himself. Moreover, by means of private agreements with the heirs and various legatees, he tried to regain certain goods to the benefit of the episcopal possessions.

The first of these agreements was signed by Bishop Cruice and Father Tempier and Fabre on November 30, 1861. It transferred to the name of Bishop Cruice goods not mentioned in the will that had a net value of at least 615,000 francs.

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<sup>5</sup> The text of Bishop de Mazenod's last will and testament can be found in *Missions...*, XVII (1979), 136-145.

According to the text of this agreement and the explanations given by the notary Gavot in his *Mémoire*, these goods had been orally destined to the successor of Bishop de Mazenod through the agency of his heirs. Since the diocese was not included among the ecclesiastical establishments which in France could legally possess goods, Bishop de Mazenod, who during his lifetime had put diocesan goods under his own name, could only by this means transmit them to his successor whose name and person he could not possibly know beforehand<sup>6</sup>.

In the interests of peace and reconciliation, Father Fabre had been generous in the November 30th agreement. Father Tempier even seemed to take some satisfaction in it. On December 1st, he wrote to Bishop Jeancard:

Finally, all the vexatious questions that you know so well have been settled yesterday by a contract under a private seal that we have signed. My constantly firm attitude has brought about what I wanted, but how unworthy people were, right to the very end<sup>7</sup>!

But, as Father Beaudoin writes:

Father Tempier was mistaken. The real harassment was just beginning... Bishop Cruice... resumed the attack in January (1862). On the 9th, one of his agents came to Montolivet with a new agreement to be signed. It meant giving the Bishop three of the four Oblate properties, adding up to a value of 310,000 francs. Only Montolivet – the General House and Scholasticate – would remain theirs. The two heirs categorically refused to sign such a contract...

The agent insisted and declared that the Bishop wanted their signature that very day, otherwise he would leave for Paris on the morrow and ask the Minister for the immediate closure of all the Oblate houses, a closure, he added, already considered by the Minister during the summer of 1861 but was hindered from being carried out by the persuasion and goodwill of the Bishop himself. Under the force of this threat and to avoid a greater evil, Father Fabre, though certain of his rights, decided to make a compromise. He would make over the three houses provided there was a rebate paid of 110,000 francs. The Bishop accepted this proposal...

This new agreement initiated a period of debate and writings which became violent in the month of April. The Oblates had signed under the effect of moral fear, and so they strove to bring the Bishop to a better attitude. Fathers Fabre and Rey prepared a long brief on the financial administration of Bishop de Mazenod, while their notary prepared a vibrant *mémoire* against the difficulties raised in regard to the deceased Bishop's will and the agreement of January 9th...

...These documents and reports, no matter how much they established the facts, did not disturb Bishop Cruice. He was busy looking for buyers and finally asked for power of attorney for an imminent sale of the three properties, as per the promise of January 9th. Father Fabre did not consider himself bound by a convention extorted

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<sup>6</sup> BEAUDOIN, Yvon, O.M.I., op. cit., *Études Oblates*, 21 (1962), pp. 288-289. (Author's translation).

<sup>7</sup> ÉCRITS OBLATS 11.2, 172. (Author's translation).



under threats and replied, in a dignified but firm manner, that he was ready to sign the promised power of attorney and thus really alienate the Oblates' property, but that he would do this only when the Bishop would himself give a real guarantee for the credit of 110,000 francs, promised in the same private contract and, therefore null in the eyes of the law because it lacked the Minister's prior approval.

On April 9th, the Bishop replied that he had no other guarantee to give except his signature and that (the Oblates) had to accept that or be denounced to Paris. On the same day, the Most Reverend Father (General) brought together the General Council of the Congregation and it was decided that no more concessions would be made, but that one last effort would be put forth to try and moderate the Bishop's position.

Consultations and negotiations multiplied between April 9th to the 28th. The notary Gavot, Father Fabre, Father Vincens in turn saw the Bishop and personnel in the bishopric. They obtained nothing<sup>8</sup>.

On April 28, Father Fabre held a General Council meeting. We read in the minutes of that meeting:

Reverend Father General presented the situation on the matter about which we are in controversy with the diocese: how they persist in refusing to give a real guarantee for the 110,000 francs provided for in the contract that was violently extorted last January 9th. He described how Father Vincens had gone to see Bishop Cruice last Saturday, April 26th, to respond to a summons that his Lordship had sent to the Most Reverend Father General the evening before. In this interview, the account of which will be put into the archives, Bishop Cruice took note of our attitude, treated Father Vincens harshly and again voiced the threat to denounce us to the Minister. The result of this meeting was that the Bishop intended to cede to the City the rights claimed by the Bishopric on the properties that are in question: this proposal was given to Fattier Vincens in writing. It was also said that the defense of the Congregation's interests would be referred to a council of judges. This interview was stormy from the beginning to the end and was abruptly terminated. Now the Most Reverend Father General stated the present position to be as follows: to – The Bishop's attitude is one of supreme dissatisfaction; according to his well-known character, he may allow himself to go to extremes, the consequences of which he is unable to assess; he himself has said that he has already spoken to the Senator. 2o – We have every reason to believe that the Minister has been influenced against the Congregation, and the Senator of Marseilles as well. 3o – We can assume that the guarantee we are asking for is being refused not only out of self-interest: we have strong reasons to believe that the intention of never paying the promised 110,000 francs really exists. 4o – The unanimous advice of the Congregation's members, of our trusted advisors and friends, is that we persist in demanding a real guarantee for the 110,000 agreed upon...

After this presentation and after having heard all opinions and reasons for the same, the Council unanimously adopted the following measures:

to – It seems imprudent that in these circumstances the Most Reverend Father General be absent by going to Rome with two of his Assistants.

<sup>8</sup> BEAUDOIN, Yvon, O.M.I., op. cit., *Études Oblates*, 21 (1962), pp. 290-291, 295-296. (Author's translation).

2o – Since the trip to Rome is a most fitting gesture, Father General will send there one of his Assistants, Father Vincens, and make him bearer of an explanatory letter, one for the Holy Father and another for Cardinal Barnab<sup>6</sup>.

3o – The presence in Marseilles of Reverend Father General and Father Tempier could occasion renewed scenes like that of April 26th; Father General therefore has taken the decision to leave Marseilles together with Father Tempier.

4o – From henceforth, the procedure will be to communicate with the Bishopric in writing and no more through personal envoys.

5o – We will as soon as possible establish a council of judges consisting of our notary Gavot, of Mr. Morandi and of another business man.

6o – Before allowing this council to begin its work, we will respectfully ask the Bishop that he be willing to submit our differences to arbitration, and propose to him the high intervention of the Archbishop of Aix for this purpose.

7o – Within a council of some friends, the Most Reverend Father General will examine whether it would be opportune to request an audience with the Minister in order to convince him that the Congregation is not at all against the Government and, moreover, its direct work is one of the glories of France<sup>9</sup>.

At the end of the same Minutes we read:

Note. For reasons of prudence and to avoid harm, the Most Reverend Father General contented himself to ask for the arbitration of the Archbishop of Aix, and, before withdrawing any of our men from diocesan establishments, his Reverence wanted to wait until our matters have been assessed in Rome: it is very important that we give no grounds which may indicate bad will on our part<sup>10</sup>.

Such were the events and such was the tense atmosphere that preceded, pervaded and influenced everyone involved and everything that was done towards an Oblate residence in Rome. If the less than kind measures taken by the Bishop of Marseilles induced the Oblates to creating new centres of administration and formation elsewhere in France, they also unwittingly contributed to the eventual establishment of the Oblates in Rome.

## **Father Ambroise Vincens trip to Rome, April — June 1861**

Assistant General Father Ambroise Vincens left for Rome on that same day (April 28), carrying with him two letters, one for the Pope and

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<sup>9</sup> Régistre des Conseils Généraux (abbreviated as RCG henceforth), April 28, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>10</sup> RCG, *ibidem*. (Author's translation).

one for Cardinal Barnabô, as well as a whole baggage of concerns and preoccupations. He arrived in the city of the Popes in the afternoon of Wednesday, April 30, 1862<sup>11</sup>. The diary he kept of his stay in the Eternal City, gradually reveals what his instructions were, what he had been sent to do. A permanent residence in Rome was one major item on his agenda; the Cruice-Oblate conflict was, of course, the other.

His first concern upon his arrival in Rome was to find a place to stay. His Diary for April 30th has this entry:

My late afternoon was spent in trying to find myself some lodging. I looked around for two hours but didn't find anything at all. In fact, M<sup>sr</sup>. Joannin<sup>12</sup> had none left. He was expecting Bishops and had Holy Spirit full of (their) nephews, nieces, cousins. And so he introduced me to St. Bridget's, where I went after supper<sup>13</sup>.

This is how the Oblates came to know of the hostel which the Fathers of the Holy Cross du Mans were running at St. Bridget's, an institution that flanks one of the sides of Piazza Farnese in Rome, and Father Vincens is thus the first Oblate to stay there.

The very next day, May 1st, he met with Cardinal Barnabb at the Congregation of Propaganda Fide on Piazza d'Espagna:

I have seen Cardinal Bamabb, an excellent man, who advises us to make peace. He considers recourse to Rome to be dangerous, and he recommends that we do not choose yet another protector<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the General Administration had been considering appealing their controversy with Bishop Cruice to Rome and also enlisting the support of an official Cardinal Protector of the Oblate Congregation. Cardinal Barnabô was against both of these measures. It should be noted in this regard that Bishop Cruice also had supporters in Rome, among them Cardinal Villecourt.

On May 4th, we find an entry in Father Vincens' Diary that is quite revealing. It reads:

Nota Bene.

For *cicerone* I had a theology student from the diocese of Mans, an intelligent young man who may perhaps talk too much but with whom I had a very important

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Vincens Diary, kept in the General Archives in Rome. In the entry for April 28, Father Vincens wrote: "The Reverend Superior General ordered me to keep a diary of my trip and I shall consider this a duty. With God's help, I shall be faithful." (Author's translation).

<sup>12</sup> Prior of the Hospice of Santo Spirito (Holy Spirit), in Rome. This author does not know how Father Vincens knew this Monsignor. It is intriguing that Father Vincens had not gone to him immediately, but had spent some two hours on his own looking for lodging before contacting Ma<sup>sr</sup>. Joannin.

<sup>13</sup> Vincens Diary, April 30, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>14</sup> Vincens Diary, May 1, 1862. (Author's translation).

conversation. The House of St. Bridget consists of only four men: the Superior, who is absent right now, a bursar, and two lay brothers. There are two other lay brothers who work outside of Rome in a kind of orphanage; that is their most important work. Here they are doing absolutely nothing. Their House is a hotel that is badly run. There would be an important work to be done here. First, a French church, because that of St. Louis is no longer fulfilling the purpose for which it was established; then, give decent and religious lodging to old priests and aged missionaries. Cardinal Bamabb very much wants to see a house for the latter purpose established. When they come back, missionaries don't know where to go or what to do. There is no dearth of houses, my interlocutor added. Right now there is a monastery with a fine church which could be leased for one hundred years at two thousand francs per year. And there we could look after the people, preach to the people: how much good we could do there! The Gentlemen of St. Louis are referred to as the French Sirs. What would be needed is that they were referred to as the good French Fathers. Now where is this house for rent! I will get some information and that beginning tomorrow<sup>15</sup>

Father Vincens was certainly intent on verifying the feasibility of an Oblate establishment in Rome, one that would be not just a residence for an Oblate Procurator to the Holy See, but an Oblate house with a ministry in the City. In terms of ministry, two ideas have occurred to him at this point: a house wherein aged priests and missionaries who have returned from the mission countries would have a decent situation – and for this purpose the hostel of St. Bridget, presently simply a poorly run hotel, would be an appropriate locale; and a house and adjoining church, a centre wherein and from which the Oblates could do in Rome what they had been doing at the church of the Mission in Aix since 1816. For this purpose, the church and hostel at St. Bridget's and the place that his *cicerone* had mentioned would be ideal.

A second entry for Sunday, May 4th, reads as follows:

The Superior of the House has returned. He is a serious man of a positive nature, a real business man. I am surprised that the House is on its way to such a decline. (Young people left to themselves, a group of Italians, were also merely being lodged, and went to eat in a restaurant.) A crowd of the Holy Father's zouaves.

N.B. (The Superior told me two things. An unofficial protector, yes; an official one, never: with a Superior General, that is only an enormous embarrassment. A residence, however, is indispensable<sup>16</sup>.)

Here is the first instance where Father Vincens received categorical advice concerning an Oblate business residence in Rome: according to the Superior at St. Bridget's, it was an absolute necessity. An official Cardinal Protector would create as many problems as he was meant to solve; *a de*

<sup>15</sup> Vincens Diary, May 4, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>16</sup> Vincens Diary, May 4, 1862. (Author's translation).

*facto*, unofficial one – such as Cardinal Barnabé in fact was for the Oblates – was always useful.

On Monday, May 5th, Father Vincens visited the Master General of the Dominicans, Father Jeandal, at their monastery of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. He found that any free quarters they might have had were occupied by soldiers who were billeted in their monastery. The Diary entry for that day continues:

In the evening, I visited <sup>Msgr.</sup> Joannin, and the reverend and learned Oratorian Father, and then the rooms in front of St. Philip Neri's which are owned by <sup>Msgr.</sup> Joannin; thereafter to different convents looking for a place to stay 17.

On May 6th, his Diary contains information about that same day as well as material gleaned the day before:

After dinner, visit to <sup>msg.</sup> Joannin to bring him these letters and a petition for an audience so that he could countersign it and I could then present it to Archbishop Pacca. This <sup>Msgr.</sup> Joannin is a good man but not too intelligent, and so slow as to drive one to despair: he wants to do a great deal but actually does little. I find him always like someone who is embarrassed.

I conversed alone with the Superior of St. Bridget's, who offer us a part of the House. I told him we would need to have the church or the rooms of St. Bridget. I place little stock in this offer, however... Besides, there is no foundation that goes with it...18

Visit to the Most Reverend Father Jeandal, Vicar General of the Dominicans. A protector would be an imprudent thing at this time. A house of Fathers resident here is indispensable. You start by lodging them in a room, they land up obtaining a chapel and thus find themselves established. The reverend Father Regis, a Trappist, was here for three years without getting anything; today he has a chapel and is in a good situation.

(I think all the chapels have a foundation that is attached to them).

I went for dinner to <sup>Msgr.</sup> Joannin who gave me an excellent welcome. He accompanied me to Archbishop Pacca who was not at home: his servant told me my request (for an audience) must be made in writing. I am going to do this today. From there we went to Father Reiner who lives at the Vatican Archives. Perfect welcome. Conversed about the state of public affairs. He is filled with esteem for the Bishop of Marseilles. I kept silent and came to understand that this prelate understands nothing of the real situation and thus we will have lots to suffer. Father Reiner does not see himself loved by religious congregations. He offered to be of service to the congregations in all kinds of ways. In passing he complained that the Marseilles people, once they are back home, forget very quickly the services that had been rendered them: they didn't send the slightest gift and didn't even deign to write.

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<sup>17</sup> Vincens Diary, May 5, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>18</sup> Vincens Diary, May 6, 1862. (Author's translation).

When we came away from there we went to the apartments which M<sup>sr.</sup> Joannin has in front of the church of St. Philip Neri. There are five contiguous apartments. I think we could get more from this convent and we would be right beside (the church) to say Mass and even to hear confessions.

I have heard people speaking of an empty building, right near the Coliseum. I went to see it, but it was nothing. It is a church belonging to the maronites that serves as a chapel for the (illegible). There is no house there to live in.

In front of it is a convent and church which is in the care of the Jesuits, but it is too far and too rich <sup>19</sup>

Still on May 6th, Father Vincens entered into his Diary the text of his petition for a papal audience. In it, he mentions that he is sent as the representative of the Superior General and brings with him both a letter and an oral message for the Holy Father.

Father Vincens was therefore keeping himself quite busy, searching for a house where Oblates could live in Rome and also attending to the Congregation's business with the Bishop of Marseilles. His search manifests certain preoccupations: the size of the dwelling, its relationship to a church (where ministry could be done and some income earned), whether the church receives some revenue from a foundation. So far, he does not seem to have found the establishment that his *cicerone* had so glowingly described to him<sup>20</sup>.

If we are to judge from the entries he made in his Diary, Father Vincens after one week in Rome begins to concentrate more and more on the Cruice-Oblate conflict. Interviews multiply, and he spends more time in his room, writing letters, making notes, composing a long *mémoire* of events in Marseilles, and making hand-written copies of his letters and the *mémoire*. It is interesting to note that he found a certain openness in the attitude of Cardinal Villecourt. As he notes on May 7th:

Visit to M<sup>sr.</sup> Joannin in regard to the audience. Visit to His Eminence Cardinal Villecourt who resides in Palazzo Angelotti... At first, a very cold reception since he took me to be a Marianist and for a long space of time he kept complaining about this congregation. Then (he gave me) a frank and open reception. I spoke of Cruice. He asked me for very specific notes which he could use... He kept me for dinner. The

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<sup>19</sup> Vincens Diary, May 6, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>20</sup> In fact, Father Vincens had his doubts about the credibility of this *cicerone* from the beginning. On May 4, he noted the following about him: "My interlocuteur is a Mr. Prochard, the nephew of a priest from Mans of the same name. My memory is badly mistaken if it is not the same man from whom I received a letter that promised wonders and marvels, and which I had judged to be quite extravagant." (Author's translation).

evening before I visited Father Villefort to whom I spoke about our affair with Bishop Cruice. He strongly encouraged me to see Archbishop Villecourt and Lavigerie<sup>21</sup>.

On May 10th, Father Vincens again saw Cardinal Villecourt. He was well received and found out that Bishop Cruice was scheduled to arrive in Rome on May 26th<sup>22</sup>. The next day, the Cardinal's secretary visited him to obtain more precise details about the Marseilles controversy<sup>23</sup>.

On May 12th, Father Vincens again saw Cardinal Barnabé. In his Diary, he noted:

Important visit to His Eminence Bamabô. He would like me to limit myself to asking for the assurance that has been promised. He recommended that I see Bishop Talbot to get the audience, so that His Holiness may be able to say a word to Bishop Cruice<sup>24</sup>.

The next days were all taken up with the Cruice-Oblate affair: one would say that any concern to find a house for the Oblates in Rome had faded from Father Vincens' memory. He was anxiously waiting to be received in audience before the arrival in Rome of Bishop Cruice.

On May 22nd, Father Vincens introduced another Oblate to be lodged at St. Bridget's, namely, Bishop Etienne Semeria, O.M.I., who had just arrived in Rome<sup>25</sup>. All these Bishops were coming to Rome for the imminent canonization of the 26 Japanese martyrs.

His visits to Bishop Talbot had not as yet resulted in obtaining a papal audience, and so, on May 24th, Father Vincens wrote the Bishop the following letter:

Last night, His Eminence Cardinal Bamabô once again directed me to take advantage of your kindness.

Today, the Bishop of Marseilles is arriving (in Rome). He will probably get an audience immediately, whereas I have not as yet been able to see the Holy Father. I am not at all complaining, my Lord, and I am not even insisting that I get this audience now. I am in full admiration and wonder how His Holiness can possibly cope with the crowd of bishops and other persons who besiege his Sacred Palace.

What I am asking for, my Lord, and what His Eminence wanted me to ask of you is that you would be so good as to tell the Holy Father briefly that the holy Bishop of Marseilles is harassing the Oblates in a manner that is very painful and dangerous. Under the pretext of caring for the temporal interests of his diocese, he is despoiling

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<sup>21</sup> Vincens Diary, May 7, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>22</sup> Vincens Diary, May 10, 1862.

<sup>23</sup> Vincens Diary, May 11, 1862.

<sup>24</sup> Vincens Diary, May 12, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>25</sup> Vincens Diary, May 22, 1862.

us, we who need all the resources we have in order to maintain our missions... I hope to be able later to kneel at the feet of His Holiness and explain all these things to him. But while waiting I would like, and so would His Eminence too, that, when seeing the Bishop of Marseilles, His Holiness would think of the Oblates, and ask this Bishop not to torment them, not to expose their work to the danger of being destroyed, to let them be in peace.

This is what I would wish that, in your kindness, you suggest to His Holiness in the manner and moment that occurs to you. My Lord, I ask you this in the name of the missions that you love so ardently<sup>26</sup>.

On the same May 24th, after having tried unsuccessfully three times before, Father Vincens managed to see Bishop Lavigerie about the CruiceOblate conflict<sup>27</sup>.

The entry on June 4th describes his audience with Pope Pius IX.

Today I had the happiness of seeing the Holy Father. I received his blessing. But alas! I did not experience therein the consolation that the other priests did. I was present there as the delegate of the Congregation, as its defender and even more as an accused person.

The Holy Father would have wanted me to throw myself at Bishop Cruice's feet, hand him the account books that he is asking for, and beg him to finish all this business. – I asked the Holy Father to reconsider his own advice and explained to him what dangers I saw therein. – This was perhaps the better thing to do. – If I were on my own,

I would myself have accepted this humiliation, but I did not dare to accept it on behalf of the Congregation. I was wrong to do what I did, perhaps. – If I could really be sure that everything would be finished then and that it only depended on me, I would accept it<sup>28</sup>.

That same evening, Father Vincens had a warm meeting with the Archbishop of Aix. (31) The next day, June 5th, Father Vincens tried twice to see Cardinal Barnabô, but without success. He notes in his Diary:

It is today, at 9.00 o'clock, I think, that the Bishop of Marseilles saw Cardinal Barnabô. He justified himself there by showing (the Cardinal) the documents he had violently extorted (from us). Cardinal Barnabô did not remember the explanations I had given him<sup>29</sup>.

The next day, Father Vincens again tried to see Cardinal Barnabô and did manage to do so in the evening. His Diary has only: "This evening I saw Cardinal Barnabô and he gave me the details that were discussed on Thursday, June 5th<sup>30</sup>."

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<sup>26</sup> Vincens Diary, May 24, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>27</sup> Vincens Diary, May 24, 1862.

<sup>28</sup> Vincens Diary, June 4, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>29</sup> Vincens Diary, June 5, 1862. (Author's translation). <sup>30</sup> Vincens Diary, June 6, 1862. (Author's translation).



On June 7th, another Oblate appeared in Rome, Father Jacques Saby. Father Vincens notes the fact, but says nothing more about it<sup>31</sup>.

June 8th was Pentecost Sunday, the day set for the canonization. Father Vincens was present for this event and commented in his Diary:

The day for the canonization.

We passed the entire morning at the Vatican. To tell the truth, I have to say that I saw the way the interior was lit up, the decorations which were quite something in the majesty of this basilica, but of the ceremony I saw nothing at all. I am amazed that the greatest ceremonies are done in such a way that the people can see nothing of them<sup>32</sup>.

On June 9th, a priest from Marseilles assured Father Vincens that "the greater number of the clergy are coming back to us, and that we would make a mistake were we to cede. The Bishop was alienating the parish priests more and more<sup>33</sup>." The Diary also has the following entry:

This evening, visited the Bishop of Marseilles. Against my expectations, peace has been concluded. Two main conditions: from henceforth, we will be dealing only with his Lordship in person; we will show him confidence and respect; we will let him see the account book for his eyes only.

This peace will be an authentic peace only inasmuch as the Bishop will see fit to look upon us with kindness and loyalty<sup>34</sup>.

The next day, Father Vincens received from many quarters congratulations for this reconciliation. He also went to report to Cardinal Barnabé "who is very glad about this peace" and to whom Father Vincens will state everything in writing for the Cardinal's use<sup>35</sup>.

Father Vincens' stay in Rome ended when he left for Marseilles on Sunday, June 15th<sup>36</sup>.

Father Vincens' Roman visit had begun with two major objectives: to explore the feasibility of an Oblate residence in Rome and to inform the Pope and the Holy See about the Cruice-Oblate conflict and thereby obtain their assessment on the position that the Oblate General Administration had taken on this issue. Father Vincens had spent 6 weeks in Rome. Only

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<sup>31</sup> Vincens Diary, June 7, 1862.

<sup>32</sup> Vincens Diary, June 8, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>33</sup> Vincens Diary, June 9, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>34</sup> Vincens Diary, June 9, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>35</sup> Vincens Diary, June 10, 1862. For a fuller account of this "peace making" in Rome between Bishop Cruice and the Oblates through the intermediary of Father Vincens, cf. BEAUDOIN, Yvon, O.M.I., op. cit., in *Études Oblates*, 21 (1962), pp. 301 ff. As Father Beaudoin notes on p. 302: "It was a matter of a few days' truce only." (Author's translation).

<sup>36</sup> Vincens Diary, June 15, 1862.

the first 8 days or so were primarily dedicated to the question of a possible Oblate house in Rome; the rest of his stay was heavily taken up with interviews, contacts, writing letters and documents that related to the Cruice-Oblate conflict. He unexpectedly achieved what he calls "peace" with Bishop Cruice and it is clear from his Diary that he left Rome with this accomplishment of his mission. It is not clear in the same source, however, what, if anything, he concretely concluded regarding an Oblate house in the Eternal City.

## 1862 General Council deliberations

What Father Vincens upon his return reported about the feasibility of an Oblate establishment in Rome is reflected in the General Council deliberations that took place during 1862. The first time that the General Council discussed this matter was on June 28, 1862. The Minutes of this meeting read on this point:

Finally, the question of an establishment in Rome was treated. Agreement was reached on the following points:

to – It is an absolute necessity that the Congregation have a representative in Rome in the capacity of Procurator of the Superior General.

2o – At this time it is neither possible nor prudent to form a community in Rome, but later on it would be desirable that the Congregation could from there work in (giving) missions in the Roman Campagna.

3o – We must not accept a position wherein we would be more or less dependent on the Fench Government.

4o – It would be a happy achievement if we could at this time find two men who are capable of filling this position, and that we could benefit from a dwelling which is offered to us to rent and which is right near the church of the Oratorians who would gladly allow our Fathers to exercise the sacred ministry in their church, which is a pilgrimage place for the city and where our Fathers would find a means of subsistence in Mass stipends which would be assured to them<sup>37</sup>.

The General Council is therefore determined that there be in Rome at least a Procurator to the Holy See, an official representative of the Superior General and a channel of communications between the General Administration and the Holy See. Setting up and manning such a post in Rome was seen as feasible at that time. This, however, is only meant to be a beginning. The General Administration hoped to establish "later" an Oblate community in Rome: it was conceived as a community of Oblate mission preachers who would "work in giving missions in the Roman

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<sup>37</sup> RCG, June 28, 1862.

Campagna". It is not at all clear on what basis the General Council had concluded that mission-preaching in the Roman Campagna was at that time a needed ministry there.

The General Council, then, committed itself to working in this direction. But it already had some concrete elements to work with too. Negatively, they wanted an establishment in Rome which was not at all dependent upon the French Government: this was important, both because of the Congregation's situation to the Government in France itself and also because at this time the remnants of the Papal States were surviving thanks to the strong presence of French troops on their territory.

Positively, the General Council already had a locale in mind also. It was in the building where M<sup>gr.</sup> Joannin resided, which faced Chiesa Nuova, i.e. "the church of the Oratorians", wherein St. Philip Neri is buried. The General Council is following here what must have been Father Vincens' own conclusion and choice from among all the different possibilities he had investigated in Rome. In fact, he had noted in his Diary on May 5th:

In the evening, I visited M<sup>gr.</sup> Joannin, and the reverend and learned Oratorian Father, and then the rooms in front of St. Philip Neri's which are owned by Msgr.. Joannin...38

and again on May 6th:

...We went to the apartments which M<sup>gr.</sup> Joannin has in front of the church of St. Philip Neri. There are five contiguous apartments. I think we could get more from this convent and we would be right beside (the church) to say Mass and even to hear confessions39.

Oblates who would be residing in these quarters would not have their own church, but could go to Chiesa Nuova, just across the street, to say Mass and also to collaborate with the ministry of the Oratorians there. This would, moreover, be a source of income for the Oblates resident in Rome.

Finally, in accord with the Oblate Rule and practice, the Procurator to be would not be a lone Oblate resident in Rome. Right from the beginning the General Council envisaged sending two Oblates to live and work in the Eternal City. This is remarkable. Even a lone Oblate in Rome would hardly live in solitude and isolation: in fact, he would be more than surrounded by other priests and religious. Perhaps the Administration of Father Fabre

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<sup>38</sup> Vincens Diary, May 5, 1862.

<sup>39</sup> Vincens Diary, May 6, 1862.

was determined not to multiply situations such as existed here and there in North America – situations about which the Founder had frequently complained – where an Oblate lived for long periods all alone, physically cut off from his fellow Oblates.

On August 8, 1862, the General Council again considered this question. The Minutes on this item read:

The Council next considered a project for an establishment in Rome. Bishop Guibert has negotiated the matter with Bishop Lavigerie for the Congregation. A chapel and a house belonging to the Government have been allocated to us for a rental fee of 1200 francs a year, with the possibility of being relieved of this rent later. Since having a residence in Rome is recognized as an absolute necessity; and moreover, in the present circumstances it would perhaps be prudent not to appear as being opposed to the Government, at least in some way; and then, since this project is advised by the Bishop of Tours, the Council is duty bound to take into consideration these offers and to accept the proposals of Bishop Lavigerie<sup>40</sup>

The General Council's determination to establish an Oblate residence in Rome remains firm. It is a different locale that it is now considering. The location of this "chapel and a house belonging to the (French) Government" in Rome is not clear.

What probably made the General Council change its mind and opt for this locale is the combination of three things: it would be an autonomous Oblate establishment, run in an Oblate way, and not simply a collaboration with the Oratorians; it included both a house and a chapel; it was negotiated and recommended by Bishop Guibert, whose proven ability and reputation was always held in high esteem in the councils of the Congregation. With such a combination of reasons in favour, the General Council changed its mind concerning dependence on the French Government. It stated a reason for this change of mind, one that is really nothing more than thin rationalization. What most likely induced the General Council to run this Government risk is the fact that this new locale was worked out by Bishops Guibert and Lavigerie, both accomplished Churchmen with lots of experience in reading and coping with the ever-changing winds of Governments.

On September 24, 1862, this matter again came up in the General Council, this time in relation to Father Fabre's coming trip to Rome. The Minutes on this item read:

Whether the Most Reverend Father's trip to Rome was opportune was studied. Its opportuneness was acknowledged. It was decided that Father General would be

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ao RCG, August 8, 1862.

accompanied by Father Vincens and by his secretary. It is during this trip that the matter of an establishment for the Congregation would be dealt with: such an establishment has been promised by Bishop Lavigerie<sup>41</sup>.

Thus, the Lavigerie-Guibert arrangement was still the one that the General Council retained. Definitively settling this entire question would be one item on the agenda of the Superior General's trip to Rome.

## Father Fabre's trip to Rome, December 1862<sup>42</sup>

Father Joseph Fabre was elected Superior General in Paris, on December 5, 1861. On December 10, 1861, he sent out his first circular letter to the Congregation<sup>43</sup>. This was followed by his second on March

21, 1862<sup>44</sup>. In this second circular, we find the following passage:

To this testimony which is so great a consolation to our faith, another has been added the value of which we cannot but acknowledge. During the life-time of our beloved Father, our dear family several times received from the Representative of Jesus Christ on earth, the Successor of St. Peter, the clearest manifestations of a truly paternal affection. In this circumstance, the glorious Pontiff who occupies the august See of the Prince of Pastors, has deigned, even in the midst of his sufferings, to remember us and to bless from his heart the one who was elected, those who had come together to elect him, and finally the entire Congregation<sup>45</sup>.

This passage is quoted here because it voices a reality that also had its share of influence in the process that led to an Oblate establishment in Rome. This will become even more clear in texts that will be quoted below.

<sup>41</sup> RCG, September 24, 1862.

<sup>42</sup> Details about this trip to Rome, made by Fathers Joseph Fabre, Ambroise Vincens and Achille Rey, can be found in:

The Diary Father VINCENS kept for this trip i.e. his entries, often very terse, from December 12 to December 28, 1862.

Father Achille REY, O.M.I., was secretary to Father Fabre and accompanied him when he began to visit the Congregation in France. The trip to Rome is like an insert into this first visitation tour. Father Rey's account of this entire tour has been published as *Notes de Voyage*, In *Missions...*, II (1863), 143-144, 261-288, 564-590. For the trip to Rome specifically, cf. pp. 268-288, 564-585.

Several texts of the Superior General, Father Joseph FABRE, O.M.I., about this trip are published. He mentions it in *Circular letter* no. 11, of March 21, 1863. There is especially his February 17, 1863 letter to all the members of the Congregation, in *Missions...*, II (1863), pp. 7-12.

<sup>43</sup> *Circulaires administratives*, no. 10.

<sup>44</sup> *Circulaires administratives*, no. 11.

<sup>45</sup> *Circ. admin.*, vol. 1. Cf. *Circ.* no. 11, p. 2.

This reality is a deep, faith-filled, filial loyalty, obedience and affection to the Vicar of Christ, the Successor of St. Peter. This was a quality inherited from the Founder and it was very strong in the Oblates of the Father Fabre generation. Having an Oblate house in Rome was not only a matter of business convenience and effective communications; it was also, for a Congregation that profoundly believed in the gift the Lord had left to his Church when he built it on the Rock, a matter of being close to the See of Peter, of being near to Peter's Successor, to the visible head of the Church on earth. No true son of Bl. Eugene de Mazenod could have felt otherwise.

On April 3, 1862, Father Fabre wrote a letter to all the Oblates, whereby he founded the *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*<sup>46</sup>.

The General Council held on April 28, 1862, mentions one of Father Fabre's major concerns: as the new Superior General, he feels deeply obligated to go and present himself to the Holy Father in Rome and express his and the Congregation's filial affection, loyalty and obedience. Because of the problems with Bishop Cruice of Marseilles, however, this must be postponed. As the Minutes of this meeting put it:

It seems imprudent that in these circumstances the Most Reverend Father General be absent by going to Rome with two of his Assistants. Since the trip to Rome is a most fitting gesture (*de toute convenance* i.e. most fitting and entirely proper). Father General will send there one of his Assistants, Father Vincens, and make him the bearer of an explanatory letter... for the Holy Father...<sup>47</sup>

Father Fabre himself, in a letter that he wrote to all the Oblates on February 17, 1863, i.e. after he had returned from his visit to Rome in December 1862, described his original attitude on this point:

I want to tell you for my part the joys and consolations that I have experienced in the visits I have made of our different houses, and especially in the trip to Rome that I made last December. I would have been pleased to begin exercising the responsibilities that the Lord has entrusted to me by making this trip. Under the weight of the enormous burden that was laid upon me, I felt the need to go and receive strength from him who holds on earth the place of Jesus Christ. I was anxious to have the authority invested in myself blessed and to tell the supreme Pastor your sentiments and my own in regard to his sacred person. That was the ardent wish of my heart. Several times I thought it was about to be accomplished. Circumstances that you know well enough have for several months deprived me of this consolation and this grace".

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<sup>46</sup> *Missions...*, I (1862), 1-5.

<sup>47</sup> RCG, April 28, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>48</sup> FABRE, Joseph, O.M.I., *Lettre du Supérieur Général à tous les membres de la Congrégation*, February 17, 1863, in *Missions...*, 11 (1863), p. 7. (Author's translation).

On April 29, 1862, Father Fabre published Circular letter no. 12, which deals with the coming first anniversary of the Founder's death<sup>49</sup>.

On account of the very bad turn the Cruice-Oblate conflict had taken, he established himself and the General House in Paris from May 1, 1862 onwards. It is in Paris that the General Councils of June 28, August 8, and September 24, already quoted above, were held.

It was the Cruice-Oblate conflict which had also held up Father Fabre's plan to visit systematically all the Oblate houses in France. But he

was able to begin on September 17 when he went to Autun, to Notre-Dame de l'Osier, to Nancy, to Notre-Dame de Cléry, and then to Limoges. He was back in Paris on December 4th, in time for the celebration of the first anniversary of his election the next day. During these celebrations, he spoke of his imminent trip to Rome:

In a few days I shall be receiving, at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, at the feet of the Vicar of Christ, a most special blessing that I have so much desired. It will radiate onto the entire Congregation and will strengthen within it all that is good, our zeal, devotedness and charity; it will complete the blessing of our well-beloved Father, who was in our midst and who from Heaven will always protect his family<sup>50</sup>

Father Rey in his *Notes de voyage*, introduces the Superior General's trip to Rome as follows:

Since the very day of his election, the Superior General had planned to go to Rome and in person offer his homage to the Vicar of Jesus Christ and to ask on behalf of the whole Congregation for the blessings of which Pius IX is the sovereign distributor. Unforeseen events, the solving of several important issues had always delayed the undertaking of this trip which a quantity of motives made so desirable. Now the favorable moment to carry it out seemed to have come. All things were thus made ready for the imminent departure. Reverend Father Vincens, Assistant General, and Reverend Father Rey, attached to the personal service of the Superior General, were to accompany the head of the family and see to all his needs.

On December 12th, the little caravan left Paris and in the evening of December 15th, sailed from Marseilles on a boat of the Imperial Message-carriers named *Le Vatican*. This name was a good omen<sup>51</sup>.

The Superior and Father Rey became sea-sick on the way and Father Vincens had to see to their needs<sup>52</sup>. After landing at Civitavecchia, they went by train to Rome, crossing that part of the Roman Campagna. Father Rey describes this area:

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<sup>49</sup> *Circ. admin.*, vol. I, Circ. no. 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Anniversaire du 5 décembre* in *Missions...*, II (1863), 142. (Author's translation).

<sup>51</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Notes de voyage*, in *Missions...*, II (1863), 268. (Author's translation).

<sup>52</sup> REV, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 271.

Everywhere one sees only marshland and uncultivated terrain: this is a part of the famous Roman Campagna that is so rich in historical memory but is condemned to be an immense solitude. Malaria reigns supreme here. Now and then one sees a hovel, some flocks. The men who herd them bear on their faces the marks of the fever and the deprivations this unhealthy region imposes upon them<sup>53</sup>.

This description of the Roman Campagna at the time — the drainage system installed under Mussolini has completely changed this area — is quite accurate. One wonders what the General Council had in mind when, in its June 28, 1862 meeting it was thinking of a future Oblate community in Rome giving missions in the Roman Campagna!

They arrived in Rome late in the afternoon of December 17th. As Father Rey writes:

Darkness was rapidly advancing and night had fallen when we arrived at the railway station in Rome. A carriage took us immediately to the French Seminary where we hoped to find lodging. But all the rooms were taken there. So we were forced to stay at the large Minerva Hotel...

The next day we celebrated our first Mass in Rome in the beautiful and vast church of the Dominicans...

We took a modest breakfast in the Roman fashion. Then, under the direction of Father Vincens, we left for St. Peter's. That is the first visit that the Superior General wanted to make...

When we came out, we promised each other that we would come every day to this superb basilica. We were faithful to this promise.

Now we did have to concern ourselves about finding a place to stay and to take measures to get an audience with the Sovereign Pontiff.

The Superior General decided to go to Reverend Father Drouelle, Superior of the House of Sainte-Croix du Mans (Holy Cross of Mans). As much as possible, we wanted to have the benefits of religious life. We were well received at St. Bridget's.

After dinner, we installed ourselves there<sup>54</sup>.

Thus we see how they had originally hoped to stay at the French Seminary (on the Via Santa Chiara, an institution the Pope had approved in 1859). As it was filled up, they stayed at the nearby Minerva Hotel overnight, and, the next day, they went to St. Bridget's where Father Vincens had stayed for six weeks earlier in the year. One wonders why they did not go there right away, if it was "the benefits of the religious life" that they wanted as much as possible. Whatever the reason, St.

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<sup>53</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 271-272. (Author's translation).

<sup>54</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 272, 274. (Author's translation)



Bridget's has the distinction of housing the first Oblate Superior General in Rome after the visits made to the City by the Founder.

It is also significant that the Superior General wanted to begin his Roman stay by visiting St. Peter's first; and that they made it a point to pay a daily visit to this basilica during the whole time of their stay in Rome.

Father Rey also describes where they said their daily Mass, often as early as 5.00 a.m.:

The second day began by the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice in the room that the famous Swedish widow, St. Bridget, lived in for fifteen years. It is an oratory decorated with paintings, of great simplicity. Three rooms made up the Saint's apartments: they are all connected and have been dedicated to the memory of her who made them sacred. On October 8th, they are open to the Faithful, who come eagerly and with great piety. Below is the public chapel, the door of which opens to the Piazza Farnese...<sup>55</sup>

They had put in their request for a papal audience with Archbishop Pacca, the Pope's Master Chamberlain, on December 18th<sup>56</sup>. The next day, they paid a first visit to Cardinal Barnabô at the Congregation of Propaganda Fide<sup>57</sup>. On December 20th, they tried to visit Bishop Lavigerie, Auditor of the Rota for France, and Bishop Nardi, Auditor of the Rota for Austria, but neither was at home<sup>58</sup>. They also visited Msgr.

Joannin, tried to see the papal chamberlain, Arch. Talbot, and were graciously received by Cardinal Villecourt<sup>59</sup>. On Sunday, December 21st, three items are worthy of note:

On December 21st, after Mass was celebrated like yesterday, the Superior General received the letter from Archbishop Pacca telling him about the audience that the Sovereign Pontiff was pleased to grant to the Superior General of the Oblates and the two religious who are accompanying him. It is for tomorrow, Monday, at half past twelve<sup>60</sup>

We wanted to assist at the papal Mass to be celebrated in the Sistine Chapel. We arrived in good time and we took our place among quite a large crowd of foreigners. But we were disappointed in our hopes. The Pope was ill and did not appear, so the Mass was one celebrated by a Cardinal<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 274-275. (Author's translation).

<sup>56</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 274.

<sup>57</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 275, 279.

<sup>58</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 279.

<sup>59</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 282.

<sup>60</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 282. (Author's translation).

<sup>61</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 283. (Author's translation). We meet here the same phenomenon that often occurs in Rome: many go to papal liturgies primarily to see the Pope.

Once we were back in the house, we received benediction of the Blessed Sacrament given by Reverend Father Vincens in the chapel of St. Bridget<sup>62</sup>.

Father Rey is quite profuse in his description of the audience with Pope Pius IX on Monday, December 22nd. Since this is the first time that an Oblate Superior General other than the Founder was received in papal audience, it is worth reading most of Father Rey's detailed description:

We had now come to the solemn moment that was the purpose, the main goal of our coming to Rome. It is December 22nd and we are to be admitted into the presence of the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, Pius IX. All our desires were thus going to be satisfied!

Holy Mass was celebrated at the same time and in the same place as on the preceding days. The whole morning was spent in getting ready, in composing our petitions, in processing the medals, rosaries and other devotional items that we wanted to get blessed.

At eleven o'clock we ate our meal and half an hour later we were on our way to the Vatican. We were bringing with us a summary overview of the works that our Congregation is engaged in, an overview that the Superior General would like to present to Pius IX.

Intense emotion gripped our hearts as we entered the huge palace. We passed through different anterooms. Already in the second one we had to hand our religious articles to two servants wearing splendid livery who hastened to carry them to the Sovereign Pontiff. They came back in short order: all had been blessed and indulgenced.

Other anterooms followed, all of them occupied by the noble guards, officers, chamberlains. We noted the uniforms of the noble guard: they remind one of that worn by French lords during the reign of Henry IV.

We finally arrived in the room where we had to wait the time for our audience. Half an hour passed. During this time, <sup>Msgr.</sup> Lacroix, a papal chamberlain and a French national, was kind enough to approach the Superior General and to show us the private chapel of Pius IX. We adored the Blessed Sacrament there and then admired the noble simplicity that characterized the decoration of the altar, the furniture of the sacristy and the vestments used by the Vicar of Jesus Christ. <sup>Msgr.</sup> Lacroix pointed out the breviary that the Pope uses: it was given only a few months ago by an American Bishop, who received the one that the Pope had been using for a number of years.

When we prayed in this chapel where Pius IX prays daily, what else could we pray for except to ask God that we love Him as his Vicar loves Him, and that He keep for a long time to come the holiest of Pontiffs and best of Fathers for the world's admiration.

When we left the chapel, we were introduced into the anteroom that is immediately before the Pope's study. Our hearts were beating hard...our emotions were more and more tense...we felt ourselves near the presence of him who can in all truth be referred to as "the one desired by the nations".

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<sup>62</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 283. (Author's translation).

Finally, we heard a small bell rung; that signal indicates that the audience of the one before us was ending. It happened to be the French consul to Madras. He had been able to present his Mulato slave to the Pope and was going away happy to possess the pen which Pius IX had used to sign the petition he had laid before him.

After this personage had gone out, the Holy Father remained a few moments with Arch. Pacca, the Master Chamberlain, whom we had asked to convey our homage.

Now we were asked to go in. Arch. Pacca led the Superior General and we came in behind them. Three genuflections had been our instructions. We thus arrived before the Pope who gave his hand to us. After we had kissed it lovingly, we were looking for his foot but could not find it: our emotion, the diminished daylight, the Pope's position impeded this fulfilling of this duty of respect and filial obedience. The Holy Father recognized Father Vincens. He invited the Superior General to take his place facing him: we were put on either side.

Our gaze never strayed from this winning physionomy which bears the mark of greatness, majesty, goodness and subtlety which no art will ever reproduce. Goodness and kindness are evident in everything...he is definitely the Vicar of the Lamb who takes away the world's sins.

In a few deeply moving words, the Superior General presented to the Sovereign Pontiff the homage of the entire Congregation..., begging him to bless its head and all its members. The Holy Father deigned to accept this homage and expressed his satisfaction in seeing the Superior General; and he granted his fatherly blessings to the entire family of the Oblates.

In receiving the summary of the Congregation's works, the Holy Father said that he probably would not be able to go through it himself, but that he will have it studied.

To the petition which asked for the Apostolic Blessing for the whole Congregation and for all persons entrusted to it in France and elsewhere, the Pope kindly added some words which have already been communicated<sup>63</sup>. He took out certain parts of the second petition and replaced it in his own handwriting with a richer favor, that of a plenary indulgence we can gain each year on a day of our own choice.

The Superior General then spoke of our plan to get established in Rome. The Sovereign Pontiff strongly approved of this: he did say that he had no church to entrust to us, but that he did want us very much to establish at least a Procurator's office.

The Supreme Pontiff then asked several questions about the state of the Congregation. the Superior General's replies seemed to satisfy him and, speaking with singular goodness, he asked us to continue courageously the work of converting souls. "With twelve Apostles," he said, "our divine Saviour converted an idolatrous world. May you continue to carry out their mission!"

After he had repeated his blessings and encouragements, he permitted us again to approach his sacred person. He did not want the Superior General to kiss his feet. He allowed us to kiss his hand several times. Father Rey, giving up hope of finding the

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<sup>63</sup> Father Fabre's letter to all the Oblates of February 17, 1863, published before this account of Father Rey, communicated these details. Cf. *Missions...*, II (1863), 10.

Pope's foot, asked him where it was. *Eccolo! le voilà!* the Vicar of Jesus Christ replied with ineffable goodness.

We withdrew under the strain of the most vivid and most consoling emotion.

How short the time had been that we had spent with Pius IX! How good it is to be in the atmosphere that surrounds him, in that room where he receives the homage of the whole world! How moving the Pope's face is when goodness lights it up with tenderness, when it reflects the fatherhood which he possesses in its fullness! One would gladly remain at his feet to hear his sympathetic voice, to receive his advice and encouragement, to live in the radiance of his gaze and heart!

When we came out, we thanked Arch. Pacca and M<sup>gr</sup>. Lacroix, and, after having taken our religious articles, we returned to St. Bridget. We needed to rest, to recollect ourselves, to communicate our impressions to each other. The audience had lasted close to half an hour. The heart has emotions which, in their brief duration, shake up human nature more than the hardest labor. What could we have gone to see after we had left Pius IX?

After we had given some solace to our over-flowing spirit, we decided to go and visit the basilica of St. Paul outside the walls...<sup>64</sup>

In his letter of February 17, 1863, addressed to all the Oblates,  
Father

Fabre also describes this papal audience<sup>65</sup>. It agrees in substance with Father Rey's description, but is less detailed. There are, however, some details Father Fabre mentions that are missing from Father Rey's narrative.

ve. Father Fabre mentions that it was 1.00 p.m. when they were admitted into the Pope's presence, and that they stood in his presence during the audience. Specifically about an Oblate house in Rome, Father Fabre wrote:

We asked him to be pleased to permit that our Congregation have close to the Holy See one Father who would represent it and who would also be a permanent witness to our inviolable fidelity and to our ardent desire to live the life of which Rome is the principle and the centre. Our request was whole-heartedly accepted<sup>66</sup>.

There is an item which to some degree conflicts with Father Rey's account. Father Fabre writes: "Oh! how good it was to be at the feet of Pius IX!... We kissed them with love...<sup>67</sup>"

After this audience, there is a whole round of visits that is undertaken: to M<sup>gr</sup>. Joannin, to Cardinal Barnabà, to Bishop Lavigerie, to

<sup>64</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 283-287. (Author's translation).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Missions...*, 11 (1863), pp. 5-13 for the full text of this letter; the portion dealing with this audience is pp. 9-11.

<sup>66</sup> FABRE, Joseph, op. cit., *Ibidem.*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> FABRE, Joseph, op. cit., *Ibidem.*, 11.

Bishop Nardi (twice). Among the many places visited was the Mamertine Prison and Father Rey mentions that Bishop Charles Forbin-Janson, the Founder's personal friend, had embellished it<sup>68</sup>.

On December 24th, Father Rey notes:

We have seen Bishop Nardi. This illustrious Prelate was kind enough to receive us, in spite of his urgent commitments. He was in accord with the decision taken by the Superior General on our Procurator's office in Rome. He renewed all his promises of good will and protection<sup>69</sup>.

Just what this decision was, is not stated. Another item on this point is noted by Father Rey for December 26th:

Our imminent departure, set for Sunday, brought on the problems and measures that every departure entails. Father Rey therefore had a number of commissions to carry out. The main was to entrust into safe hands the petition that the Superior General had addressed to the Pope in view of obtaining a decree approving our establishment in Rome<sup>70</sup>.

Presumably, these "safe hands" were those of Bishop Nardi.

On Christmas Day, the Superior General and Father Rey went to St. Peter's to assist at the solemn Mass.

A large number of foreigners were already there. We recognized several Americans who had been our travelling companions. Their attitude was not the most restrained... The Dean of the Sacred College sang the Mass from the Papal Altar... We left before the end of the Mass which offered us nothing extraordinary. The Pope was not present, and one feels that his presence alone can fill the immensity of this temple and be in harmony with its magnificence<sup>71</sup>.

On December 27th, their last day in Rome, Father Rey said Mass on the altar nearest to St. Peter's tomb; the Superior General and Father Vincens also spent two hours of prayer in St. Peter's<sup>72</sup>. They made a farewell visit to Bishops Lavigerie (from whom they learned of the serious illness of the Archbishop of Paris) and Nardi (from whom they learned that the Pope was ill no longer) and Cardinal Barnab<sup>73</sup>.

Early on Sunday morning, December 28th, the three Oblates left Rome for Civitavecchia – their transportation to Rome's railway station had slept in and Father Fabre woke them up just in time! – and on to Marseilles where they arrived on December 30th. On January 1, 1863,

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<sup>68</sup> REV, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 573.

<sup>69</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 570. (Author's translation).

<sup>70</sup> REV, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 575. (Author's translation).

<sup>71</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 571-572. (Author's translation).

<sup>72</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 580-581.

<sup>73</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 583.

they took the train for Paris, where they arrived on January 2nd<sup>74</sup>. On the eve of leaving Rome, Father Rey wrote:

Rome is truly the capital of the world. It is permeated with the holiness of which Catholicism is the purest source. All religious families have a house there. All human miseries find shelter and solace there. Truth, beauty, justice have established their residence there. The Roman Church will always be their unshakable support. *Happy the Oblates of Mary who will finish their course of studies there. They will be taught not only from the height of the cathedral of the Sapienza or the Roman College; we can say that everything will speak to them and that the lifeless stones themselves will speak with eloquence.* The voices of Rome are many. They resound from two distinct worlds that are diametrically opposed; they come together, however, and result in an admirable concert. a divine harmony in the praise of Him who was, who is and who will be: *Jesus Christus hen et hodie, ipse et in saecula.* Nowhere does this truth shine forth so brightly as in the Eteranal City: properly understood and put into practice, it is the finest crown for man's intelligence and heart<sup>75</sup>.

It is truly amazing how thoroughly these three Oblates visited Rome during the ten days that they were there. Besides doing their business, making and receiving visits, they managed to visit just about all that was worthwhile seeing at that time. Their visit was essentially that of Christian pilgrims, never that of mere tourists. Father Rey kept an accurate account of where they went and what they saw and the impressions they received. His narrative adds up to a veritable Christian guide to the City. Their appreciation of what they saw is expressed in the language of their day, their sense of historical criticism less acute than ours, but their Christian sense was genuine.

St. Peter's was definitely their favourite place, even before they had seen it. It is interesting that their presence in the Sistine chapel provoked no comment whatsoever.

Another element is their encounter with memories left by Bishop de Mazenod in Rome. This encounter had a double aspect, one living and another one could call "monumental".

Their living encounter with the Founder in Rome consisted of meeting people in the City who remembered him or knew of his efforts and achievements. Father Rey noted:

...The Superior General and father Vincens visited His Eminence Cardinal Bamab<sup>6</sup> and Bishop Lavigerie, auditor of the Rota for France. They returned around seven o'clock delighted with the welcome they received from these high personages and the conversations they had with them. His Eminence was most confiding and

<sup>74</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 584, 586.

<sup>75</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 584. (Author's translation).

completely open. He spoke of our beloved Founder in terms that were deeply felt, and he gave new assurance of the attitude that the Sovereign Pontiff has always nourished in this (the Founder's) regard.

It is with felt satisfaction that our filial hearts received these words, and others equally consoling that we heard spoken by distinguished Prelates. They show us that a good number of persons appreciate our venerated Founder according to his full merit...<sup>76</sup>

The "monumental" encounter consists of discovering traces of the Founder in the churches and other buildings in Rome. The only such encounter is mentioned by Rey as follows:

...Rome has given him the consecration of immortality. That is a halo of glory that shall never be taken from him. On the walls of St. Peter's, on the walls of St. Paul's we have seen his name engraved on tables of white marble, and we experienced a real feeling of filial pride when we recalled the two great pages of history that these tables narrate: the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the dedication of the basilica of the Doctor of the Gentiles. Our Congregation was there, represented by its Head and Founder, the one and only person in that illustrious assembly who to the glories of the Priesthood and the Pontificate added that of being the Father of a religious family that has been thrice blessed and thrice approved by the Church<sup>77</sup>.

What is amazing, however, is that this seems to be the only "monumental" encounter that these three Oblates, who had known Blessed Eugene de Mazenod so well, made of him here in the City. Father Rey said Mass at the altar nearest Peter's tomb, an altar where the Founder several times said Mass, but there is no indication that Father Rey thought of this. There is the church of St. Sylvester at the Quirinal where the Founder was ordained bishop, the church of Santa Maria in Campitelli where he heard nine Masses in a row while waiting for the Commission of Cardinals to finish their meeting on the Rules: however, nothing in Father Rey's account indicates that they thought of these places or went to visit them. There are so many churches they did visit v.g. Chiesa Nuova, the Gesu, St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran, Sts. John and Paul, and others, where the Founder had said Mass, prayed and visited, and yet Father Rey gives not the slightest hint that in any of them they remembered Blessed Eugene de Mazenod having been there. Judging from Father Rey's account – and from the Vincens Diary entries for his trip to Rome earlier in 1862 – we cannot say that the new Superior General, Assistant General and his personal secretary (who would soon become the Founder's major biographer) were in any way visiting Rome in the footsteps of the Founder's own stay in that City.

<sup>76</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 566. (Author's translation).

<sup>77</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 566-567. (Author's translation).

The question of the Oblate establishment in Rome occurs a number of times in the account of this visit. In his audience with Pope Pius IX, Father Fabre received verbal approval and strong encouragement to establish at least an Oblate Procurator's office in Rome. In communicating this news to the Congregation, Father Fabre explained that the sense of this office would be to "have close to the Holy See one Father who would represent (the Congregation) and who also be a permanent witness to (the Oblates') inviolable fidelity and ardent desire to live the life of which Rome is the principle and centre." The Superior General drew up the written petition, addressed to the Pope, to open such an office and Bishop Nardi was engaged to see the petition delivered and that it be given effect. From Father Rey we also learn that linked to this office was a plan to have some Oblates reside with the Procurator and finish their ecclesiastical studies by taking courses at the Sapienza or the Roman College.

From Father Philippot we further learn that, "before leaving Rome, the Most Reverend Father Fabre provisionally rented some apartments at St. Bridget's, where the Reverend Father Procurator would reside while waiting to find a house<sup>78</sup>." This statement is confirmed by what follows below.

### An Oblate Procurator's office is established in Rome

On January 2, 1863, the same day that the Superior General had returned to Paris<sup>79</sup>, he held a General Council meeting. The Minutes, in what regards our topic here, read as follows:

Our Most Reverend Father, just returned from his trip to Rome, has immediately called together his Council in order to communicate to it the Holy Father's blessings.

The Most Reverend Father first stated how happy he was with the welcome he had received in Rome: the Holy Father had been most paternal; the Cardinals and Prelates manifested a real esteem for our Congregation; at Propaganda Fide in particular our missions inspire the greatest confidence...

The Most Reverend Father General also explained the situation concerning our establishment in Rome. It is beyond question that the Congregation should have its own procurator's office there, were it only for the reason of not being an exception (in regard to other religious institutes); furthermore, the Holy Father wishes it. The position there is difficult: several opinions entertain diverse currents of views and each is

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<sup>78</sup> PHILIPPOT, Aristide, O.M.I., *Conférence historique sur la Maison de Rome (1825-1931)*, in *Missions...*, 66 (1932), 681. (Author's translation).

<sup>79</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem.*, 586.



trying to recruit adherents. Making ourselves dependent on the Government is something that is not much to the Pope's liking and for this reason it is not possible to pursue the negotiations begun by the Bishop of Tours. On the other hand, it is difficult to get a Roman church. In this state of affairs, the Most Reverend Father limited himself to renting some rooms without a church and (thus), towards the month of March two Fathers will be able to go and live in Rome. (Now) it is a matter of finding a man who is prudent, wise, and skilled to serve the Congregation usefully<sup>80</sup>.

Because of the political situation in the Papal States, the Pope was not at all eager to have another establishment in Rome that was in some way dependent upon the French Government. He had manifested his attitude to the Superior General — presumably during the audience — and that sufficed to determine him and his Council to abandon the scheme that Bishop Guibert had already negotiated with Bishop Lavigerie. The Minutes mention the renting of rooms, but do not say that it was at St. Bridget's. We also learn that the plan is to have two Oblate Fathers leave for Rome in March 1863.

The official rescript from the Holy See authorizing the Superior General to establish a Procurator's office in Rome is dated February 20, 1863<sup>81</sup>. As soon as he had it in his possession, Father Fabre called a General Council meeting, in the Minutes of which we read:

In regard to the Procurator of the Congregation who is to be sent to Rome, the Council has firmly chosen Reverend Father Tamburini, who will begin by making the trip all alone and wait for his companions when he has found a place to stay<sup>82</sup>.

This appointment of Father Luigi Tamburini would seem to be a "pro forma" regularizing in Council of an appointment that was in fact made a little earlier. In fact, Father Rey writes that on February 20, 1863, "the House of Paris received... the Reverend Father Tamburini... Reverend Father Tamburini is leaving Corsica; he has come to Paris in order to receive the instructions he needs to fulfill the post of Procurator in Rome<sup>83</sup>."

Father Tamburini, therefore, was to leave alone. His Oblate companions would join him only as soon as "he has found a place to stay". This appears odd, in view of the fact that the Superior General had rented rooms at St. Bridget's for this purpose. Perhaps it was felt that the facilities rented there were just sufficient to house the Procurator and his office.

<sup>80</sup> RCG, January 2, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>81</sup> PHILIPPOT, Aristide, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, 681.

<sup>82</sup> RCG, March 6, 1862. (Author's translation).

<sup>83</sup> REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Notes de voyage*, in *Missions...*, III (1863), 142. (Author's translation).

The General Council meeting of March 11, 1863, made everything official and definite:

The Most Reverend Father General communicated the official establishment of a Procurator's Office for the Congregation in Rome. Consequently, the Reverend Father Tamburini will set out immediately<sup>84</sup>."

Father Tamburini arrived in Rome on March 19, 1863 and Brother François Gandolfi arrived a few days later. The first student Fathers would arrive in time for the next academic year in autumn. All were staying at St. Bridget's<sup>85</sup>.

Thus the first Oblate "house" in Rome was now a fact. It housed the General Procurator to the Holy See, an Oblate Brother, and some student Fathers.

Aloysius KEDL, O.M.I.

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<sup>84</sup> RCG, March 11, 1863. (Author's translation).

<sup>85</sup> PHILIPPOT, Aristide, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, 681, 682.

# Communautés ecclésiales de base et sécularisation

SUMMARY – After a short history of the secularization in Uruguay, the author gives us a portrait of a secularized person. Then he studies the relations between freemasonry and secularization as those between the Gospel and secularization. The answer to the problem of secularization is the creation of basic ecclesial communities which are a product of the theology of Vatican II. Their characteristics are: a Church-communion, conversing with the world, less secularized, directly in the service of the human person, a leaven of the Kingdom, living of the Gospel, formed of little groups working where the destiny of humanity is decided, that is the poors' milieu. Lastly, the author gives a few details on the secularized city and the city-communion. Although the topic treated in this article is not strictly Oblate, many of the author's confreres, who have to work in secularized fields, can benefit from it.

## Un exemple de sécularisation: l'Uruguay

Pour trouver un pays ayant plus de 80 ans de sécularisation, il faut aller en Amérique latine. Entre la grande Argentine et l'immense Brésil, il y a le petit Uruguay. Quasiment trois millions d'habitants, un territoire presque'entièrement cultivable et une histoire curieuse.

Au commencement du siècle passé, l'Uruguay naissait comme pays catholique. Alors que tous les libérateurs latino-américains, ou presque, s'inspiraient de la Franc-maçonnerie, José Artigas, le héros national de l'Uruguay, éduqué dans un collège franciscain, basait sa pensée politique sur l'expérience des missions des Jésuites et sur «l'Utopie» de Thomas More.

Cependant Artigas dut s'exiler volontairement au Paraguay car, face à la colonisation idéologique française, face à la colonisation économique anglaise et face à la colonisation politique des États-Unis, il ne put réaliser son idéal politique d'une Confédération d'états autonomes.

Le processus de sécularisation de l'Uruguay commença peu après 1830, avec l'arrivée des premiers immigrants européens; ceux-ci apportèrent au Nouveau-Monde les idées de la Révolution française. Ce fut un

hymne à l'homme sécularisé, indépendant et libre de toute pensée qui ne fut pas selon la raison.

Deux dates sont à retenir dans le processus de sécularisation de l'Uruguay. La première, 1872. C'est l'année où la culture se sépare de l'Église. Les universitaires prononcent, dans l'Athénée de Montevideo, leur profession de foi rationaliste. Selon eux, l'Église accuse du retard et véhicule des préjugés; il faut se libérer de la pensée préhistorique cléricale et se lancer vers le Règne de la Raison. À partir de ce moment, la culture uruguayenne se caractérise par son rationalisme, sa distance avec la religion et son autonomie face aux valeurs de la foi.

L'autre date, 1905, rappelle la rupture entre le peuple et l'Église; rupture due aux catholiques.

Batlle était alors président de la République. C'était un homme prophétique quant aux réformes sociales. Encore peu influencé par la Franc-maçonnerie, il était un penseur indépendant et cherchait à mettre en oeuvre le meilleur de la pensée sociale européenne, particulièrement le social-christianisme de Belgique.

Or Batlle vivait avec une femme qui avait abandonné son mari. Comme le divorce n'était pas admis, ils cohabitaient. Ils auraient pu se marier selon l'Église; il y eut même des pressions mais ils ne voulurent pas.

Cette année-là, le Président et sa femme assistent à une réunion sociale dans un Club catholique. Les Dames catholiques méprisent la femme du Président, refusent de lui parler et même de la saluer. Ce mépris amène des conséquences immédiates: le Président Batlle lance une campagne très dure contre l'Église.

Le peuple, attaché au Président en raison de ses réformes sociales, appuie Batlle, se tourne anticlérical et commence à se séculariser<sup>1</sup>.

La Franc-maçonnerie profita de la situation avec beaucoup de subtilité. Elle s'approprie le pays et les catholiques qui ne surent distinguer entre le bien et le mal de la sécularisation, et rejeta les réformes sociales de Batlle, lesquelles seront un peu plus tard, du patrimoine universel.

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Pour toutes ces notes, nous voulons remercier l'historien et chercheur, Professeur Mario CAYOTA, auteur de «*Cristianos y cambio social*», 3 tomes, Montevideo, 1982.

## Caractéristiques de l'homme sécularisé

La sécularisation met toute sa confiance dans l'homme et cherche à développer toutes ses potentialités.

L'homme sécularisé a beaucoup de culture, une sensibilité particulière envers les gens qui souffrent ou qui sont sans défense, une forte indépendance et, souvent, beaucoup de superficialité dans ses jugements.

La société sécularisée, de son côté, insiste sur la socialisation de la vie et la place prépondérante de la personne; elle hésite entre le personnalisme et la socialisation. Elle défend la nature, l'art et l'égalité.

L'homme sécularisé est sportif; moins enclin aux relations interpersonnelles, il est autosuffisant même s'il affiche sa personnalité avec beaucoup de fantaisie.

L'homme sécularisé est le reflet de l'homme où Dieu est absent. C'est un ensemble de contradictions: bonheur et désespoir, bien-être et suicide, joie et angoisse, égalité et marginalité, athéisme et crédulité. C'est un homme ordinaire avec des qualités et des défauts, mais sa grande faiblesse c'est le manque de transcendance. Il pense au futur à court terme, le planifie, mais il s'angoisse devant le futur à long terme.

Dans un monde sécularisé, la foi est personnelle et se conquiert au milieu des difficultés; la confrontation continuelle lui donne de la profondeur.

## Un essai d'explication

La sécularisation se distingue du sécularisme par le fait qu'elle est positive et souligne la distinction entre le sacré et l'humain, alors que le sécularisme insiste sur la séparation radicale entre les deux. Évidemment, ni la sécularisation ni le sécularisme n'est facile à repérer dans l'histoire; la sécularisation a toujours quelque chose du sécularisme et vice versa.

La sécularisation a commencé avec le christianisme en ce sens qu'on accusait les chrétiens d'athéisme puisqu'ils rejetaient le sacré dans lequel baignait le monde ancien.

D'autres manifestations plus importantes apparurent au Moyen-Âge et fleurirent dans l'Humanisme, la Renaissance, l'Illuminisme, finalement dans le Marxisme qui hésite entre la négation et la domination du sacré.

Chacun de ces mouvements historiques a eu ses bienfaits et ses erreurs; chacun a purifié l'Église, l'a tentée, aidée ou persécutée. Nous ne pouvons juger de façon absolue, il nous faut discerner comme la Parole de Dieu «qui est plus incisive qu'aucun glaive à deux tranchants, qui pénètre jusqu'au plus intime de l'âme et de l'esprit pour juger les sentiments et les pensées du cœur» (He. 4, 12).

La sécularisation et le sécularisme trouvèrent en la Révolution française un point de départ vigoureux vers le monde occidental et l'Amérique latine.

La Révolution française, dont le dieu était la Raison, voulut, comme toute révolution, propager ses idées. La Franc-maçonnerie lui servit de véhicule, après avoir été un de ses moteurs. Il importe ici de distinguer entre les principes de la Révolution, parmi lesquels plusieurs sont positifs, et le mouvement maçonnique qui débuta comme société secrète avec sa hiérarchie, ses lois propres et son action.

Il faut distinguer «entre l'erreur et la personne qui la professe» (Pacem in Terris, 158), ensuite «entre les théories philosophiques... et les théories économique-sociales. Qui peut nier que dans la mesure où ils s'ajustent aux données de la raison droite et reflètent fidèlement de justes aspirations de l'homme ces courants aient des éléments moralement positifs dignes d'approbation?» (Pacem in Terris, 159)

Le rejet de fausses théories doit aller de pair avec un dialogue avec les personnes dans l'erreur, et une recherche sincère, sans préjugé, de la vérité.

La Franc-maçonnerie a sans doute été un des mouvements d'idées qui a le plus contribué à diffuser la sécularisation et le sécularisme dans le monde (surtout occidental), cependant tout n'est pas à rejeter et tout n'est pas négatif.

Distinguons entre la Franc-maçonnerie française et la Franc-maçonnerie anglaise. Celle-ci date de 1717, donc elle est la plus ancienne<sup>2</sup>. «D'une part, il y a le bloc dirigé par la Grande Loge d'Angleterre: déiste, très conservateur et de caractère rituel. D'autre part, il y a le bloc dirigé par le Grand Orient de France: sans esprit religieux, intellectuel et humaniste. Le modèle français, anticlérical, laïciste et rationaliste, fut suivi par plusieurs Orients et plusieurs Loges d'Amérique latine. Cependant, la

<sup>2</sup> B. KLOPPERBURG, *La Massoneria in America Latina*, in Rivista bimestrale «Incontri», no. 3, nov.-dic. 1981, p. 72.

majorité des groupes sur le continent latino-américain s'est maintenue fidèle aux orientations de la Grande Loge anglaise et a adopté le Rite Écossais ancien<sup>3</sup>.»

Même si les positions entre l'Église catholique et la Franc-maçonnerie sont irréconciliables<sup>4</sup>, il faut quand même continuer l'étude du problème car il touche directement à l'évangélisation du monde contemporain sécularisé.

### Franc-maçonnerie et sécularisation

Les principes de la Franc-maçonnerie sont exactement ceux qui régissent les sociétés sécularisées. Pour analyser ces principes, nous utiliserons l'article du P. B. Kloppeburg: LOGGE DEL NUEVO MONDO, dans la revue «Incontri», no. 3, nov.-déc. 1981.

Pour toute personne qui vit en Uruguay, il est surprenant de constater l'étroite relation qui existe entre ces principes et la Constitution, la mentalité, la culture, les attitudes et les valeurs du pays.

- a) «Le principe de l'existence de Dieu, celui-ci étant défini comme 'Le Grand Architecte de l'Univers'». Il s'agit d'un Être suprême, plutôt diffus, loin des tâches humaines et très différent du Dieu de la Révélation chrétienne.
  - b) «Le principe de la libre-pensée». La libre-pensée précède le Credo. La foi n'est pas objective et doit se soumettre au discernement humain.
  - c) «Le principe de la tolérance». C'est l'acceptation et la cohabitation avec n'importe quelle idée.
  - d) «Le principe de l'autonomie de la raison». La raison guide tous les actes de la personne. «À cause d'elle, la Révélation divine ne peut être acceptée». La raison et la foi sont deux choses tout à fait distinctes.
  - e) «Le principe de la liberté de culte».
  - f) «Le principe de la liberté de conscience». Ce principe souligne l'autonomie de la personne devant toute loi morale objective.
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<sup>3</sup> Idem.

<sup>4</sup> Déclaration de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la foi, 19 juillet 1974.

dénonce tout principe extérieur comme violent et fanatique. Le dogme de foi vient de l'extérieur et réduit la liberté de l'homme.

- g) «Le principe de l'indifférence religieuse». Rien ne doit favoriser une religion puisqu'elles sont toutes admises et elles doivent toutes se soumettre à la supervision humaine. Jésus n'est qu'un chef religieux et sa doctrine varie selon l'opinion individuelle.
- h) «Le principe de l'État neutre... C'est la thèse de l'agnosticisme moral et religieux de l'État et de ses lois». Avant la venue du Pape en Uruguay, mai 1987, le Président de la République déclarait à un journaliste de la télévision argentine: «Je suis gnostique». Cette mentalité est fréquente. Or, le jour du départ du Pontife romain, le même Président déclarait qu'il était d'accord pour laisser sur une des places centrales de Montevideo la croix de fer élevée pour souligner la visite papale.
- 1) «Le principe de l'éducation laïque». La formation de l'individu doit être en conformité avec les idées reçues dans un peuple.
- j) «Le principe de la morale indépendante». Il s'agit d'une morale liée à la personne, aux circonstances, aux pulsions de l'individu, en définitive à ses contradictions.
- k) «Le principe de la religion naturelle». C'est une religion spontanée, docile aux sentiments et aux nécessités. Il y a une place pour tout: la magie, le spiritisme, la religion naturelle, la «macumba», etc...<sup>5</sup>

En analysant ces principes, nous nous rendons compte que ce sont les mêmes qui guident la sécularisation des sociétés; évidemment, avec les caractéristiques et l'histoire de chaque pays. Une observation sereine nous met en face d'une pensée où se mêlent «le bien et le mal», «la vérité et le mensonge», «la sincérité et la méchanceté».

Comment évangéliser ce curieux «mélange»? Après avoir lavé son bébé, la mère ne jette pas l'enfant avec l'eau sale. Il en est de même pour nous. Après avoir éclairé le phénomène de la sécularisation, jetons l'eau mais sauvons les personnes<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> KLOPPERBURG... p. 74-77.

<sup>6</sup> Je ne sais où j'ai appris ce dicton; il me plaît et je remercie la personne qui l'a formulé.



N'oublions pas qu'en 1717, au début de la Franc-maçonnerie, l'Église veillait à la défense du dogme, sans se soucier que la religion et le dogme «naissent de l'intérieur» et croissent dans le coeur de l'homme.

Il ne s'agit pas de devenir Franc-maçon. Il s'agit de connaître autant que possible le phénomène de la sécularisation, son histoire, ses principes et ses objectifs; ensuite on l'évangélise par l'intérieur, avec un dialogue persévérant, sans accusation, en soulignant plutôt le positif et en suscitant des alternatives qui partent de la base et qui aient du sens pour les gens.

## Évangile et sécularisation

Un prêtre m'a dit un jour: «L'Église progresse là où elle lutte pour quelque chose: les pauvres, les injustices, les persécutions... elle tire de l'arrière là où ces situations n'existent plus». Ce n'est pas mon opinion.

Je pense qu'une société sécularisée remet à l'Église un Évangile purifié, c'est-à-dire que l'Évangile apparaît libéré et se tient debout par ses propres forces, sans appui.

La foi n'est pas le produit d'une coutume, d'une société chrétienne ou d'une éducation familiale; elle est un don personnel qui fleurit entre les incrédulités de l'entourage. Elle est un choix personnel fait de l'intérieur.

Dans une société sécularisée, l'appel à la foi n'est pas exprimé par des charismes intéressants et désincarnés, mais par des témoins courageux et authentiques; l'appel se fait de personne à personne, comme dans l'Évangile.

L'évangélisation n'est pas non plus le fruit de méthodes ou de propagande; elle surgit de l'unité entre les croyants: «Que tous soient un... afin que le monde croie» (Jn. 17, 21).

Dans un monde sécularisé, l'Église se fait semence, levain, lampe allumée au milieu des ténèbres. L'amour pour le prochain n'est pas une bienfaisance globale, mais une nécessité dans un monde qui cherche à soulager la personne en difficulté sans y voir le visage du Christ comme le voit l'homme de foi (Mt. 25, 31-46).

Dans une société sécularisée, le chrétien ne peut plus s'occuper de collèges, ni de grandes oeuvres sociales ou culturelles... il doit s'occuper de l'Évangile. Comme chrétien, il se doit de témoigner partout de l'esprit du Christ. «Donnez à César ce qui est à César, et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu» (Mc. 12, 17).

Nous pourrions continuer, mais il nous intéresse de faire ressortir ici les traits positifs de la sécularisation. On n'évangélise pas le monde sécularisé en le fuyant, mais en le reconnaissant, en l'étudiant et en le regardant avec empathie.

Le monde sécularisé démystifie le mystère, l'institution sacralisée, la déification superstitieuse et concentre ses efforts sur la personne, son histoire, sa réalité. Malgré ses nombreuses limites, la sécularisation demeure une disposition propice à l'incarnation de l'Évangile dans le monde.

Le service du prochain, l'attention aux nécessiteux, la promotion de l'égalité et de la fraternité entre les personnes, ce n'est pas la foi mais cela prépare bien le don de la foi. «Dieu, personne ne l'a jamais contemplé. Si nous nous aimons les uns les autres, Dieu demeure en nous, en nous son amour est accompli» (1 Jn. 4, 12).

L'insistance sur l'humain et une société au service de la personne humaine, ce n'est ni un risque ni une difficulté; c'est une voie possible de relation avec Dieu. Bien sûr, il y a des difficultés et en se mettant au travail, on peut les surmonter.

### Une réponse: Les Communautés Ecclésiales de Base

Les CEB sont un produit de la théologie de Vatican II dont les caractéristiques seraient: une Église-communion, en dialogue avec le monde, moins sacralisée, directement au service de la personne humaine, levain du Royaume, en contact avec l'Évangile, formée de petits groupes greffés là où se joue le sort de l'humanité c'est-à-dire le milieu des pauvres.

J'aimerais faire des liens entre les CEB et d'autres forces vives de l'Église pour montrer comment elles expriment toutes le même esprit; hélas! ce serait trop long. Chose certaine, ces forces tendent dans une seule direction même si elles suivent des voies diverses. Les CEB, entre autres, sont un chemin d'évangélisation du monde sécularisé.

Pour analyser ce chemin, nous allons procéder de façon originale, c'est-à-dire suivre les principes de la Franc-maçonnerie et, par conséquent, de la sécularisation. Il sera alors facile de repérer les points communs, les divergences, les oppositions radicales et les lieux de dialogue.

- a) À la place de l'Être Suprême indéfini et lointain, les CEB présentent un Dieu proche des préoccupations humaines, un Dieu qui marche

avec le peuple et fait l'histoire avec lui, un Dieu qui participe à ses inquiétudes et ses souffrances.

Le Dieu du dogme et des célébrations grandioses se fait maintenant un ami attentif aux événements de la vie quotidienne; Il n'est plus Celui qui sauvera seulement à la fin de la vie, Il est le Dieu du quartier et lui transmet l'espérance. La vie devient prière et Dieu répond tout simplement dans le quotidien.

«Les communautés célèbrent dans une église paroissiale, dans une chapelle de zone périphérique ou de campagne, dans un hangar, dans une maison ou à l'ombre d'un arbre... Ce qui se célèbre, c'est le mystère du Christ dans la vie. La liturgie se «lit» à partir des faits vécus par la communauté; en même temps elle projette une lumière biblique, théologique et spirituelle sur la marche de la communauté et celle du peuple... Jésus vit dans le pain eucharistique et se prolonge dans la vie de la communauté. Communier c'est s'alimenter de Lui pour poursuivre la lutte.»

C'est dans la communauté que l'on expérimente parfois ce que dit l'apôtre St-Jean: «Personne n'a jamais vu Dieu. Si nous nous aimons les uns les autres, Dieu demeure en nous, et en nous son amour est en plénitude» (1 Jn. 4, 12).

Au moment où naissait la Franc-maçonnerie en 1717, une des raisons pour laisser la foi catholique était l'immense abîme que la liturgie creusait entre l'homme et Dieu. Dieu était tellement grand, tellement parfait, tellement inaccessible, que les hommes s'organisèrent entre eux dans ce petit espace qu'est le monde.

Dans la dimension sacramentelle, liturgique, spirituelle et communautaire, les CEB retrouvent la «proximité de Dieu». La CEB actualise l'incarnation du Christ; sa spiritualité se fait «chair» comme le Christ qui «... en prenant la condition d'esclave est devenu semblable aux hommes» (Phil. 2, 7).

- b) Le deuxième principe est celui de «la libre pensée» avec, comme conséquence, un individualisme poussé à l'extrême. La société en souffre car l'homme sécularisé a deux vies: l'une, officielle, dans le travail et les obligations sociales; l'autre, privée, intimiste, où personne ne peut entrer et où tout est permis.

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<sup>7</sup> Frai BEIFO, *Lo que son las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*, Bogota 1981, p. 39-41.

On parle ici d'un espace de liberté; c'est le lieu que les CEB veulent remplir de foi. «... Les CEB manifestent un vécu de foi explicite et continu, indépendamment de la présence du ministre ordonné<sup>8</sup>.»

La foi n'est pas seulement liée au dogme, elle l'est aussi et surtout à la Parole de Dieu, source intarissable de lumière dans la vie personnelle et quotidienne. Une lecture orthodoxe, bien sûr! Mais personnalisée, libre et intime avant d'être communautaire. En général, les membres de la CEB ont une bonne connaissance de la Parole de Dieu. Il est impressionnant de constater comment des gens simples en arrivent à être familiers avec la Bible.

Lors de sa deuxième visite en Uruguay, Jean Paul II parlait de la Nouvelle Évangélisation où les CEB jouent un rôle important et soulignait la dimension personnelle de la foi par ces mots:

L'évangélisation sera 'nouvelle dans ses méthodes' si chaque membre de l'Église devient protagoniste de la diffusion du message du Christ. 'L'Esprit du Seigneur est sur moi car le Seigneur... m'a envoyé porter la Bonne Nouvelle' (Is. 61, 1). Chaque chrétien, chacun de vous, peut reprendre ces paroles du prophète. Chacun peut entendre, comme dites pour lui-même, ces paroles que le Christ disait à ses apôtres: 'Allez dans le monde entier et proclamez la bonne nouvelle à toute la création' (Mc. 16, 15)<sup>9</sup>.

Évangéliser le monde sécularisé c'est aussi se laisser évangéliser par ce monde qui s'accroche à son petit espace où il «vit sa vie». La «libre-pensée» de la Franc-maçonnerie est certes un danger pour la société, cependant elle témoigne aussi de la valeur évangélique du respect à la liberté individuelle. En ce sens, elle favorise une personnalisation de la foi et lui évite d'être un dogme froid et frustrant.

- c) Le «principe de la tolérance» a sa place dans la vie d'une CEB. Au coeur d'un quartier, en contact direct avec les gens et leurs problèmes, la communauté maintient une attitude de «tolérance» envers l'entourage. La charité, le service et l'empathie sont des caractéristiques de la nouvelle relation Église-monde, relation qui se vit dans la communauté. Et l'Église se doit d'avoir cette attitude puisqu'elle ne recherche pas seulement le salut des baptisés mais le salut de tous; elle est au service du Royaume de Dieu.

Gloria et René, membres de la Communauté du Sacré-Coeur dans le quartier Delta, furent les promoteurs de la formation d'une garderie

<sup>8</sup> Marcelo de C. AZEVEDO, *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*, Madrid 1986, p. 88.

<sup>9</sup> JEAN PAUL II, à Salto, 9 mai 1988.

dans le secteur; c'était un besoin urgent. Tout en travaillant, ils

surent éveiller l'intérêt des gens. L'expérience acquise dans la CEB les avait rendus habiles dans l'organisation d'activités de bienfaisance. Nous ne savons pas si le nombre de catholiques a augmenté dans le quartier; ce que nous savons c'est que le climat communautaire s'est grandement amélioré.

Entre l'Église et le monde, des liens nouveaux surgissent. Pourquoi? Parce que le contact, la relation amicale, la connaissance mutuelle et le travail en commun font découvrir aux catholiques que le monde est un lieu de rencontre avec Dieu et avec le prochain; de son côté, le monde découvre que l'Église est accessible et présente les traits d'une mère.

- d) «Le principe de l'autonomie de la raison» a défini, dans l'histoire, la scission entre la foi et la vie. La foi, comme doctrine, était, et peut continuer à l'être, sujet d'incompréhension dans la vie quotidienne faite de contradictions, d'angoisses et de problèmes. La raison ne pouvait comprendre qu'un ensemble de vérités «rigides» pouvait vitaliser le monde complexe. Qu'est-ce que les CEB peuvent répondre à cette question?

Comme elles vivent la foi dans la vie et cherchent à éclairer les événements avec la Parole de Dieu, les CEB considèrent le dogme comme un point d'arrivée, non comme un point de départ. Il n'y aurait pas beaucoup de pratiquants dans ma paroisse «Rincon de la Boisa», si nous commencions par enseigner les obligations de l'Église.

D'ailleurs beaucoup de gens non mariés selon l'Église font partie des CEB. Au point de départ, les CEB acceptent toute personne, sans préjugé, soulignant ce qui unit dans la foi plutôt que ce qui divise. Au lieu de parler de l'indissolubilité du mariage, on parle du service des pauvres, de la communion et du dialogue. Et lentement on chemine vers la plénitude de la vérité.

«Pour que la proclamation du message soit attirante, il faut partir du vécu et des préoccupations de l'auditeur de la Parole, de même faut-il tenir compte des catégories avec lesquelles il essaie de comprendre ses propres expériences. Toute la théologie est et doit être un dialogue avec la culture de son temps. Et c'est dans ce dialogue que se joue sa capacité de faire pénétrer l'Évangile dans l'histoire humaine. Cela suppose une fidélité lucide au «dépôt de la foi» d'un côté, et, de

l'autre, une grande loyauté au moment historique dans lequel cette théologie s'élaborelo.»

Il importe de maintenir l'attitude que Jésus eut avec Zachée; Il l'aima et l'accepta tel quel avant qu'il ne change de vie et ne remette ce qu'il avait volé.

- e) Les CEB vivent le «principe de la liberté de culte» non seulement par le fait qu'elles acceptent des membres professant une religion différente, mais aussi dans le fait qu'elles reconnaissent l'autre comme différent.

Selon ce principe, la société sécularisée place toutes les religions sur le même pied. Or aujourd'hui, la mentalité de l'Église est ouverte au dialogue, à la communion, à l'accueil, aux actions communes et au pardon pour les divisions passées.

La liberté de culte accepte tout culte, depuis le plus saint jusqu'au culte de la «macumba» et même les «cultes sataniques». C'est comme si on voulait définitivement oublier les liturgies solennelles et structurées d'autrefois. Dans ces liturgies, le fidèle risquait de se sentir étranger dans sa «patrie» ou bien de faire un voyage hors de l'espace et du temps pour revenir ensuite sur terre, en contact avec une toute autre réalité.

«Le Document de Puebla parle ainsi de la prière du chrétien: 'mû par l'Esprit Saint, le chrétien nourrira sa prière avec sa vie quotidienne et son travail' (no. 932). Puebla nous invite à découvrir le visage du Seigneur non seulement dans la paix et le calme de la prière contemplative, mais aussi dans la réalité en conflit, dans les problèmes sociaux, dans l'angoisse des pauvres... 11»

«La liturgie des CEB reflète la relation d'amitié qui existe entre les membres et le contact direct avec les événements, car bien souvent elle surgit des faits vécus par la communauté elle-même... Dans la CEB, il n'y a rien d'ésotérique, de mystérieux ou de magique; il y a un lien entre ce qui se célèbre et ce qui se vit. La CEB témoigne du caractère libérateur de la foi» 12.

<sup>10</sup> Gustavo GUTIERREZ, *La verdad los hara libres*, Lima 1986, p. 122.

Camilo MACCISE, *La oración en el contexto de la vida*, Mexico 1983, p. 28-29.

<sup>12</sup> Gregorio IRIARTE, OMI, *Qué es una Comunidad Eclesial de Base?* Bolivia 1983, p. 36-37.

Le culte devient un lieu de liberté pour les personnes et leur cheminement personnel. Ainsi le culte et la liberté retrouvent leur ancienne amitié, quand, dans le Désert, le peuple de l'Ancienne Alliance célébrait les événements de son histoire.

- f) Du conflit entre «l'Absolu» et la réalité humaine contradictoire a surgi «le principe de la liberté de conscience». La CEB dépasse ce conflit foi-et-vie en privilégiant l'expérience aux vérités absolues. Elle cherche à comprendre de l'intérieur, partant du «singulier» pour arriver au général, de l'expérience pour arriver à la vérité, de la liberté pour arriver à la foi. Le Christ n'a pas enseigné le dogme; Il a aimé et invité à aimer. La personne ainsi aimée en est arrivée peu à peu à découvrir la vérité toute entière.

Si dans les CEB on disait de prime abord que l'Évangile importe plus que la promotion sociale, y aurait-il beaucoup d'enfants à la première des communions? Beaucoup de mariages selon l'Église? Serait-il possible d'annoncer le Message du salut en Jésus-Christ?

- g) et h)

«Les principes de l'indifférence religieuse et de l'État neutre» sont de même nature. L'État ne soutient pas du tout la religion; certes l'indifférence est la pire des persécutions. Pour y faire face, l'Église, par la CEB, doit témoigner de toutes les vertus et montrer son meilleur visage. Même si les résultats sont maigres et le chemin est long, il faut donc que le Christ-Église-CEB s'enracine encore davantage dans l'humain.

Même si aucune loi n'appuie l'Église, les «ennemis» eux-mêmes ne pourront se passer de sa présence. Tous les membres de communauté qui se sont éloignés de leur CEB ont reçu des pressions de leur propre famille pour reprendre le chemin de la communauté.

- i), j) et k)

«Les principes de l'enseignement laïque, de la morale indépendante et de la religion naturelle» visent à donner une éducation, une morale et une religion selon les exigences personnelles. Certes, il existe une éducation, une morale et une religion «objectives», cependant elles doivent tenir compte de chaque personne car chacune a été créée par Dieu avec une identité propre, avec une personnalité unique et concrète. Et chaque personne a son expérience de vie.

Même si la sécularisation a ses erreurs, elle nous aide à retrouver la personne humaine. «La tradition demeure vivante en autant qu'elle se réactualise dans l'histoire 13»

La CEB rapproche Dieu et l'homme; elle humanise la religion, fait une place à toute situation humaine, relie le particulier et l'universel, la tradition et l'histoire quotidienne, la foi et la vie, le dogme et la liberté.

## La cité séculière

Si nous voulons avoir une image du type d'homme que produit la sécularisation, nous n'avons qu'à regarder l'homme des grandes villes.

La formation des grandes villes modernes n'est pas le fruit du hasard, mais bien de la sécularisation. L'homme de la ville pense librement, préserve sa vie privée et son indépendance, se relie directement à «l'Absolu», évite les contrôles et vit sa solitude au milieu des gens.

En ville, tous se sentent égaux, les hiérarchies disparaissent, les commerçants te tutoient et la vedette de télévision parle au vendeur du coin. Dans la même rue, on peut trouver des lieux de culte très différents. Employés, étudiants et ouvriers se coudoient dans le même «métro»; dans le stade, 50,000 personnes appuient la même équipe. Chaque personne est à la fois propriétaire et esclave de la ville et de ses grands marchés.

Les jeunes de la ville ont un comportement officiel de jour, alors qu'ils étudient, et un comportement privé en soirée alors qu'ils se laissent aller à «la fièvre du samedi soir». Le gars aime une fille en vue du mariage et une autre pour la danse.

On a découvert la valeur des Droits Humains, en même temps on consomme de la drogue dans les parcs publics. Si un ami me trahit, j'en cherche un autre un peu plus loin; si les voisins briment ma liberté, je change d'appartement. La ville me facilite le sport, le cours d'anglais, le cours de danse, le cinéma, le théâtre et la vedette de la chanson populaire.

La ville met en crise l'Absolu. Autrefois le rythme des saisons était marqué par les fêtes liturgiques et les fêtes des saints; aujourd'hui d'autres fêtes jouent ce rôle: la fête des mères, la fête des pères, la fête du professeur, de la belle-mère, de l'enfant...

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<sup>13</sup> Carlos PALACIO, *Vida religiosa inserta en los medios populares*, Bogota 1982, p. 59.



L'homme de la ville vit un jour à la fois, il gaspille, il profite de la vie. En un mot, il est le protagoniste de la cité séculière.

Dans les années 1960, H. Cox écrit un livre à succès intitulé: «La cité séculière». Il y fait une description de l'homme de la ville et suggère des réponses que la foi devra donner.

Selon Cox, la sécularisation `est le processus qu'aucune action, cléricale ou autre, ne pourra inverser. Les dieux et leurs pâles créatures, symboles de la métaphysique, sont en voie de disparition. Le monde est en train de devenir monde; on lui enlève son caractère sacré et religieux. L'homme devient de plus en plus homme, il laisse les explications mythiques et les réflexes culturels qui le caractérisaient à l'époque religieuse de l'histoire, époque qui prend fin. L'homme doit assumer la responsabilité du monde; il ne peut la laisser sur les épaules d'une force religieuse'.

Est-ce que cette situation de la société moderne représente un désastre ou une issue favorable pour le christianisme? Cox est optimiste; il fait appel à la Bible. La sécularisation, répète-t-il avec Gogarten, est une conséquence de la foi biblique. La cité séculière, sa mobilité et son anonymat, en soi ne garantissent pas le salut, mais ne constituent pas non plus un obstacle à la foi. Il n'y a pas d'opposition entre le Royaume de Dieu et la cité séculière, comme autrefois il n'y en avait pas entre le Royaume de Dieu et les formes que prenait la cité des hommes. En y regardant de près, l'Église pourrait trouver dans la cité séculière des possibilités inespérées d'actualiser sa fonction «kérygmatisque» ou d'annonce, sa fonction de «diakonia» ou de service, et sa fonction de «koinonia» ou de rassemblement <sup>14</sup>

Vingt ans ont passé et la problématique de l'évangélisation du monde sécularisé demeure plus actuelle que jamais. La cité séculière reflète l'intérieur de l'homme; un intérieur sans Dieu. La ville est le miroir du cœur humain où cohabitent le bien et le mal, la grâce et le péché. C'est l'image de l'homme avant de recevoir l'évangélisation.

### La cité-communion

Après l'ère de l'homme nomade, après l'ère de l'homme agriculteur, c'est l'ère de l'homme urbain. Et la CEB (une toute petite ville) est l'annonce d'une cité nouvelle: la cité-communion.

La sécularisation a empilé les hommes dans la grande ville où se jouent la vie et l'activité humaine. Les CEB devront évangéliser ces villes où l'homme se retrouve avec ses contradictions au point d'en perdre sa relation à l'autre et à l'Absolu.

<sup>14</sup> A. MILANO, *Secolarizzazione*, in Nuevo dizionario di Teologia, Rome 1979, p. 1448.

La CEB valorise le quartier, le voisinage, la proximité. Chaque CEB est composée de personnes vivant dans un espace physique rapproché; ainsi elle peut susciter diverses activités et éduquer une des facettes les plus importantes de la personne: la proximité et la relation à l'autre.

La cité séculière donne à la CEB les bases nécessaires à l'édification de la cité-communion: possibilité de dialogue, proximité du prochain à servir, partage de foi dans un groupe de référence et d'appui.

Dans la cité-communion, la religion n'aura pas le visage des grandes cathédrales et des sanctuaires; elle aura le visage du levain pour de petits groupes qui se réunissent dans les sous-sols.

Dans la cité-communion, encore plus qu'en campagne, on fait une place au pauvre et on le considère; les «ceintures de misère» sont transformées en lieux d'expressions nouvelles de culture et de foi. La vie ne s'organise plus en fonction d'une hiérarchie de valeurs, mais en fonction de la co-participation des valeurs de chaque personne. Dans le nomadisme, le patriarce gouvernait; dans la vie paysanne, c'était le roi; dans la ville, c'est le gouvernement participatif.

## Conclusion

Jusqu'à présent, la rencontre entre la sécularisation et la CEB n'a pas eu lieu pleinement. Cependant, en commençant par les périphéries, les CEB ont commencé la «conquête» de la cité séculière.

Je pense que la CEB, modèle de cohabitation sociale, pourra éclairer la sécularisation à la lumière de l'Évangile. Finalement, je pense que la clé de l'évangélisation moderne c'est l'évangélisation de la ville.

Giuseppe MAMMANA, O.M.I.

# The Oblate Rule and Communications

SOMMAIRE — Selon nos Saintes Règles il nous faut utiliser toutes les ressources disponibles pour atteindre les masses que nous avons à évangéliser. Or, de nos jours, dans l'oeuvre de l'évangélisation comme partout ailleurs, les media occupent une place de plus en plus importante. Les Oblats doivent avoir recours à eux et s'entraîner à les maîtriser d'une façon experte. Les media peuvent servir à maintenir et à approfondir la culture et les valeurs propres des peuples. En somme les media font partie de toute la gamme d'instruments utiles à l'évangélisation, à l'annonce de la présence libératrice de Jésus-Christ.

In a religious congregation like the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, it should be possible to see some connection between the Rule and the different fields of work that we undertake. I would like to do this for the field of Communications. This should not seem strange, rule two says "There is no ministry, however, which is foreign to us, provided we never lose sight of the Congregation's primary purpose: to evangelize the most abandoned<sup>1</sup>."

I hope that this survey of the rule will raise some new possibilities for the communications work that is being done in so many parts of the congregation.

In the Preface to the Rule, the founder has called for priests "who would labour with all the resources at their command<sup>2</sup>." One of the resources of the present age is certainly the media. But this quotation does raise the question, 'Do we have members who have command of the skills necessary to use the media fruitfully?' Bluntly, anyone can fill a radio program with words or a TV program with images and words but there are numerous skills needed if these programs are to be at a technical level which compares (or even competes) with the other programs which precede and follow our program. The same is going to be true of the print

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions and Rules*, Rome 1982. English Edition, p. 23  
<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 10

medium or computer medium. The skills that I am talking about here are the technical skills needed to cast the message into a particular technological form, like a printed page or a computer program.

Jack O'Brien sj, one of my lecturers in Rome who was the president of Multimedia International at the time, said in one of his lectures "It is funny, if we ask to do theological studies, usually our superiors will allow us the years necessary to do a doctorate. But if we ask for training in communications, then we get a couple of weeks."

There does seem to be (let me make a statement which is going to be unfair to someone!) a feeling that priests can get into the communications field with less training than anyone who is employed in the field. This is a generalisation but it does have some truth to it.

Let's examine the part that is true a little further: the communications industry is a massive multibillion dollar international network. It has its own minimum standards for qualifications based on its own experience. Just as an Oblate has to accept current medical standards if he wants to become a doctor, I believe that the Oblates are obliged to get the requisite qualifications if they are going to work in the communications field. I think that we have to be committed to the professional levels that are current in the industry, that is if we take media seriously. The pastoral instruction that appeared after the Council said "Communicators... have a duty in conscience to make themselves competent in the art of social communication in order to be effective in their work<sup>3</sup>." (CP15)

Now let's go a little further with this professionalism. Oblate media people are Oblates who work in media. If the 'Oblate' in that sentence is lost sight of then there is no reason for that person to belong to the congregation. He could be a Paulist or one of the other congregations who are more specifically called to be communicators through the media or a layman who makes his career in communications. But I believe that I see a framework for Oblate media professionals in the Rule. The details will vary with situations but the broad outline is there. I am going to come back to this but right now let's look at another question which follows from this one.

"Are we in any situations where we have use of a significant part of the media?" Or better "is our involvement in the media proportional to the

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<sup>3</sup> *Communio et progressio*, article 15, Vatican Council II — The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, Austin Flannery (ed) Liturgical Press, 1975, p. 298.

degree of development in the country?" One would have to ask the question for each of the media in each country. In a country like the US the church has no part of the main commercial television networks. The bishops conference has bought into one religious network. The oblates do own radio stations. Some Oblates do produce programs that are broadcast on cable television, usually on religious cable channels. It would be a useful study to see the proportion of religious publications and programmes compared to the figures for the nation.

In French Polynesia, it was the Diocese that was given 15 minute prime time per week on the national TV. That was a significant time because there was only one channel and we had the slot between the news programs. But it is clear that we do not have a very large commitment to the media if we were to look around the world. And this raises the question that I cannot answer here and that is, "Are we as committed as we should be?" given the fact that people get a lot of information from the media. Some surveys say 80% in some countries.

### Oblate media professionals:

I said earlier that I thought that I could see at least the outline of a description of what Oblate Media Professionals would be according to the Rule. Let me develop this a bit.

#### (1) "We commit ourselves principally to evangelizing the poor"

If we are Oblates who are working in media then the charism of the congregation should light up a fire in us – giving us both an area of commitment and a vision to guide us. In the very first constitution, we "commit ourselves principally to evangelizing the poor<sup>4</sup>." So without wanting to deal right away with who are the poor, we can say that our rule gives us a target population. Constitution five amplifies this a little, "Where the church is already established, our commitment is to those groups it touches least<sup>5</sup>." We have a clear mandate. Now I want to examine the target group in terms of communications.

To start off – let me say that 'the poor are those who are deprived in some way.' Now communicators can have a job serving and reaching such

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<sup>4</sup> *Constitutions and Rules*, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., p. 18.

people. The scenario will be different in each country. But the initial exercise of research and reflection is inescapable. Firstly, who would you identify as poor in your country? Then what are their needs? What needs can we answer as a 'religious congregation' and then what part of that work could be done effectively by 'communicators'? Once the commitment has been made then the communication strategy follows.

I don't want to lose the importance of the last two questions. Oblate groups have to learn what they can reasonably achieve. This will be the fruit of practice rather than simply brainstorming. After the oblates have been working with the particular population for a while, then it has to be discerned – what if anything can be done by communicators.

Something else that we committed ourselves to is that "We shall support lay-people in the discernment and development of their own talents and charisms, encouraging them to undertake ministries and apostolic commitments and thus to shoulder the responsibilities which are properly theirs in the Christian community<sup>6</sup>." Expressing this rule especially for the Oblate Media Personnel, we must ask, "do we train lay-people?" or "enable them to get the training?"

The presence of media is not always a sign that there is a job for communicators to do. In South Africa for example, there is a national television network. But considering that religious programs are censored by the government and the time available is distributed amongst a large number of religious denominations and sects, it does not make much sense to get into national television in South Africa. I don't even want to start in on the question of whether this would be seen as collaboration with the government!

In such a situation, the choice has to be made whether one uses broadcasts or one makes cassettes or chooses another medium like print or radio. It is clear that the structure of each of the local media has to be examined before choices and commitments are made. Obviously any choice will involve expense so care is needed. Often we are talking of expenses which will rival building a church!

You will notice a certain process that I am proposing here. Because of the specific orientation of the congregation towards the poor we are starting with their situation and the media are examined as only some of the many possible ways (and maybe not the most effective ways!) to reach out

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<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., p. 25.

to them. Hopefully the media will be an ancillary mode to more personal ways of evangelizing and working with the poor. But in any event, the media are selected to fit the situation and not the other way about. They are only tools for the job.

There is a lot that must be said on the subject of the poor. I found one section of Fr. Jette's talk in San Antonio in 1979 to be very relevant reading. He spoke about "the new poor?" and the question that they pose for missionaries committed to the poor. His categories would be very helpful in discerning the target group for a media project.

A final question that I would like to deal with in regard to the poor is what has been termed the *New World Order of Information and Communication*. (UNDA 1982). This is a massive topic but at its core is the question of how we use media or better how are media used by everybody? There is the moral question here of who is controlling the messages that flood our planet. What messages are they passing on? If we are pastorally minded then this question is for us too.

One article in the *Sao Paulo Document* says "Put the accent on the necessity to have systems of communications which are used for the development of the community. This development needs to be holistic, democratic and autonomous. ...The Church had better have a clear social policy in this regard ...so that the media do not continue to be determined by the dominant elites and the multinational corporations." (my translation) Article 51<sup>8</sup>. The Pastoral Instruction on Social Communication puts it like this, "Modern man cannot do without information that is full, consistent, accurate and true. ...Information does not simply occur... in order to get it, the man who wants information must have access to the varied means of social communication" (CP 34).

One illustrative point: while I was working in the Pacific, an Australian company contracted to build the television system for the island of Papua, New Guinea. Part of the agreement was that they would dictate the majority of the programs (which were being produced in Australia). There was no provision for the treatment of local culture or developing local production skills. Fortunately there was an uproar in New Guinea because

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<sup>7</sup> Fernand JETTE, *Letters to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate*. General House, Rome 1984, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> *Avec l'Amérique latine sur la route du NOM1C*. Brochure éditée par LINDA Rue de l'Orme 12, 1040 Bruxelles, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Vatican II — *The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, op. cit., p. 305.

some local media people analysed the long-term effects of the contract and the government renegotiated the contract.

The media are not neutral. They are expensive long-term institutions which will shape and direct cultures. Do we want a hand in that shaping? In this field the *poor* are those who have little control over what the media are presenting to them.

(2) "We coordinate our missionary activity..."

We find in the sixth constitution that "We coordinate our missionary activity with the overall pastoral plan of the local churches where we work, and we collaborate in a spirit of brotherhood with others who work for the Gospel.. .10."

I stated earlier that media are part of the array of tools for evangelizing. This means that for a missionary congregation like ours its role is complementary to all the other strands of projects and ministries that are being woven into the fabric of evangelization. It is precisely this coordination and collaboration which should show up in Oblate media efforts. So not only is our use of the media target specific but we recognise that these media are efforts alongside other efforts.

There can hence be a lot of *crossover* between different missionary efforts and the media efforts. The media can present part of the information that is needed in other initiatives. Publications can aid voter registration or inform people of their rights so that the projects which deal with these issues can have tools. (Design is crucial here. Many media projects fail because they are designed in a foreign culture.)

Another example could be videos which present speakers who would not ordinarily be available. But again design comes in. Perhaps the original tape of a speaker would have to be re-worked and ancillary notes prepared so that the video can be exploited to the full. Perhaps part of the media work would be to train presenters to use the video and the notes to animate groups. Then they could continue with follow-up questions leading to some kind of action.

Another form of crossover is *publicity* which is what media do best. The more popular media like newspapers, television spots, etc. just don't have the capacity to do much in depth. But they can bring something to the attention of the public. Often this is enough to heighten awareness and

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<sup>10</sup> *Constitutions and Rules*, op. cit., p. 19.



cause some response. I did a 15 minute broadcast on a project for a school for drop-outs and money and personnel support poured in. The school was a real response to a real need and enough people felt that need. The school was not my idea – even the program was not my idea. I just directed and produced it. That was my role as a 'communicator' working for the diocese.

Using a video with a presenter would go under the heading of what we call small-group media. Because of the personal interaction involved, I think of small-group media as the medium for missionaries. This medium uses the deep symbolic value of having a person present who is interested enough to be there. This is a personal preference but I think that one could argue that it does arise from a very rich understanding of missionary work.

Such media are at a second level of evangelization. Paul VI says "In our age which is characterized by the mass media we must not fail... to avail of the media for the first proclamation of the message...<sup>11</sup>." (EN 45). Small-group media go beyond that to the personal and community levels which cannot be reached by mass-media. Mass-media are notoriously one directional. Because of their structure they have a *me talk — you listen* style and they have a limited application for evangelization in depth.

### (3) "We help them to see their own values"

Constitution five also says that we "help them to see their own value<sup>12</sup>," in the light of the gospel. And here is the next point in the framework – the values and culture of the people are the point of departure. This firmly deals with the temptation which every director of a media project feels at some time or another to just produce what "I" want. This is more far-reaching than simply answering the needs of the people. It gets into the area of the cultural symbols and how they can be juxtaposed with the affirmation and critique which is inevitable when Christianity is finding expression in a particular culture.

There might be another consequence for Oblate media people which differs from the considerations of the personnel of the big mass media organisations. If we are dealing with the deprived, their culture will be different from the *culture* contained in the mass-media. This is another of those characteristics that varies from country to country.

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*Evangelii numtiandi*, Article 45, Vatican II — more post-conciliar documents Vol. II, Austin Flannery (ed.) 1982, Eermans, Michigan, p. 730.

<sup>12</sup> *Constitutions and Rules*, op. cit., p. 18.

Having lived in South Africa, I think that I can say that despite the channels in the *black* languages and despite some hours of *black* programming there is no clear commitment to the black majority if you analyse the time commitment and the content. South African TV is a *white* entity. We have to see a difference here between the government's objectives and what our own would be if we were doing media work in South Africa.

In French Polynesia, there was only one channel and french programmes dominated, some weeks our *catholic* program seemed to be the only tahitian language program in the entire week. Now, I don't want to equate language and culture. There is much more involved here and there is not the space to go into it in detail. But clearly we should have a different emphasis from people with other objectives like governments, commercial organisations, even other churches. This seems obvious but biases and blind spots have a way of creeping in. Our media presentations will always be our best guess but the lookout for bias sharpens up our constant reaching out to the people we want to reach.

Lastly, this constitution means that we have to have a 'feel' for the culture either through our own experience or through having the courage to train those who do. The Bishops Conference of South Africa paid for the training of black journalists. They will have an immediate sense of reaching their people. Anyone from another culture would take years to even begin to develop that sensitivity. This goes right along with constitution 7 "We have as our goal to establish Christian communities and Churches deeply rooted in the local culture and fully responsible for their own development and growth<sup>13</sup>." We are empowering the communities that we help to form. Constitution 8 cast it a little differently "We will always be close to the people with whom we work, taking into account their values and aspirations<sup>14</sup>."

(4) "Our commitment is to those groups the church touches least"

Constitution five goes on "Where the church is already established, our commitment is to those groups it touches least<sup>15</sup>." This offers a real challenge to the oblate media people. They are going to be committed to something which is not the concern of ordinary media people. They are going to have to know if they are serving those who are touched least by the Church.

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<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., p. 18.

This is marketing research with a difference because by definition the people they are trying to serve might not be part of the traditional church structure and so not easy to reach. I believe this might be the real test of the professionalism of our media efforts. Are our products simply part of the "mass-culture" or has our vocation to evangelise moved us to know who we are addressing?

One project that springs to mind, when we talk about those who are marginalised is to offer them the information that is not reaching them. Sometimes, even vital information about health is presented in some languages and not in others. I proposed to the Conference of US provinces that we prepare videos in 'minority' languages and using their cultural settings to pass on health and social information which would aid them in improving the quality of their life in the US.

You will notice that I did not start immediately with devotional material as possible content. It obviously has its place, but we are really dealing here with the old question of 'how much of the Good News can you tell a hungry man?' Our rule nine comes at this from a different angle "Action on behalf of justice is an integral part of evangelization<sup>16</sup>." This point surfaces again in the next section.

(5) "We announce the liberating presence of Jesus Christ"

The content of the media will be tailored to serve the poor. This might seem to follow from what has been said already but there are some more points which come up in the Rule. Constitution nine needs to be quoted in its entirety "We are members of the prophetic Church. While recognizing our own need for conversion, we bear witness to God's holiness and justice. We announce the liberating presence of Jesus Christ and the new world born in his resurrection. We will hear and make heard the clamour of the voiceless, which is a cry to God that brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly. cf Lk 1:52<sup>17</sup>." Would it be too much to say that this text should be boldly displayed in our printing-rooms and our planning rooms and our studios?

There is so much here. A first point is that this offers a christology different from the formal scholastic christology that many of us learned. If we take each word seriously, then I would propose reading a book like

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<sup>16</sup> Op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., p. 21.

"Christ before Christianity" by Albert Nolan, OP<sup>18</sup>. Many of the points of his vision would run right along with that of the Rule to which we committed ourselves. And surely the media team would need to pray and debate some kind of vision springing from this constitution.

The line "we will hear and make heard the clamour of the voiceless" presents a challenge. Can Oblate Media Personnel contribute something here? Again this is market research with a difference. We have to see and evaluate as much with our hearts as with our heads.

I read of one initiative in the Phillipines where a group of fishermen had to ask the question "Is the sea still ours?" This was in the face of "an unprecedented expansion of fishpens, illegal fishing and pollution<sup>19</sup>." Part of their response was to document what was going on. But they presented their documentation in a novel form. They did a soundslide presentation. The whole exercise of producing the slide-tape presentation was an exercise in development and organisation for the group. Some experts worked as facilitators but the fishermen were involved at all stages.

Two points come out of this experience. The 'poor' have something to say and small media might be one way that they can say it. But also they can grow by being part of the production process. For media personnel, this is no longer – "we have all the answers and we bring you our wonderful slides or videos as completed products", but rather "what do you have to say and how can we aid you in saying it?" The media personnel are part of an enabling process.

(6) In our formation...

Rule 61 is clear; "Since the means of social communication profoundly influence attitudes and values, Oblates should understand how public opinion is formed and ought to develop their talents in the field of communications. They can thereby help to make Gospel values present and powerful in society<sup>20</sup>." There are two levels of knowledge of communications in this rule. One is very general, Oblates need to know how media work. They are just too common and too powerful to ignore. Once again the Pastoral Instruction raised this issue: "...all men of good will,

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, The Gospel of Liberation, David Philip 1976 (also published by Orbis Press).

<sup>19</sup> *Sonulux information*, Number 12-13, March 1984, Edited by Wolfgang Bernhard, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Rules and Constitutions*, op. cit., p. 77.

then are impelled to work together to ensure that the media of communication do in fact contribute to the pursuit of truth and the speeding up of progress<sup>21</sup>." (CP 13).

Oblates need a practical knowledge of how information is shaped and flows. Critical awareness is an essential skill. In the Pacific, there is already a manual in English which goes through this subject.. Most departments of Communications deal with it. A good thing about critical awareness is that its usefulness spills over into other areas. The Editor of Jescom, the jesuit journal, proposed that all jesuits have some instruction in the basics of communications.

A second level of communications knowledge is for those who are going to be working in it full-time preparing communications presentations. This goes back to something that I said earlier about training. I don't think that we have any excuse for being less-qualified than comparable workers in the field already. Journalists or editors or directors or cameramen are doing highly skilled jobs.

These six points span a large field which certainly parallels the importance of the media in our world. There is much more to be done. I think that the sketchy vision presented here could be fleshed out but I would hope that these points help our ongoing reflection. The Pastoral Instruction sums up the Church's perspective on media with words that contain a profound commitment and respect for the media: "The Church sees these media as "gifts of God" which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation<sup>22</sup>." (CP 2) May it be the commitment of the Oblate Congregation.

Bevil BRAMWELL, O.M.I.

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<sup>21</sup> Vatican II — *Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, op. cit., p. 298.

<sup>22</sup> Op. cit., p. 293.