



Novena Prayer
for
Oblate Vocations

May 21-29, 2021

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Every year we unite in prayer asking God for the grace to grant our family holy vocations. This year, our Oblate community at the Novitiate of Marino (Rome), thought of offering a passage from the Gospel or a text from Pope Francis to accompany us every day. We offer some of the words from the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, in this special year dedicated to St. Joseph, looking at the carpenter of Nazareth, as well as the Protector of the Congregation, as a model of Oblate consecration.

During this time of the pandemic that continues to challenge us, this Novena seeks to be a sign of hope in a God who makes all things new, knowing that, at the foundation of every vocation, is God's call. He never ceases to call generous young people to be a sign of hope for a world that seems to have lost it. The Superior General, Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, reminded us that we, "were made for times like this." Pope Pius XI called us "specialists of the most difficult missions." It is up to us today to live our Oblate vocation to the fullest and to witness to its beauty, to pray that there will never be a shortage of missionaries in the world.

As the novitiate of the Mediterranean Province, we are very happy to contribute to this Novena because it is a way to reach all the communities related to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. With these sentiments of communion and gratitude, we hope that these days of prayer can be moments in which we can all live together the testament of Eugene and be "the most united family on earth", wherever we are. United in prayer, let us always find ourselves before Jesus in the Eucharist; it is there that we can meet each day and be One.

The Marino Novitiate, Italy

First Day
The Will of God

From the Gospel according to John

(John 2: 1-5)



On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

Mary is the Mother of the Redeemer, but she is also our Mother. Throughout her life she cared for Jesus, accompanied him, and participated in his life. We can confidently say that behind every vocation we find Mary. With her maternal love she places in so many hearts the desire to give life to Jesus and to reach many hearts that seek Him. May Mary's fiat be the model of our faithfulness to God's plan. Her simplicity, her affection for Joseph and the child of Nazareth should be the way in which we, too, live our daily lives. Looking at St. Joseph we can perhaps say that in his life, he chose to be an "imitator" of Mary. He looked to her to love Jesus more and learned to care for that child as a true father.

Joseph, in whose veins flowed royal blood, humbly looked to Mary to love Jesus more. We, too, address this prayer to you, Mary: "You who by divine will have a special place in heaven, you who are all pure, you who freely said fiat voluntas tua at the announcement of the angel Gabriel, accompany and intercede with your good Son so that there may never be a lack of young people who desire to make of their lives a total oblation to Jesus the Savior through you."

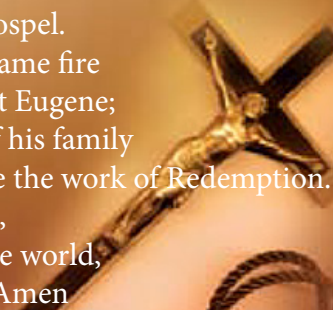
The charism speaks to us:

"Let us renew ourselves especially in devotion to the most holy Virgin and render ourselves worthy to be Oblates of the Immaculate Mary. But this is a

*passport to heaven! How have we not thought of it sooner? Avow that it will be as glorious as it will be consoling for us to be consecrated to her in a special manner and to bear her name. The Oblates of Mary! This name satisfies the heart and the ear. I must admit to you that I was quite surprised, when it was decided to take the name I had thought should be left aside, at being so impervious, at feeling so little pleasure [...] And now I see the reason; we were remiss in regard to our Mother, our Queen, she who protects us and who must obtain for us all graces whereof her divine Son has made her the dispenser. So let us rejoice to bear her name and her livery."*¹

Let us pray that following the example of St. Joseph we may look to Mary, entrusting ourselves to her, our model of love for Jesus and others.

Holy Father,
we come to you because Jesus asked us to pray
that you send workers into your harvest.
Therefore, send us generous young men, passionate for Jesus,
willing to make of their whole life a total oblation to you,
to become close to the poorest and most abandoned,
and to proclaim the Gospel.
May they burn with the same fire
that you enkindled in Saint Eugene;
may they come to be part of his family
and, with all the Oblates, may they continue the work of Redemption.
Mary Immaculate,
Who first gave Jesus to the world,
be with us as we pray. Amen



Second Day

Loving Kindness

From the Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 10:21-24)

At that very moment he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

Turning to the disciples in private he said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."



Every vocation springs forth from the love of God, after one has known the immense love of the Father. It is only in gazing at the love that God has for us that we can love all people. It may be that we return to Him after having been far away, because we feel in our hearts the infinite sweetness of that love; it may be that all our lives we have perceived God's love thanks to the environment in which we have lived through the people who have been close to us. St. Joseph in the house of Nazareth cared for Mary and Jesus. He was a model for the Savior. With his love, gentleness, humility, and obedience he cared for Jesus and made his life blossom in those early years. St. Joseph showed how much he cared and in silence made sure that Jesus could grow and depart to bring the light of God into the world. In every story there are beloved fathers who follow this example. Just as St. Joseph took care of Jesus together with Mary in the simplicity of the house of Nazareth, so we ask the good Lord for this simplicity in caring for those close to us. Perhaps there may be in him or her this sprout, and one day they may remember us as a beloved father, as St. Joseph is remembered by the people.

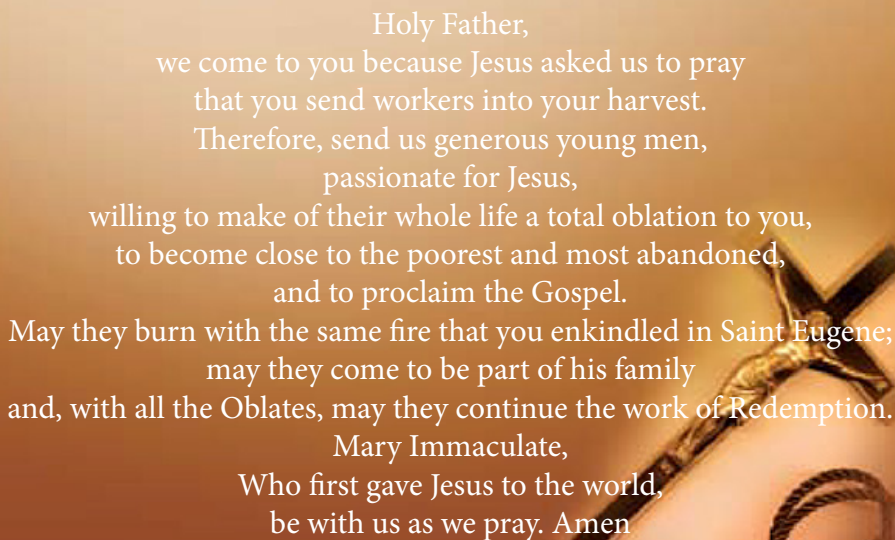
The charism speaks to us:

Our Founder saw in Don Bartolo Zinelli a father figure who took care of him during his exile in Venice. Recalling those moments St. Eugene writes:

*“If I have related these facts, it is only to highlight the graces I was blessed with from my tenderest childhood, and how deeply I must humble myself for not having derived greater benefit from them. It is from then that I date my vocation to the clerical state, and perhaps to a more perfect state.”*²

*“O blessed Zinelli! What would have become of me without you? No one could understand what profound impressions have been left on my heart by the acts of generosity for which I am indebted for the little good there is in me, that takes its source in this first formation and in the direction which this man of God managed to give to my spirit and to my youthful heart.”*³

Let us pray that, following the example of St. Joseph, we may care for the people the Lord entrusts to us, so that with his help they may be the fruit that beautifies the tree of life that is Jesus.



Holy Father,
we come to you because Jesus asked us to pray
that you send workers into your harvest.
Therefore, send us generous young men,
passionate for Jesus,
willing to make of their whole life a total oblation to you,
to become close to the poorest and most abandoned,
and to proclaim the Gospel.
May they burn with the same fire that you enkindled in Saint Eugene;
may they come to be part of his family
and, with all the Oblates, may they continue the work of Redemption.
Mary Immaculate,
Who first gave Jesus to the world,
be with us as we pray. Amen

2 Oblate Writings, vol. 16, pgs. 42-43.

3 Oblate Writings, vol. 21, pg. 34.

Third Day

Tenderness

From the Gospel according to Luke

(Lk 15:11-14; 17-24)

A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So, the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. [...] Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called as you would treat your son; treat me as one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began.



We can easily imagine that Joseph discovered in God a "tender father towards his children". For this reason, Joseph continually seeks, with his life, to transmit to Jesus that same tenderness, through his fatherhood. It was with this tenderness that Jesus approached the poorest and most abandoned, without fear of touching them in their infirmities, without being ashamed of human weakness but exalting it even to the point of death on the cross.

Pope Francis writes: *The history of salvation is worked out “in hope against hope” (Rom 4:18), through our weaknesses. All too often, we think that God works only through our better parts, yet most of his plans are realized in and despite our frailty. [...] Since this is part of the entire economy of salvation, we must learn to look upon our weaknesses with tender mercy. [...] Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us.* ⁴

In their vocation, young people can see in Joseph a model who, despite his limitations, history, and fatherhood, continues to rely on the grace of God who, like the father in the parable, with mercy and truth comes to him, restores his dignity, and puts him back on his feet. As with Joseph, today, too, the Lord continues to use who we are to write on the pages of salvation history.

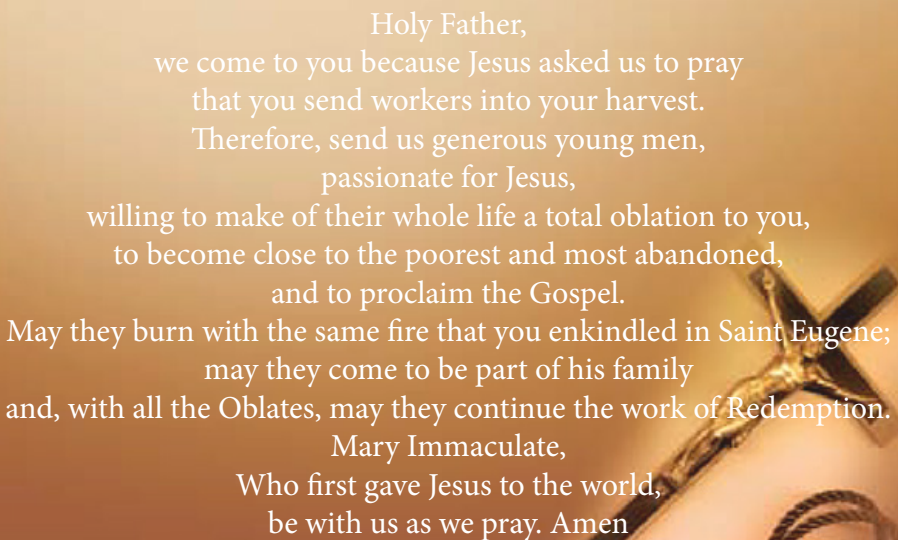
The charism speaks to us:



Remember that you are sent to sinners, and even to hardened sinners. [...] We are the ministers of his mercy, and so let us always have the tenderness of a father towards all; let us easily forget the insults that are sometimes committed against us in the exercise of our ministry as the good Lord wishes to forget the offences continually being committed against him. The father of the prodigal son was not content with putting the best robe on him and having a ring put

on his finger, he had the fatted calf killed as well. In the same way, we must not only reconcile sinners, but in the view of all the graces granted to them during the mission, of the guarantees their fidelity gives to respond thereto and of the efforts they have had to make for all this, we admit them to the sacred banquet, we give them the bread of life so that they can advance in this new path which they are to follow, and may, at the same time, fulfil an imperative duty that urges them. ⁵

Let us pray that following the example of St. Joseph, Patron of our Congregation, during this special year dedicated to him, young people may evermore be a living witness to the Father's tenderness, welcoming and loving the brother or sister they meet on their way.



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May they burn with the same fire that you enkindled in Saint Eugene;
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Fourth Day

Obedience

From the Gospel according to Matthew

(Mt 1: 20-21, 24-25)

Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." [...] When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

(Mt 2:14)

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

(Mt 2:21)

He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

(Mt 2:22- 23)

And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth.

In these first chapters of Matthew's Gospel, Joseph is highlighted as a central figure, a man like us who discovers himself a part of God's plan. It is a plan beyond his understanding, despite him being a righteous man. The Lord speaks to Joseph through dreams and asks him for concrete actions. Four times Joseph is called by God to take charge of the situation and make an impact in the history of Salvation. God speaks to Joseph through dreams, where it can be difficult to make the distinction between fantasy and reality. Joseph responds, urgently discerning, because it is the child's very life that is at stake. Joseph is called to obey in the uncertainty of what is happening to him and he is called to respond promptly. He must grasp God's will in the complexity of his life and trust it.

The charism speaks to us:

Eugene also had to live obedience, even as Superior General, particularly before the reality of becoming Bishop of Marseilles. In this letter, Fr. Tempier presents Eugene with a concrete situation, inviting him to make up his mind and to trust his companions by obeying their advice. After this letter, Eugene will accept and obey, discovering the solution for many situations:



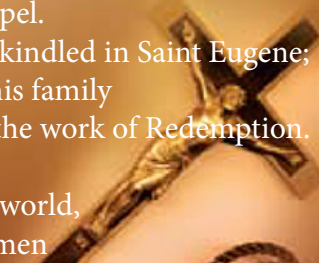
Do you or do you not want to extract yourself from the dire situation in which you are placed? If not, well and good! But in that case, you really shouldn't let us incur all the expenses of the proceedings, you ought to forbid Guibert categorically to speak a word about you; you will have to put up with all the

injuries they heap on you; you must say amen to all the harassment, past, present and future, whether coming from ill-disposed members of the Society or from the Government. If that is what you want, I have nothing to say. But if, on the contrary, you do wish to extract yourself from this situation, that I am justified in describing as wretched, you will have to submit to some extent and yield to the opinion of your friends, who also have some concern for your honor... It is absolutely necessary that you co-operate with the measures we are taking on your behalf... I think this is the last time that I shall speak to you about all this, for I am sick and tired of it. I can tell you that if a rest is so pleasing to you, I also call and desire a rest at least as much as you. Why is it that I have to be here and let my blood run dry for twelve years, forever harnessed to the cart, in most difficult situations! Providence has always arranged things in such a way that, whatever be the crisis we have had to undergo, no matter what its nature, I have ended up all alone to taste its sweetness. All the difficult moments that I have had to experience

in diocesan business and for you especially in countless instances, have worn me out, have wearied me to the point that business annoys me to no end. ⁶

Let us pray that following the example of St. Joseph, Patron of our Congregation, in this special year dedicated to him, young people may confidently launch themselves into the arms of God to live His will to the fullest.

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Fifth Day

Hospitality

From the Gospel according to Luke

(Lk 24: 13-17, 25-27)

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. [...] And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

Often, like the disciples of Emmaus, we fail to see God in the people we meet, in the things we do, in the prayers we recite, and we begin to think that we are alone. Yet, on our journey, Jesus himself approaches and walks with us, follows us, and tries to overcome our disappointment and sadness by saying, "Do not fear, do not be afraid." These are the same words that prompted Joseph to trust God and recognize His presence in his life. Joseph welcomes God's presence in the vulnerability of his personal story, inviting us to do the same, recognizing it as Sacred History.

Pope Francis writes:

In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments. [...] Just as God told Joseph: "Son of David, do not be afraid!" (Mt 1:20), so he seems to tell us: "Do not be afraid!" We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed.⁷

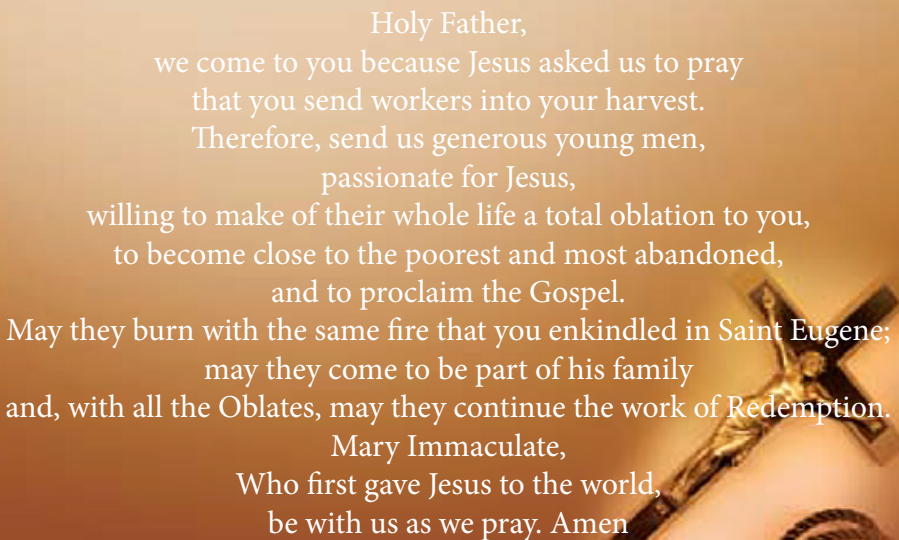


In the reality of life, Joseph lives it recognizing the presence of a God who walks beside him, who supports him and continues to tell him "Do not fear." As we listen to our story we will find "everything that refers to Him".

The charism speaks to us:

I looked for happiness outside of God and for too long with resulting unhappiness. How often in my past life had my wounded, tormented heart taken wings for God from whom it had turned away! [...] I was in a state of mortal sin and it was precisely this that made me grieve. I could then, and also on some other instance, perceive the difference. Never was my soul more satisfied, never did it feel such happiness; for in the midst of this flood of tears, despite my grief, or rather through my grief, my soul took wings for its last end, towards God its only good whose loss it felt so keenly. ⁸

We ask for the intercession of St. Joseph, that he may accompany all young people who are searching and who are on a journey without a specific destination. May they meet authentic witnesses of Christ's love, helping them to reread their story in the light of God's plan of love.



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Therefore, send us generous young men,
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May they burn with the same fire that you enkindled in Saint Eugene;
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and, with all the Oblates, may they continue the work of Redemption.
Mary Immaculate,
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be with us as we pray. Amen

Courageous Creativity and Daring

From the Gospel according to John

(Jn 6:4-9)

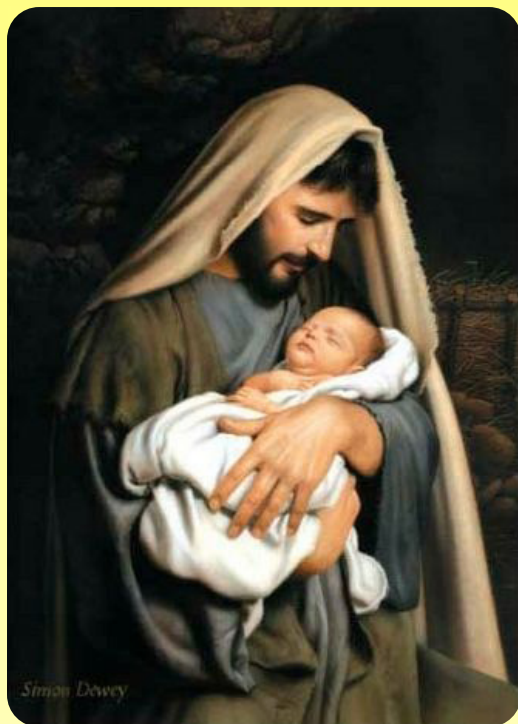
The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little bit." One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?"



How many times have we found ourselves in this situation? On one side a hungry "big crowd", on the other side "five loaves and two fish". What should we do? We need to get out of our quantitative logic. We must let ourselves be moved and respond with creative courage. In the words of Pope Francis, *"This emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties,"*⁹ as does the carpenter of Nazareth, *"who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence."*¹⁰ Like the boy in the Gospel who offered the little he had so that it might become much for many people, so is St. Joseph, the man who offered all of himself to courageously care for the child and his mother at the beginning of the story of redemption and to give what he could.

9 Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde*, no. 5, 8 December 2020.

10 Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde*, no. 5, 8 December 2020.



We may think we are not capable enough, but often, *“difficulties bring out resources we did not even think we had.”*

¹¹ Daily miracles are evident if we think of the moments in our lives when we said a word, gave a loving gesture, “fed” the souls of those before us! At a specific moment of his story, Joseph is called to accept the will of God, to plan, to work, to find a way to keep and save his treasure. We too can take what we have and offer it with courage, creativity, and missionary boldness to save souls who hunger for Jesus Christ. Looking at Joseph’s courage, we realize that it is a

matter of considering all things, of trying and trying again, inventing, and reinventing ways that adapt to those people, to those places, with those urgencies and not others. It is a question of being available to the action of divine grace, which can do everything if it obtains everything from us, even if it may seem little to us.

The charism speaks to us:

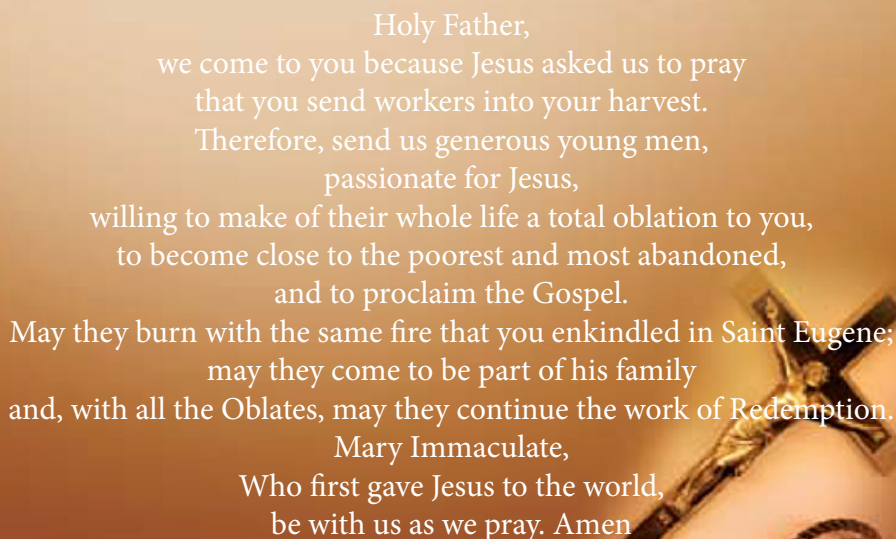
This was not something tentative to be tried. You had to go there with the firm resolve to overcome ail obstacles, go there to stay, take root there! How could you hesitate? What more beautiful mission than this! [...] Take all your courage in your hands...it is only thus you will bring upon yourselves the blessing of God. ¹²

11 Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde*, no. 5, 8 December 2020.

12 *Oblate Writings*, vol. 1, pg. 79.

It is only a matter of doubling one's zeal. Go back in memory to the time when we were only four, it is thus that the Congregation began and we gave a good account of ourselves. It is your turn to show yourself as generous and enterprising. One must never recoil from work, never be intimidated. The good God is there to inspire us and our good Mother to assist us. ¹³

In these days of the Novena for Oblate Vocations, we pray ardently to Saint Joseph that he may inspire in the hearts of many young people the desire to be that boy of the Gospel who, in the few loaves and fishes that he carries with him, courageously chooses to entrust everything he has into Jesus' hands so that it may be transformed into food for many.

A background image of a crucifix and a rope. The crucifix is made of wood and has a figure of Jesus on it. A thick rope is coiled in the bottom right corner.

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be with us as we pray. Amen

Working for the Kingdom of God

From the Gospel according to John

(Jn 4:31-38)

Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So, the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months the harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving his payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work."

What is "work" for Jesus? And for me, today, what does it mean to work? Do we work too much or too little? Pope Francis writes: *"Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion. [...] Saint Joseph's work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work. The loss of employment that affects so many of our brothers and sisters, and has increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, should serve as a summons to review our priorities."*¹⁴ Jesus chooses fishermen and makes them "fishers" of men. What a great dignity this is—through vocation—in which Jesus recognizes and, at the same time, confers on man and his action, the grace of work! The fruit of work is usually food: "If anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat,"¹⁵ says St. Paul to the Thessalonians. The food of Jesus is "To do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work."¹⁶ This is the dignity of Jesus' work and, therefore, of the very "work" to which we are called: the will and work of God. The charism speaks to us:

Eugene de Mazenod, writes often to his missionaries, reminding them how work and rest must be ordered to the will of God:

14 Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde*, no. 6, 8 December 2020.

15 1 Thessalonians 3:10.

16 John 4:34.



*Night and day the labors of our Fathers are on my mind and I cannot put it at rest. It is not possible that they are bearing up to it: it tries me truly and cruelly. How long then will last this so highly rated Jubilee in our blessed city of Aix? I see Suzanne from here forcing his voice in that great church of Saint Savior. How could his chest not suffer thereby? And Courtes, is he not also forcing himself, although preaching in a church less vast? At least let no one think of joining to this work any other work whatever. Make your plans ahead; it is absolutely indispensable and I absolutely wish that they rest an entire month after such excessive fatigue. When I say rest themselves, I mean a total cessation from preaching for those at least who are at it for such a long time and the others who will have been tired by shorter work but still above their strength. You will quite simply have to refuse any proposal and not fear to give the reason why, they will all have to understand that men are not made of iron and that even iron wears out.*¹⁷

Do we work too little, too much? In what or in whom do we place our hope? What is really our "work"? Let us pray that, like Saint Joseph, our daily actions, our work, and our projects may be lived in the will of God, with humility and dedication, aware that God is the beginning and the end of everything and that he has chosen us to be collaborators in his work.

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Eighth Day
Hiddenness

From the Gospel according to Luke

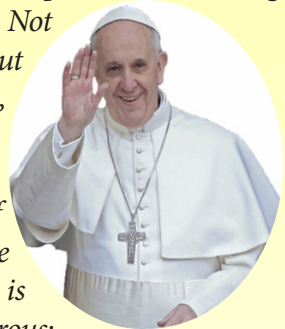
(Lk 2:40; 2:52; 3:23)

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. [...] And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man. [...] When Jesus began his ministry, he was about thirty years of age.

Jesus lived thirty years “hidden” and learning from his “hidden” father. This hiddenness is also emphasized by the swiftness of the narrative which mentions thirty years of Jesus’ life in the few verses between the end of chapter 2 and 3 of Luke’s Gospel. In that long period of hidden life, Jesus—true God and true man—learns to live chastity, poverty and obedience through his own family. Who knows how beautiful his relationship with Joseph, the man of dreams whom God asks to be the hidden father, must have been?

Pope Francis writes:

Fathers are not born, but made. [...] Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person. [...] Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being overprotective or possessive, but rather making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities. Perhaps for this reason, Joseph is traditionally called a “most chaste” father. That title is not simply a sign of affection, but the summation of an attitude that is the opposite of possessiveness. [...] Only when love is chaste, is it truly love. A possessive love ultimately becomes dangerous: it imprisons, constricts and makes for misery. God himself loved humanity with a chaste love; he left us free even to go astray and set ourselves against him.¹⁸ Hiddenness is, then, like Joseph’s chastity and like Jesus’ humility and docility.

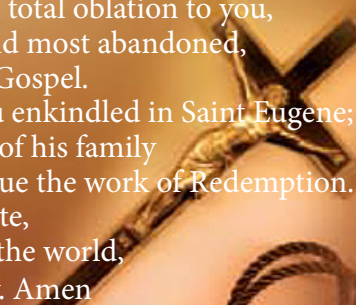


The charism speaks to us:

During his retreat upon entering the seminary, Eugene gains an awareness of his littleness and, with his Provençal energy, with the charge of an ardent young man, and a deep desire for radicality in God, he notes:

Absolute devotedness to the orders of the superiors, perfect submission to their least command, however puerile it seems to someone who has lived to be 26 in the fullest independence, even as regards piety. Scrupulous obedience to the rule, even though I may seem overly meticulous in the eyes of my confreres. A friendly, generous charity towards all my brothers, respect for all superiors, trust in many of them. I will be more self-critical and try to imitate the most fervent, meticulous, interior amongst my confreres. I will show a special respect, at least in my mind, towards those who are already enabled with the priesthood, and in general I will hold this sublime character in the deepest respect, making an interior act of humility whenever I meet a priest, that is, acknowledging and confessing humbly before God that I am unworthy of ever being clothed with a character so awesome at least to a man who has had the misfortune to live for so long in forgetfulness of God. Humility, above all humility, must be the foundation of the building of my salvation. ¹⁹

Let us pray that, like Jesus and Saint Joseph, we may learn to live hidden when it is required of us; to become "fathers" and "mothers" to one another so that we may witness to the charity of Christ on earth.



Holy Father,
we come to you because Jesus asked us to pray
that you send workers into your harvest.
Therefore, send us generous young men,
passionate for Jesus,
willing to make of their whole life a total oblation to you,
to become close to the poorest and most abandoned,
and to proclaim the Gospel.
May they burn with the same fire that you enkindled in Saint Eugene;
may they come to be part of his family
and, with all the Oblates, may they continue the work of Redemption.
Mary Immaculate,
Who first gave Jesus to the world,
be with us as we pray. Amen

Ninth Day

Holiness

From Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*:

A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for “this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3). Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel. That mission has its fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through him. At its core, holiness is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life. It consists in uniting ourselves to the Lord’s death and resurrection in a unique and personal way, constantly dying and rising anew with him. But it can also entail reproducing in our own lives various aspects of Jesus’ earthly life: his hidden life, his life in community, his closeness to the outcast, his poverty and other ways in which he showed his self-sacrificing love. ²⁰



We are called to holiness! Yes! All of us, each of us is called to holiness. Saint Eugene was very clear about this. It is only through a holy life that we can give witness and awaken in young people the desire and the beauty of giving one's life for God. This does not mean

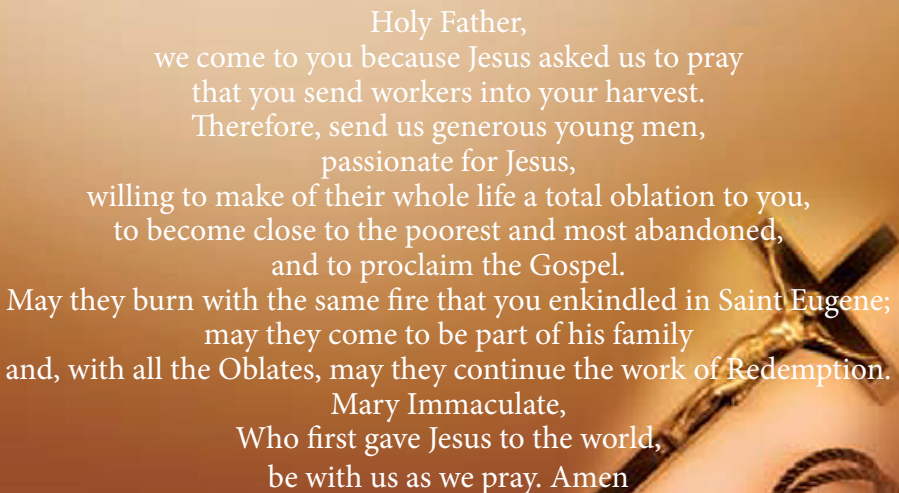
doing great, lofty things, but doing our daily tasks perfectly by carrying out the mission that God has entrusted to us. As Pope Francis reminds us, "every saint is a mission" and he is so because he embodies an aspect of the Gospel by putting God at the center of his life, totally. St. Joseph had a mission: to cooperate as Mary's spouse and foster father of Jesus, in the mystery of the Incarnation. It is true that there is no higher or more sublime mission, but it was what God asked of St. Joseph and he did it with filial obedience, embracing and accepting everything with the greatest humility. He became a saint by embracing the divine will moment by moment. He

was in Bethlehem for the census and the birth of the Savior; he protected Jesus and Mary from the persecution of Herod by taking them to Egypt; he lived the rest of his life in simplicity of life in Nazareth guarding and loving Jesus and Mary. For us, the call is no different. We are called to holiness; we are called to be cooperators of the Savior where we live, in our communities, in our daily tasks, doing them and offering them to Him, the only good, the only salvation, Jesus Christ the Savior.

The charism speaks to us:

We are constituted a Society. Just now I can say to you quietly what I will say to you out loud when the brief is delivered: know your dignity, take care never to dishonor your Mother who has just been enthroned and recognized as Queen in the household of the Spouse, whose grace will make her fecund enough to engender a great number of children, if we are faithful and do not draw upon her a shameful sterility by our prevarications. In the name of God, let us be saints. ²¹

Let us pray that, following the example of Saint Joseph, we may become docile and obedient to the voice of the Father, committing ourselves to the path of being saints where He has placed us and calls us to bear witness to His love, with joy and simplicity.



Holy Father,
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that you send workers into your harvest.
Therefore, send us generous young men,
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willing to make of their whole life a total oblation to you,
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