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REFLECTING ON  
JESUS CHRIST, THE SAVIOR  
WITH ST. EUGENE DE MAZENOD

and the Mazenodian Family

DECEMBER 2021- NOVEMBER 2022

# Introduction

**Fr. Frank Santucci, OMI**

*Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies, San Antonio, Texas*

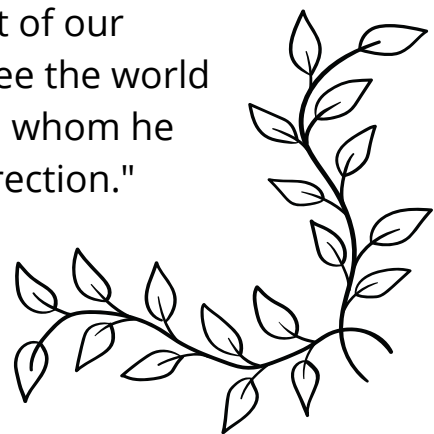
## **WHY THIS BOOKLET?**

*"We achieve unity in our life only in and through Jesus Christ. Our ministry involves us in a variety of tasks, yet each act in life is an occasion for personal encounter with the Lord, who through us gives himself to others and through others gives himself to us. While maintaining within ourselves an atmosphere of silence and inner peace, we seek his presence in the hearts of the people and in the events of daily life as well as in the Word of God, in the sacraments and in prayer. We are pilgrims, walking with Jesus in faith, hope and love."*  
(Constitution 31)

This beautiful text from the Missionary Oblate Rule of Life expresses the deepest desire of all of us in the Mazenodian family: to journey together as disciples of Jesus Christ the Savior to eternal life. This booklet, compiled by Fr. David Muñoz OMI and several members of the Mazenodian family, aims to be a monthly guide for each of us throughout the year.

## **IT IS AN INVITATION**

- For you to use the text as a focus for your personal reflection and prayer throughout the month
- To use it as a means of being united with all the members of the Mazenodian Family who are on the same spiritual and missionary journey around the charism of Saint Eugene de Mazenod.
- To participate in the monthly Oraison prayer moment, usually on the third Sunday of each month. This why the reflections are all focused on the Gospel text of that Sunday.
- To focus on the Cross of Jesus Christ which is at the heart of our charism: "Through the eyes of our crucified Saviour we see the world which he redeemed with his blood, desiring that those in whom he continues to suffer will know also the power of his resurrection."  
(Constitution 4).



# What is Oraison?

“In the prolonged silent prayer we make each day, we let ourselves be molded by the Lord, and find in him the inspiration of our conduct” (OMI Rule of Life, 33).

The practice of Oraison was an important part of St. Eugene’s daily prayer during which he entered into communion with the members of his missionary family. While they were all in France it was easy for them to gather in prayer at approximately the same time. When Oblate missionaries started to be sent to different continents it was no longer possible to pray at the same time, yet each day there was a time when they stopped and prayed in union with one another – even though not at the same time.

This is a practice that Eugene wanted the members of his religious family to maintain.

Just choose a time for personal prayer wherever you like, and consciously unite yourself with all the members of the Mazenodian Family in praying for one another.

The choice of length and content of the prayer is for each one to decide.



# December 2021

## Jesus Christ, the Evangelizer

### **Scripture Reading: *Luke 1: 39-45***

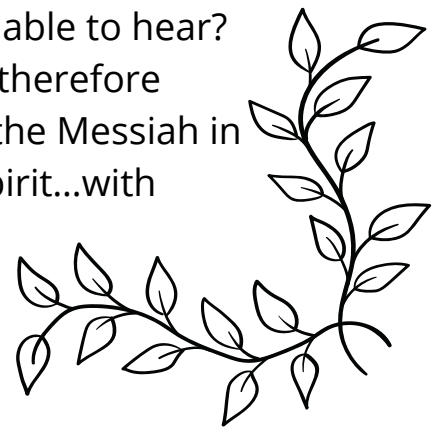
Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

### **Oblate Text: *To Father Vincens, January 17, 1835.***

Grace penetrates hearts while our words reach the ears. Herein lies the vast difference between our preaching and the sermons, from other aspects infinitely superior, of the great occasion preachers. Miracles multiply at the sound of the missionary's voice and the prodigious number of conversions is so striking that the poor instrument of these marvels is the first to be amazed: as he blesses God and rejoices, he humbles himself because of his own insignificance and nothingness. What an approval these miracles are!

### **Michele Divito: *Consecrated Virgin and Oblate Associate, Buffalo, NY***

This text is one of my favorites! Two women of faith, two humble family members, holy, prayerful listeners, and women of action! Mary and Elizabeth, together, exemplify a life of humility, prayer and action. Let us start with Elizabeth: "...Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting..." and "...Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out..." How was she able to hear? Because she was prayerful! She was attuned to listening and therefore attentive to God's promptings and presence. She recognizes the Messiah in Mary's womb. And this allows her to be filled with the Holy Spirit...with God! When we are similarly disposed, with both humility and listening, we too can cry out in a loud voice.



# December 2021

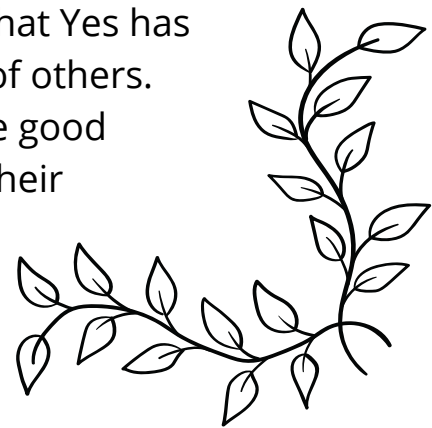
## Jesus Christ, the Evangelizer

We become evangelizers of the poor! And our blessed mother? We already know from the Annunciation that she is a holy and prayerful woman. In this passage we see her “in action.” She “..set out and travelled...” Being filled with God means we don’t stay safe and in one place. It means we go out! And like Mary we bring Christ with us, just by our presence and being, we carry Christ to those who do not know Him.

And the Oblate text, the words of St. Eugene, mirrors this same attitude presented to us in this scripture. Grace enters those who are prayerful and open and then miracles of conversion occur. We, like the women in the Gospel of Luke, like the Oblates spoken about by St. Eugene, can be used by God to bring Him into a world that greatly needs Him, by our humble and prayerful attitudes and willingness to act.

**Fr. Tony Rigoli, OMI:** *Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe/ St. Jude Shrine in New Orleans, Louisiana*

After Mary made her “YES” to the Angel’s request to be the mother of the Saviour....what does she do with this Good News.....she not only wants to share her news with her cousin Elizabeth but she goes to assist her in Elizabeth’s pregnancy. If we go back a bit to the scene of the Annunciation, we see that when asked to become the Mother of the Saviour.....Mary says:” How can this be”. Mary is anxious, confused, she wonders what holds in store for her. Finally she makes her profound FIAT.....her YES...and that YES changes our entire salvation history. As a member of the Oblate Family, we also heard the call to take a step into a future unknown. We also may have said...how can this be. We experienced confusion, anxiety but finally we made that leap of faith and made our own YES. That Yes has made all the difference in our life and hopefully in the lives of others. Finally, what did we do with the YES---we set out to bring the good news to the poor. We set out, like Mary , to serve others in their need.Our Yes brought us to many different places and our YES , like Mary’s, called us to truly be servants.



# January 2022

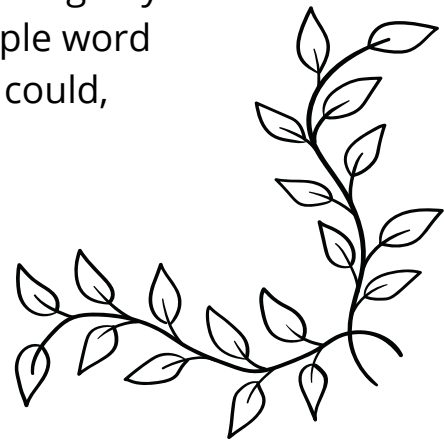
## Jesus Christ, the Word of God

### **Scripture Reading: *Luke 4: 14-21***

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

### **Oblate Text: *Popular Instruction on Confession preached in Provencal on the 4th Sunday of Lent, 1813.***

We had placed all our trust in the Lord and our hope has not been in vain: experience proves that the sacred word transmitted through our ministry is being eagerly received. For this may God be praised! My brethren, the joy I experience is so great that I cannot express it to you... Called by vocation to be the servant and the priest of the poor, in whose service I want to be able to spend my whole life, I could not be insensitive seeing the poor people's eagerness to hear me... Imitating the Apostle, we did not come to proclaim to you the Gospel of Jesus Christ through high-sounding speeches of a human wisdom, no, "in speaking and in preaching to you we used not persuasive speech of human wisdom, but the simple word of God devoid of all embellishment, offered as much as we could, within the reach of the most simple people".





# January 2022

## Jesus Christ, the Word of God

**Fr. Jarek Pachocki, OMI:** *Vocation Director, Canada-Lacombe Province and  
Pastor of the De Mzenod Door Outreach Mission, Hamilton, Ontario.*

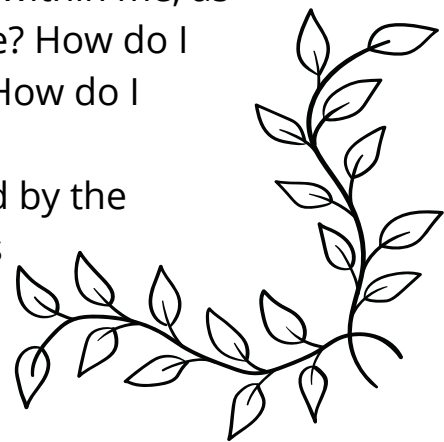
Our Oblate Constitutions and Rules state, “Cooperating with the Savior and imitating his example, we commit ourselves principally to evangelizing the poor.” (C. 1) This daring commitment has always been a guiding principle in discernment for me in life and mission as an Oblate. The experience of missionary life has constantly taught me about what “evangelizing the poor” means.

Preferential option for the poor, marginalized and abandoned is like a compass that Eugene gave to the Mazenodian Family. I currently minister in an inner-city parish with lots of homelessness, drugs, prostitution, mental illness, etc. in the neighbourhood. A few years ago, we started the Outreach Program called “De Mazenod Door,” which offers food for close to 400 guests a day. As well, this ministry helps address the basic needs regarding housing and the overall wellbeing of our guests. Everyone coming to the De Mazenod Door is treated with dignity and respect. It is our goal that every single visitor to our Door walks away with a true sense of friendship and hospitality. There are many volunteers who are involved in this ministry - they see the value of living a preferential option for the poor and underprivileged, just like Eugene did. In embracing this mission to love the poor, we become co-operators with Jesus Christ the Savior!

**Eleanor Rabnett:** *Oblate Associate, Canada-Lacombe Province,  
Ottawa, Ontario*

How are these words of scripture proclaimed and enlivened within me, as a member of the Mazenodian Family? As an Oblate Associate? How do I become a living Gospel and proclaim it with my very being? How do I become a servant and priest to the poor?

Living out my vocation to love all, especially those untouched by the structures of our society and church, I take to heart Eugene’s words and walk with my neighbours, the forgotten, ignored,



# **January 2022**

## **Jesus Christ, the Word of God**

voiceless and those who have been robbed of their humanity. Like Jesus, his disciples, and Eugene de Mazenod I do not wait for them to come to me, but go out to meet and greet them, asking if I might walk with them, as a friend, companion, and fellow traveller. Allowing myself to become a light to my neighbours' feet as we journey together I ask God to smile and shed His light on us, so that we may be filled with light and hope for others as we go; that together we might be healed, and our steps will become one with all of creation in the continuous unfolding of the Kingdom of God.





# February 2022

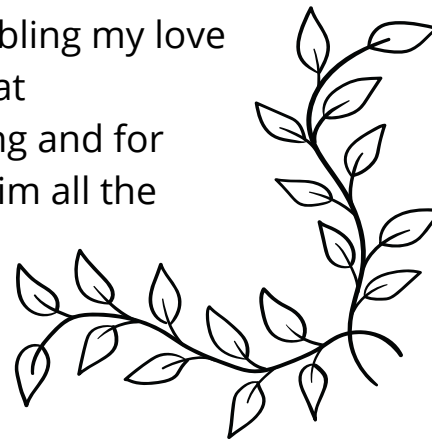
## Jesus, the Merciful Christ

### **Scripture Text: *Luke 6: 27-38***

Jesus said to his disciples: "To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."

### **Oblate Text: *Retreat Notes December 1814***

So I had looked for happiness outside of God, and outside him I found but affliction and chagrin. Blessed, a thousand times blessed, that he, this good Father, notwithstanding my unworthiness, lavished on me all the richness of his mercy. Let me at least make up for lost time by redoubling my love for him. May all my actions, thoughts, etc., be directed to that end. What more glorious occupation than to act in everything and for everything only for God, to love him above all else, to love him all the more as one who has loved him too late.



# February 2022

## Jesus, the Merciful Christ

**Fr. Louis Studer, OMI:** *Provincial, United States Province*

I recently listened to a presentation by Fr. Chava Gonzales regarding St. Eugene's purpose for sending his sons to minister at Shrines. Shrine ministry was a favorite of his.

We might assume, as I did, that his primary purpose would be to minister to the many pilgrims who often come to Shrines to renew their spiritual lives and deepen their relationship with the Lord.

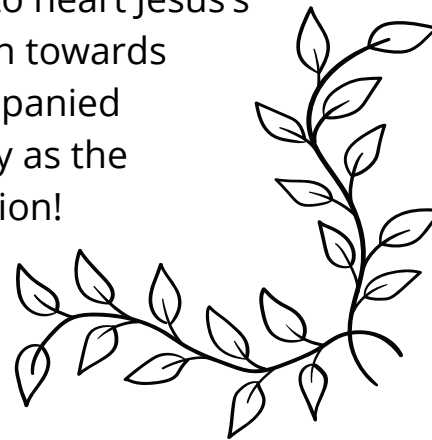
That was not his primary purpose. His primary purpose for sending Oblates to Shrine ministry was because he believed such ministry would renew the Oblates themselves spiritually and deepen their vocation.

St. Eugene often was concerned about the prayer life, the relationship with Jesus, of his Oblates. He believed this ministry would deepen and enhance the religious commitment of his Oblates!

I love that concern for the welfare of his Oblates! He knew they would minister in a more effective way if they themselves were constantly renewed in their own vocation and their commitment to that vocation given to them by Jesus.

**Kirk Jacob:** *Coordinator of Oblate Partners in Mission, London, UK*

We all have unsettling times in life, our Founder Eugene De Mazenod had the same! We are in good company! His 1807 Good Friday notes clearly shows this: 'I looked for happiness outside of God and outside of him I found affliction.' Eugene's aristocratic lifestyle did little to satisfy his emptiness. Nonetheless, on that Good Friday he finally welcomed and accepted the loving embrace of the crucified Lord. He took to heart Jesus's words to "Be merciful". Mercy involves compassionate action towards someone in need! In post-French Revolution, Eugene accompanied prisoners to the guillotine with the last Rites. Daring ministry as the mainstream Church considered Prisoners 'outside' redemption! Our question today is: who are those Jesus asks us to love?



## **February 2022**

# **Jesus, the Merciful Christ**

During my early childhood years in India, I recall hearing how unsafe LGBT Catholics felt in their respective communities. A lack of welcome and even rejection. Added to this, harsh condemnatory Church statements and Scripture quotes that increased their pain.

In our times, Pope Francis shows us the merciful face of God and this can move us towards the peripheries. Our work is to leave 'nothing undared for the Gospel' and seek to be compassionate servants of God within human sexuality that is integrated into spirituality.



# March 2022

## Jesus Christ, the Savior

### **Scripture Text:** *Luke 13: 1-9*

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener,

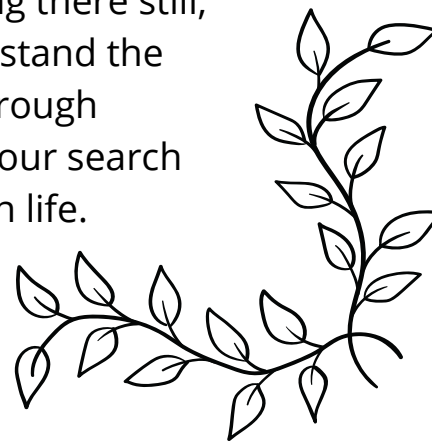
'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"

### **Oblate Text:** *Retreat Notes, December 1811*

[...] That the Holy Spirit... may come to rest on me in all its fullness, filling everything within me with the love of Jesus Christ my Saviour, in such a way that I live and breathe no longer but in him, consume myself in his love, serving him and spreading the news of how lovable he is.

**Alfonso Lopez:** *Oblate Youth Minister, Houston, Texas*

I think of the times I resemble the unfruitful fig tree- standing there still, swaying in the wind, waiting for the rain, and hoping to withstand the storms that come my way. We live in a world that speeds through everything, seeking instant gratification and life meaning in our search engines as if our browser had the answers to all questions in life. Unfortunately, our surroundings push us to live fast and in the now, taking yesterday and tomorrow for granted.



## March 2022

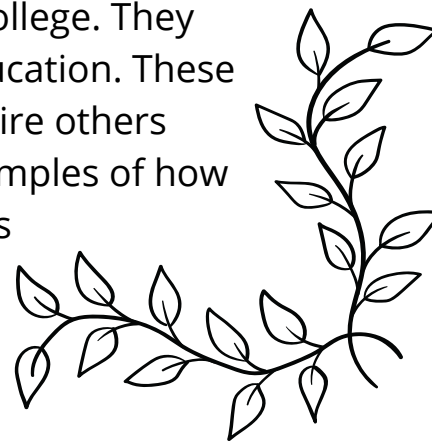
# Jesus Christ, the Savior

Those of us who farm and garden know that all plants and trees take time to grow; they need constant care, proper feed, and sometimes a change in surroundings to thrive and flourish. Like the gardener, Jesus comes to save us and gives us a revival of spirit and faith. He looks beyond our frailty and sees in us for the people of faith, kindness, love, and compassion that we can be. I ask myself, am I as loving, caring, and patient to others as He is to me? When was the last time I helped to water the garden? Jesus invites us to live a different life, a life watered and cultivated by the graces of God.

**Fr. Jesse Esqueda, OMI:** *Superior, Baja California Mission, Mexico*

In graduate school, during a discussion on poverty, our professor told the class: "Be cautious with your judgements and don't expect the poor to have your middleclass mindset when they make choices. They did not have your opportunities, education, or life experiences." These words made an impact in my ministry; and, after many years, I continue to reflect on them when I am tempted to judge the choices of others.

I have been serving in the poorest area of the city of Tijuana, Mexico, for over seven years. In our community, there is a great deal of violence, drugs, gangs, and broken families. Many times, young men and women make unhealthy choices because they lack role models, family support, opportunities, and/or resources. Like the orchard owner in the parable, it is easy to feel disappointed and discouraged; however – far from criticisms and judgments – these young adults need advocates who will help cultivate the ground around them, in order that they are able to bear fruit in the future. Over the years, many Oblates, donors, and friends have invested time, talent, and resources in our mission community; consequently, ninety percent of the young adults in our parish are now in college. They are the first members of their families to receive a higher education. These new opportunities will change their lives forever and will inspire others who lack the motivation or hope. This is one of the many examples of how change in a community is possible when faith-filled gardeners believe in the potential of the fig tree, even when all hope seems lost.



# April 2022

## Jesus Christ, Eternal Life

### **Scripture Text: *John 20: 1-9***

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

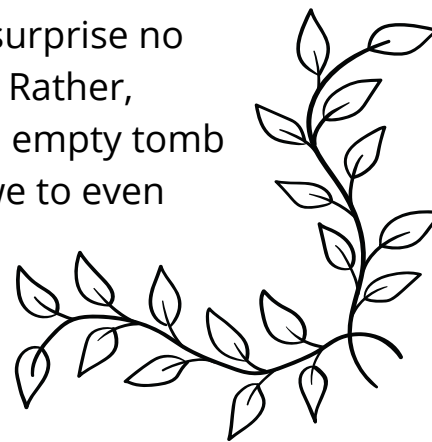
### **Oblate Text: *Constitutions and Rules, no. 4***

The cross of Jesus Christ is central to our mission. Like the apostle Paul, we "preach Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2: 2). If we bear in our body the death of Jesus, it is with the hope that the life of Jesus, too, may be seen in our body (cf. 2 Cor 4:10). Through the eyes of our crucified Saviour we see the world which he redeemed with his blood, desiring that those in whom he continues to suffer will know also the power of his resurrection (cf. Phil 3: 10).

**Dr. Scott Woodward**-*President, Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, TX*

That the followers of Jesus who came to the tomb before dawn would be astonished to find the stone removed and Jesus gone should surprise no one. There are no witnesses to the resurrection as it happens. Rather, Mary of Magdala finds the stone removed, then others find an empty tomb and the burial cloths rolled up. Rise from the dead? How are we to even comprehend that anyone can rise from the dead?

The way to understand the resurrection is found in the Constitution and Rules – See through the eyes of the Crucified





## April 2022

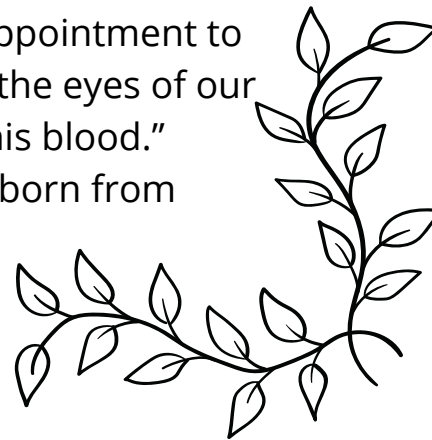
# Jesus Christ, Eternal Life

Savior. This is what the “other” or beloved disciple does. He sees and believes. The resurrection is incomprehensible until we see God’s unconditional love for all creation, all people. Surely God leaves out some people, we like to think. The answer is no, God loves all; as impossible a thought as the resurrection unless one sees through God’s eyes.

Like Peter who ran into the tomb, we see and we touch but we struggle to believe the message of salvation, the message of the resurrection – God loves all and the Paschal Mystery is evidence of it. New life comes by seeing as the Beloved Disciple did – through the eyes of the Crucified Savior.

**Fr. Salvador Gonzalez, OMI:** *Director, King's House Retreat & Renewal Center  
Belleville, IL*

Today’s meditation speaks to me about new breaking away from the old to embrace the new. We celebrate Easter Sunday because Mary of Magdala came to the tomb on the day first day of the week, the day after the sabbath. Mary of Magdala’s love for the lord was held back by the observance of the law concerning the sabbath. With the expression, “On the first day of the week” recalls the first day of creation, In Jesus we find God’s new creation. In Jesus, this new creation, willed by God, knows no death, knows no end, knows no darkness. God wills that all of God’s creation experience life to the fullest, no longer marked by our sins, or failings, or even death. For this creation to flourish we must be free, free to accept the love of God and free to respond to that love generously. The voice of love called Jesus from the grip of death. The voice of love moved the Simon Peter and the other disciple to run towards the tomb. The voice of love transformed the tomb from a place of pain and disappointment to a womb from where new life flowed like a spring. “Through the eyes of our crucified Savior we see the world which he redeemed with his blood.” (CCRR, No 4. May our love for all of humanity be one that is born from freedom, removes stones, births new life, and restores people to their dignity as children of God.



# May 2022

## Jesus Christ, the love of God

### **Scripture Text:** *John 13: 31-33a; 34-35*

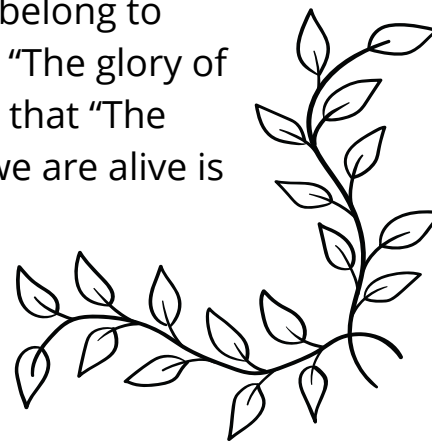
When Judas had left them, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

### **Oblate Text:** *Retreat Notes, May 1837*

To you alone it belongs to give strength to my soul; you alone can renew in my depths the sacred fire of your love which must first enkindle fire in my heart, and then pour itself out by my ministry in the souls whom you want to confide in me.

**Fr. James Allen, OMI:** *Formation Team, Henri Tempier Prenovitiate, Belleville, IL*

Five times in one sentence in John's Last Supper narrative, Jesus uses the word "glorify." A couple of lines later, he gives the apostles a "new commandment" and he uses the word "love" four times. Of course, the word "glorify" means to "give glory." But how is that done? The whole paschal mystery of Jesus' passion, death, resurrection, appearances, and ascension are simply God's way of showing His love for us. In acts of mutual love, the Father and the Son "glorify" or demonstrate their love for one another and for all creation. And the new commandment to the disciples (and to us, of course) is that we too enter that cycle of glory and love by loving one another. That's how we show God that we belong to Him! St. Irenaeus is sometimes partially misquoted as saying: "The glory of God is the human fully alive." All that Irenaeus really said was that "The glory of God is the living human being." The simple fact that we are alive is a sign of God's glory (love) and we are living most fully when we give that glory back by loving God and our neighbor. St. Eugene seemed to really understand that in the retreat notes quoted above.



# May 2022

## Jesus Christ, the love of God

**Claudia Garcia:** *Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas*

God's love is unconditional and He asks for our love for Him, ourselves and others to also be unconditional. This is easier said than done.

Our most important relationship is with God. Only by getting to know Him better can we receive the unconditional love for ourselves and others. For example, when we love someone; our husband, children, or parents we make sure that we spend time with them. So what are we doing to spend time with God and develop this loving relationship? Let's take time to pray, read the bible and listen to God on a daily basis.

Our second most important relationship is with ourselves. What are we doing to accept ourselves; improve our attitudes and take care of our ourselves? For many years I didn't love myself and that made it very hard to open myself up to loving others. Forgive yourself; take care of yourself and accept that God loves you more than you will ever know.

Once we put God first and work on loving ourselves then the Holy Spirit can fill us with unconditional love that overflows. We will be better equipped to love our spouse, children, friends, co-workers and yes even those who hurt us. It's not easy to love unconditionally so reach out to the source of love, which is Jesus.



## June 2022

# Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life

### **Scripture Text: *Luke 9: 11-17***

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

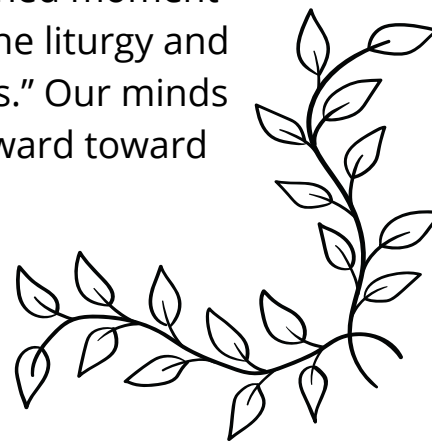
### **Oblate Text: *To Father Tempier, February 16, 1826***

It was especially at communion, when our divine Savior is on the point of giving us the utmost proof of his love that I was prompted to abandon myself to all the sentiments that his divine presence and the immensity of his mercy inspired at that precious moment in my miserable soul, never better felt than when I see him not despising a sinner like me.

### **Artie Pingolt: *Director of the Missionary Oblate Partnership***

Luke's miracle of the loaves and the fishes offers an empowering way to understand Eucharist, Jesus as the Bread of Life. Most of us grew up both learning and experiencing "holy communion" as this heightened moment of the 'ultimate' sacrament, when bread and wine, through the liturgy and a priest, became the "real and actual body and blood of Jesus." Our minds and hearts were captivated by the wonder of this event, outward toward the consecrated host.

In my reading of the loaves and fishes, however, Jesus calls and empowers us too, not only the priest or the liturgy,



## June 2022

# Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life

to move outward and “consecrate” others, this “Body of Christ” that we are a part of. He says, directly, to his apostles, “you feed them.” In the same way, and one which is deeply Mazenodian, we are called to a global vision, greater than ourselves, to feed those who we know who hunger: for food, for justice, or merely for care and acknowledgement.

Our theology of Christ’s real presence in Eucharist is also very Mazenodian: our deepest identity as a member of a missionary family is to see Christ in ALL men and women in all places in the world, in all situations. Our seeing God in all and finding God “in all” is this real, Eucharistic presence we call the Body of Christ.

**Fr. Ron Laframboise, OMI:** *Formation team, Bl. Mario Borzaga Scholasticate, San Antonio, TX*

When the twelve returned from their mission, Jesus took them apart to a quiet place, but people heard He was there. A crowd gathered. More than 5,000. They lingered, did not want to go away. As I read this, I see the crowd fording the Rio Grande and huddling under a bridge in Del Rio. I hear voices say, “dismiss them, send them away, send them back.” Then I hear Jesus say, “Give them some food yourselves.” The crowd had gathered not to eat, but because He understood them, had compassion, satisfied a deeper need. “Give them that yourselves,” Jesus says. According to U.N. statistics, at the end of 2020, 82.4 million people, of whom 4.1 million were asylum seekers, were forcibly displaced because of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or events seriously disturbing public order. We can easily feel overwhelmed, but we can also share our “five loaves and two fish”, and He will do the rest. Then they will experience His presence and the immensity of his mercy.



# July 2022

## Jesus Christ, a Friend

### **Scripture Text: Luke 10: 38-42**

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

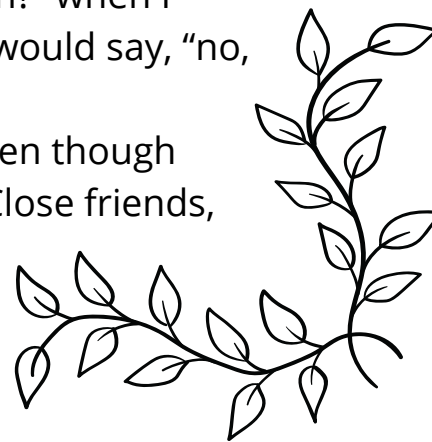
### **Oblate Text: Retreat Notes, December 1811**

For by how many titles do I belong to you? Not only are you my Creator and Redeemer, as you are all people's, but you are my special benefactor and applied your merits in an altogether special way to me; my generous friend, you forgot all my acts of ingratitude to help me as powerfully as if I had been always faithful to you; my tender father, who carried this rebel on your shoulders, warmed him against your heart, washed his wounds, etc. Good God, merciful Saviour, a thousand lives employed in your service, sacrificed to your glory, would be the least compensation your justice would be entitled to demand of me.

**Bro. Patrick McGee:** *Formation team, Oblate Novitiate, Godfrey, IL.*

Do you ever pause to consider – and be grateful for – the ways in which your closest friends have an impact on your behavior? I had such an impactful friend in Kelly. He and I shared life in community for too short a time. Periodically he would say to me: "are we isolating again?" when I would say "no" to an invitation to watch something on TV. I would say, "no, I have some reading to do," or some other lame excuse.

Kelly was one of those friends who could make me think, even though initially I might have found myself put off by his comment. Close friends, like Kelly, help to widen the boundaries of our hearts through such invitations!





# July 2022

## Jesus Christ, a Friend

Jesus was such a close friend to Mary, Martha and Lazarus, as we see in the Gospel. Martha was all about duty and household tasks, while Mary was all about being present. Jesus loved both, and in this short text from Luke, invited Martha to a change of heart and to recognize the good in Mary's being present to the encounter with Jesus.

In the Oblate text for today, St. Eugene is well aware of his failures. How is Jesus the Friend inviting you to grow today?

**Sandra Prather, HOMI:** *Provincial Animator for Oblate Associates, Canada-Lacombe Province.*

Do you ever complain to Jesus? I do. I can be Martha, burdened with worry, querulously asking Jesus, "Lord, do you not care?" I even, like Martha, dare to tell Jesus what to do about my concerns: "Fix this, change that."

I laugh at the temerity of it, [who am I to be complaining to God?], but am comforted by the intimacy of it. I only complain, after all, to those I am close to. It is family and friends who hear the full extent of my feelings, especially the negative ones. So, when I am acting like the cranky Martha, I find reassurance in John's gospel, "Jesus loved Martha . . ." [Jn 11:5]. It is that affection that allows Martha to speak so freely, and by extension, I hope, the same applies to me.

De Mazenod had Martha's confidence. He speaks of himself at prayer, imagining walking with Jesus as the apostles did. He pours out his heart, entrusting his troubles and worries to his, 'generous friend.' Jesus was for de Mazenod, "a person to know, to love. . . in whose presence it was good to be," [Zago, *Renewing Ourselves* 2008].

"I call you friends," Jesus says. Do I trust in that saving relationship?

Can I be openly honest in my prayer, bringing not only my piety but also my worries, concerns and yes, even my complaints?



# August 2022

## The Blood of Jesus Christ

### **Scripture Text: *Luke 13: 22-30***

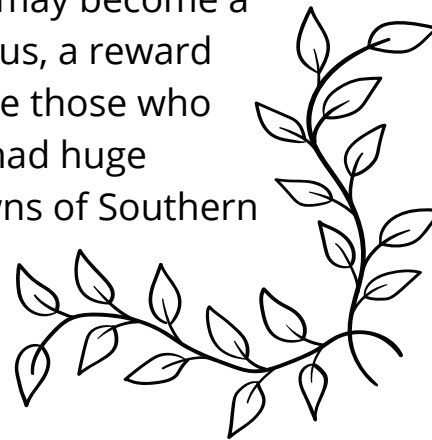
Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from. And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

### **Oblate Text: *1859 Pastoral Letter***

In effect, because the Church forms only one body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, those who do not receive life from this Head are dead members; they are no longer linked to this body with the bonds of divine love, the blood of Christ no longer circulates in their veins, as it were.

**Fr. Arthur Flores, OMI:** *Vicar Provincial for Personnel, United States Province*

What is the narrow gate that Jesus refers to the scriptural passage? The question posed to Jesus referring to the few who are saved may become a presumption for some, an expectation for privilege and status, a reward for a job well done. In the Kingdom, heirs to the Kingdom are those who walk the path of discipleship. The Missionaries of Provence had huge successes in preaching missions throughout the nearby towns of Southern France. St. Eugene and his companions did not merely congratulate one another on their accomplishments.



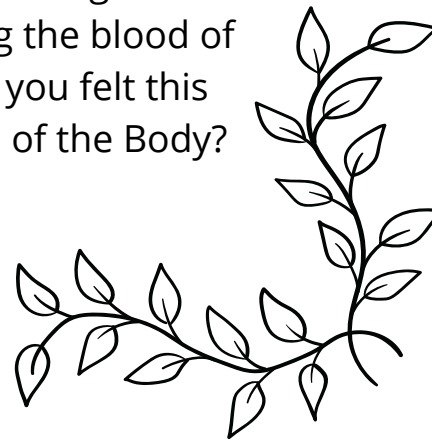
## August 2022

# The Blood of Jesus Christ

Always focused on Christ, they had the strength to go through that narrow gate, taking them to places they never imagined. Our missionary endeavors are fed by the Eucharist and can only make sense in communion with Christ. The daring we manifest for the salvation of souls is not brought about by our own abilities, but by knowing that God will take us where we need to be. Is it no surprise that St. Eugene urged his early companions, and continues to do so today, to focus on Christ crucified? The narrow gate we seek is not one shrouded in secrecy. It is Christ, and Christ alone, who leads us through that gate.

**Victoria Luna:** *Director of Continuing Education, Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, TX*

There was a time when I felt overwhelmed, disoriented, and struggled find my way forward. During prayer one day, I fell into a dream of sorts in which I found myself in cold, deep waters. Surrounded by darkness, I was clinging to a buoy for survival. Instinctively, I knew that the buoy was Jesus. I awoke with the certainty that I needed to cultivate a closer relationship with Him. Reading this Scripture passage in Luke has always evoked in me a sense of dread. Even now, I wonder 'Will I be turned away? Will Jesus tell me He doesn't know me?' These questions elicit a great sadness within me. Not one rooted in what the vision of the wailing and grinding of teeth may foretell of my fate, but the cavernous sadness of heartache, imagining being separated from Him in whom I confide my deepest fears, joys, angers, and hopes. In whom my life rests. I recall how life-giving it felt clinging to Jesus in that water, and I think this must be what St. Eugene means when he refers to us, members of the Body, as having the blood of Christ circulating through our veins. In which moments have you felt this life-giving connection with Jesus Christ? With other members of the Body?



# September 2022

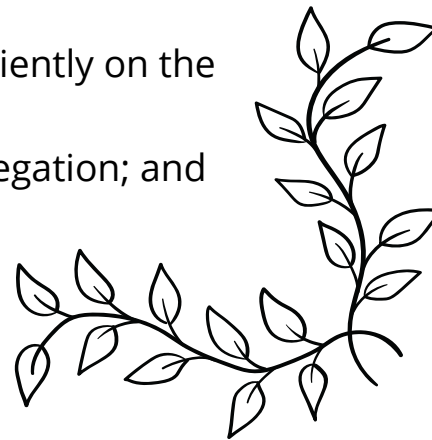
## Jesus Christ, the Oblate

### **Scripture Text: *Luke 16: 1-13***

Jesus said to his disciples, "A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.' The steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.' He called in his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' He replied, 'One hundred measures of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.' Then to another the steward said, 'And you, how much do you owe?' He replied, 'One hundred kors of wheat.' The steward said to him, 'Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.' And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. "For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

### **Oblate Text: *Retreat Notes, October 1831***

Could any one think that the Rule has already insisted sufficiently on the indispensable need to imitate Jesus Christ? No, It further presents the Saviour to us as the real Founder of the Congregation; and the Apostles, who were the first to walk in the footsteps of their teacher, as our first fathers. Could there be anything more urgent than this to induce us to imitate them?



# September 2022

## Jesus Christ, the Oblate

**Fr. Thomas Klosterkamp, OMI:** *Associate Professor in Church History at Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, TX*

"Your money or your life!" - That is a criminal's language. You give your wealth to the robber or you are shot.

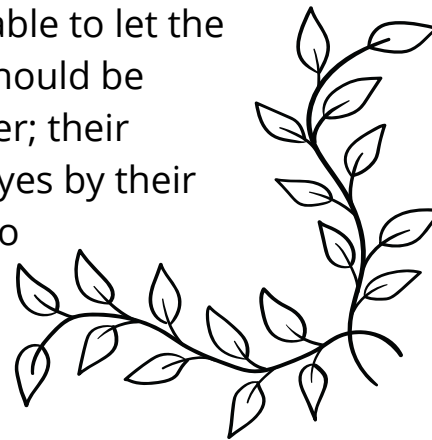
"Your money or your life!" - That is also the language of a crisis which is a matter of survival. This is the meaning of Jesus' warning, "You cannot serve God and mammon." Do we want to follow the laws and needs of a newer, just world of finance, or do we want to meet the qualitatives of life? Images of hunger, war, pandemic and climate change show us day after day the losers of this world. The spiritual hardships can hardly be measured.

"Your money or your life!" therefore is also a spiritual language. The Oblates and all those who belong to them are called to follow Christ. In the Tradition of the Apostles, they are agents of a universal "culture of life", which repeatedly has to make decisions for the sake of itself and its future. Indifference and carelessness are part of a "cult of mammon", which accepts worldwide poverty and exploitation.

"Your money or your life!" - Which side are we on? Oblates are called to bring Christ's Good News to the Poor.

**Pamela Dixon:** *Oblate Associate, Canada-Lacombe Province, Ottawa, Ontario*

In Luke 16, we find Jesus using a parable about a steward who has mis-managed his master's money and is now being held accountable. His last act, is to lessen the debts owed, impacting his own income, so as to have some favour with the debtors. This steward is using his influence, his power to show mercy and generate good will, to secure his future and raise himself in the eyes of his master. Jesus is using this parable to let the disciplines know that when they are held accountable, they should be using whatever influence they have to make their future better; their future in heaven and ultimately raising themselves in God's eyes by their deeds. That means, making a decision about which master to serve: money (financial security) or God (spiritual security).



## **September 2022**

### **Jesus Christ, the Oblate**

As Christians, we are called to be stewards of God, using all our “wealth” to further the goals of God. Eugene de Mazenod encourages his family to be imitators of the apostles.

We are asked to consider the value of our actions and to be Christ-like in all things: to look with the eyes of Christ, to help the most abandoned, to love all. In this case, being like an apostle is like being a wise steward of God. In each moment, we can become closer to reaping our reward in heaven, closer to God’s grace, closer to being Christ-like by being wise, merciful, loving, and generous with what we have. May we strive to make the best decisions we can.





# October 2022

## Jesus Christ, Servant of the Poor

### **Scripture Text: *Luke 18: 1-8***

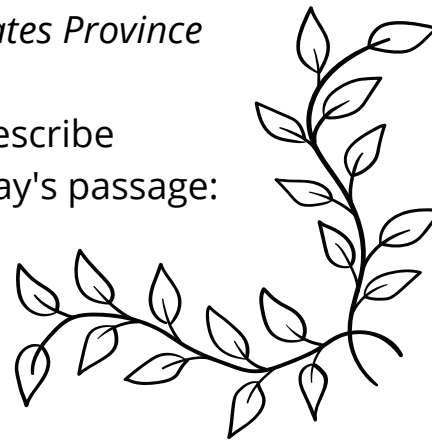
Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time, the judge was unwilling, but eventually, he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

### **Oblate Text: *1813 Notes on the Instruction given at the church of the Madeleine***

Poor of Jesus Christ, afflicted, wretched, suffering, sick, covered with sores, etc., all you whom misery oppresses, my brothers, dear brothers, respected brothers, listen to me. You are God's children, the brothers of Jesus Christ, heirs to his eternal kingdom, chosen portion of his inheritance; you are, in the words of St. Peter, a holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are in some way gods, You are gods, children of the Most High. So lift up your spirits, that your defeated souls may breathe, grovel no longer on the ground: You are gods, children of the Most High. (Ps. 81:6).

### **Fr. James Brobst, OMI: *Vicar Provincial for Mission, United States Province***

"Down to Earth and close to people." It's how others often describe Oblates and our ministry. Contrast this with the judge in today's passage: the widow receives justice, but for the wrong reasons - fear and loathing from a crooked leader. She is not seen as



## October 2022

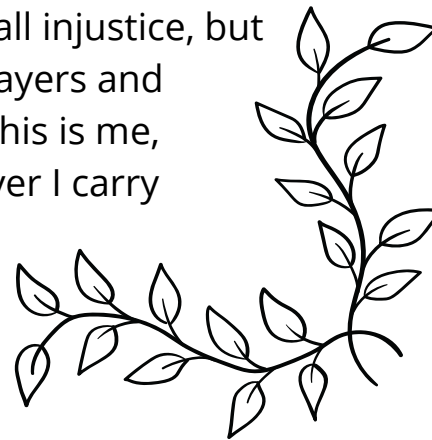
# Jesus Christ, Servant of the Poor

someone worthy of justice or compassion, or as worthy of anything. She's merely problem to be solved. St. Eugene, in his first sermon, addresses the poor of Aix-en-Provence in a strikingly different tone. His promise is not simply a desired verdict, but literally, that "the Poor are Evangelized"- by helping them to understand their goodness in God's eyes. Eugene can see this dignity in them because he identifies with them so completely. Although born rich, he proved his compassion for the poor since early childhood. He knew the pains of being a refugee in his later youth. He experienced how empty mere wealth can be upon his return to France after exile. Simply put, Eugene could say these things of the poor because he knew them, their stories, and their difficulties first-hand. The poor are never a problem to be solved, but people to be lifted up; that includes every member of the Mazenodian Family.

**Lauretta Agolli:** *Member of the Missionary Oblate Partnership,  
San Antonio, TX*

The world's injustice is cruel and beyond understanding. Like the widow begging for justice, at times my prayers seem unanswered by God. In these moments I forget who I am and who God is. My time and perception are not God's. In the darkest hours of night when God's calls, I pray and remember. The rising sun extinguishes my conscious knowing but it stays alive in my heart supporting me through another day. Maybe that's faith, holding me when I can't feel the arms of God holding me. Faith, an invisible bridge spanning temporal time and God's time. Faith brought the widow before the judge one last time and the judge rendered a just decision in his time not hers.

I can't perform the miracle of the loaves and fishes, correct all injustice, but with faith and discipleship to Jesus, I know God hears my prayers and through His Grace they multiply like the loaves and fishes. This is me, child of the Most High, being a servant to the poor. The prayer I carry in my heart becomes part of me, takes root, and is ceaselessly, effortlessly repeated with every heartbeat. My prayer is not wearisome with God's help.



# November 2022

## Jesus Christ, the Priest

### Scripture Text: *Luke 23: 35-43*

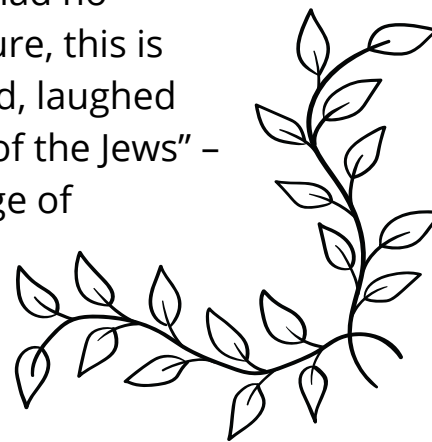
The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews." Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

### Oblate Text: July 1816

I wish you to change the end of our litanies; instead of saying *Jesus sacerdos*, we must say *Christe salvator*. That is the aspect under which we ought to contemplate our divine Master. Our particular vocation is such that we are associated in a special manner with the redemption of men... Through the oblation of our whole life, may we never contribute to lessen the effects of his redemption for ourselves and for those whom we are called to evangelize.

**Deacon Juan Carlos Carreño:** *Oblate Associate, San Antonio, TX*

This reading leaves no doubt that Jesus is a special kind of King. He had no earthly riches, he had no high earthly position of royalty. He had no majestic throne he cast on a cross, a symbol of pain and torture, this is where he came into his kingdom, from where he was crucified, laughed and ridiculed from. He was mocked by the encryption- "King of the Jews" - However, we must think about the meaning here of a message of redemption. The redemption found by a sinner who received salvation through the forgiveness of the crucified Jesus.



# November 2022

## Jesus Christ, the Priest

We know that Christ's death then opened the way for our own redemption and salvation. Jesus' message was not of power over others but of compassion. Our very own Oblate text reflects that message asking us, better yet, reminding us that we are associated with the redemption of men. It points out that we achieve this through "the oblation of our whole lives". We should live in a manner that evangelizes Christ's redemption and saving grace. It asks that we nothing to lessen the effects of redemption for ourselves and those we are called to evangelize to. Our obligation should be to be relentless in our evangelization and when words are not enough then let the actions of our lives speak salvation and redemption as well.

**Keith Perkins:** *Member of the Missionary Oblate Partnership, San Antonio, TX*

Imagine you need some help. You know someone, a "fixer", who others have trusted to fix their problems, and so you go talk to him. After listening to your problems, he gives you two options.

The first is that he can take your request to someone who can fix your problems for you, but that fix is rarely obvious and never explained. The fix is very subtle and most people miss the clues they need to follow. The fix is mostly handled for you but only IF you recognize the clues and follow them. Most people miss the clues and so never get their problems fixed.

The second is option is tougher and longer, but you have more control. The "fixer" asks you to follow where they lead. Be someone who sees the good in everyone. Be someone generous and kind. Be someone who is slow to anger but when angered uses it as a tool to help. Be someone who makes friends and helps them grow. Be a better person, help others, and through that find the fixes to your problems.

Our "fixer" is Jesus Christ.

Jesus may first act as our High Priest, Jesus sacerdos, who takes our problems to God on our behalf in the hopes of a miracle. Alternately by following Jesus' example as our Christe salvator, Christ Savior, we can find our own fixes.



## **November 2022**

### **Jesus Christ, the Priest**

Both options are good, and Jesus supports both in his teachings and actions. That he prayed and received miracles is well documented, but he stressed through his life, teachings, and ultimately his sacrifice and resurrection how important it was to be a good person. Jesus proved this to the end by comforting the other crucified men while he himself was dying on the cross.

Thus the Oblates litanies stress the need to follow Christ the Savior, Christe salvator, over that of Christ the High Priest, Jesus sacerdos. This emphasis pushes Oblates to help people fix themselves through following Jesus' example. It's a longer, tougher path, but there's more control over how things turn out. It's a better one for us all in the end, too, as by being better people we have less need of miracle solutions even as we appreciate them more when they happen.



# Mazenodian Family Prayer

Holy Father, we come to you because Jesus asked us to pray that you send workers into your harvest. Therefore, send us generous men and women, 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. Send us, Lord, people willing to share the charism of our Founder, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, conscious of the call of God to be a part of the Mazenodian Family and serve the poor and the most abandoned. Under the inspiration and protection of Mary Immaculate, help us as we encounter our brothers and sisters and offer them Jesus, the source of our hope, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

