

**Acts of the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter  
(2016)**

**EVANGELIZARE PAUPERIBUS MISIT ME  
PAUPERES EVANGELIZANTUR**



**MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE  
290 Via Aurelia – 00165 Rome, Italy**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Address of the Holy Father, Pope Francis .....	p. 3
2. Message of the 36 <sup>th</sup> General Chapter .....	p. 5
3. Election of the Superior General and Council .....	p. 7
4. Main Document:	
<i>"Evangelizare pauperibus misit me... Pauperes evangelizantur"</i> .....	p. 8
I – Mission and the New Faces of the Poor .....	p. 8
II – Mission with Youth .....	p. 12
III – Formation for Mission .....	p. 15
IV – Mission and Interculturality .....	p. 18
V – Mission and Social Media .....	p. 22
VI – Mission and Finance .....	p. 25
5. Additional Recommendations, Resolutions, Authorizations, Directives and Mandates of the General Chapter .....	p. 29
A. Editing of Chapter Documents .....	p. 29
B. General Administration .....	p. 29
C. Finances .....	p. 30
D. Proposal on the Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults .....	p. 31
E. Mission with Youth .....	p. 31
F. Communications Media .....	p. 31
G. Islam .....	p. 32
6. Changes to the Constitutions and Rules .....	p. 33
A. Changes to the Constitutions .....	p. 33
B. New or Revised Rules .....	p. 34

## Address of the Holy Father, Pope Francis

Rome, Sala Clementina, October 7, 2016

*Pope Pius XI called you “specialists of difficult missions”; today the Oblates of Mary Immaculate are called “to work for a Church that is for everyone, a Church that is ready to welcome and to accompany”. With these words the Holy Father addressed the participants of the General Chapter of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in celebrating the bicentenary of their foundation. He received them in an audience on Friday morning, 7 October in the Clementine Hall. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s address, which was given in Italian.*

Dear Brothers,

It is with particular joy that I welcome all of you, who represent a missionary religious Family dedicated to evangelization in the Church. I greet you all with affection, beginning with the recently elected Superior General, and also his new Council. You are here for the General Chapter, in the year in which you are *celebrating the bicentenary of your foundation*, through the work of St Eugene de Mazenod, a young priest who was eager to answer the call of the Spirit.

At the beginning of its history, your Congregation endeavoured to rekindle the faith that the French revolution was extinguishing in the hearts of the poor of the countryside of Provence and overwhelming many ministers of the Church. Over the course of a few decades, it spread into the five continents, continuing the journey that was started by the Founder, a man who loved Jesus passionately and the Church unconditionally.

Today you are called to renew this twofold love, commemorating the 200 years of your religious Institute’s existence. This Jubilee you are celebrating, by joyful and providential coincidence, forms part of the Jubilee of Mercy. And indeed, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were born from an experience of mercy which the young Eugene had experienced on a Good Friday before Jesus crucified. May Mercy always be the heart of your mission, of your commitment to evangelize the world today. On the day of his canonization, St. John Paul II called Fr. de Mazenod a “man of Advent”, docile to the Holy Spirit in reading the signs of the times and in assisting the work of God in the history of the Church. These characteristics are present in you, his sons. May you also be “men of Advent”, able to recognize the signs of the new times and to guide our brothers along the way that God opens up in the Church and in the world.

The Church, along with the entire world, is experiencing an age of great transformation, in the most diverse of fields. It needs men who carry in their hearts the same love for Jesus Christ that lived in the heart of the young Eugene de Mazenod, and the same unconditional love for the Church, which strives to be an ever more open house. It is important to work for a Church that is for everyone, a Church that is

ready to welcome and to accompany! The work to be done in order to achieve all of this is vast; and all of you also have your own specific contribution to offer.

Your missionary history is the story of many consecrated people, who have offered and sacrificed their lives for the mission, for the poor, in order to reach distant lands where there were still “sheep without a shepherd”. Today, every land is “mission territory”, every human dimension is mission territory, awaiting the proclamation of the Gospel. Pope Pius XI called you “specialists of difficult missions”. The current field of mission seems to expand every day, embracing the poor again and again, the men and women bearing the face of Christ who ask for help, consolation, hope, in the most desperate situations in life.

Therefore, there is need of you, of your missionary courage, your availability to bring to everyone the Good News that frees and consoles. May the joy of the Gospel shine forth firstly on your face, making you joyful witnesses. Following the example of the Founder, may charity among you be your first rule of life, the premise of every apostolic action; and may zeal for the salvation of souls be a natural consequence of this fraternal charity.

During these days of Chapter work, you have broadened your gaze and heart to the dimensions of the world. May this fraternal experience of prayer, encounter, and communal discernment be the stimulus for a new missionary impetus, a starting point for new horizons, for encountering the new poor, in order to bring them with you to encounter Christ the Redeemer. It is necessary to seek adequate evangelical and courageous responses to the questions of the men and women of our time. For this you must look to the past with gratitude, live out the present with passion and embrace the future with hope, without allowing yourselves to be discouraged by the difficulties you encounter in the mission, but instead to be strong in faithfulness to your religious and missionary vocation.

As your religious family enters its third century of life, may the Lord allow you to write new pages that are as evangelically fruitful as those of your brothers who, over the past 200 years, have borne witness, sometimes even with blood, to that great love for Christ and for the Church. You are Oblates of Mary Immaculate. May this name, which was defined by Eugene as “a passport to Heaven”, be for you a constant commitment to the mission. May Our Lady sustain your steps, especially in moments of trial. I ask you, please, to pray to her for me too. May my blessing, which I wholeheartedly impart to you and to your entire Congregation, accompany you always on your journey.

## Message of the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

Dear brother Missionary Oblates,

Dear brothers and sisters of the Mazenodian family,

1. In this jubilee year of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, we give thanks to the Lord. We look to the past with gratitude, beginning with St. Eugene de Mazenod and all of our predecessors including our living elder brothers whom we greet most especially.

2. In these times of great global changes, we respond to the call of the Spirit, as did St. Eugene de Mazenod in his Preface to the Oblate Rule, by giving a new impetus to the mission that is our *raison d'être*: being close to the new faces of the poor, the most abandoned, and sharing the Good News to which we are witnesses.

3. In this world that God loves, with all its richness and beauty, and looking upon it as Saint Eugene did through the eyes of Christ crucified:

- We observe new forms of poverty, especially among young people: fundamentalism, individualism, materialism, consumerism, addiction to the digital world... But, we also see the suffering of families, youth, the lonely, and the elderly.
- We recognize urgent issues which strongly speak to us such as: the situation of refugees, the homeless, and migrants who are forced to leave their countries, as well as the devastation of the environment.
- We perceive victims of injustice and violence, especially the indigenous peoples and minorities, the victims of human trafficking, of abuse and exploitation, who cry out loudly for support and a response from us.

4. Faced with these situations, the Church strongly calls us out of our comfort zone to go to the “peripheries” and work for the fulfillment of the Kingdom. We are invited to write a new page of the Gospel with Mazenodian creativity and audacity.

- We recognize that the poor evangelize and teach us, and we welcome their contribution to the authenticity of our charism.
- We are committed to live in missionary communities founded on a fraternal spirit and mutual sharing, as we strive to break down the barriers that separate and divide people. We will promote interculturality at all levels in which cultures, religions, and diverse communities can dialogue and enrich one another.
- We will give witness to the deep bonds that unite all human persons, both in our daily life and personal encounters of all kinds, as well as in the collective bodies where decisions are made. Drawing upon the charism of Saint Eugene, we will contribute to the defense of family values, of refugees and migrants, as well as of all people who are victims of injustice, violence and abuse.

- We will participate in efforts to care for the integrity of creation in the face of environmental devastation. We will continue to strengthen our commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (J.P.I.C.).
- We are committed to the defense of minors and the most vulnerable as we have been sensitized by the recent scandals in the Church and in society.

5. Conscious of our infidelities, of our poverty, and of our own need for conversion:

- We commit ourselves to strengthen our family spirit and the quality of our community life, following the example of Jesus Christ with his disciples, as did St. Eugene de Mazenod and his first companions.
- We, Oblate brothers and priests, hear the call to holiness, and we value the missionary religious life and accept being interdependent and responsible to each other.
- We choose to strengthen the ways we live interculturality in international communities and in society, as we are present in close to 65 countries around the world.
- We have decided to increase the sharing of personnel and the other resources of the Congregation, in order to foster greater fairness and generosity among our Oblate units.
- We will take steps to prepare ourselves, throughout life, in the areas of anthropology and missiology, as well as in studies of economics and media, so as to better respond to the demands of today's world.
- We renew our support for the preparation and empowerment of the laity to whom we are sent and with whom we share a common mission.

6. *"Missionary disciples"* of Christ, who gave himself for us, we choose to give witness wherever we live to the joy that flows from the Gospel.

Our vocation is to become missionaries of mercy and hope, ambassadors of the tenderness of the paternal and maternal face of God like the Virgin Mary, our Immaculate Mother, pondering all things in her heart. Thus, we will bear witness to God's family, a family without borders, in dialogue with the cultures and religions of our time.

Through the intercession of Saint Eugene de Mazenod and all the Oblate saints and martyrs, we are responding to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *"He has sent us to evangelize the poor. The poor have the Gospel preached to them."* *"How vast the field that lies before us!"*

Rome, October 10, 2016

The capitulars of the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

## **Election of the Superior General and Council**

Through elections held according to the prescriptions of our Constitutions and Rules, the General Chapter called the following Oblates to the service of authority:

Superior General	Louis LOUGEN (United States - General Administration) (Elected: September 30, 2016)
Vicar General	Paolo ARCHIATI (Italy - General Administration) (Elected: September 30, 2016)
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant General	Cornelius NGOKA (Nigeria - General Administration) (Elected: October 1, 2016)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant General	Ramon Maria BERNABE (Philippines - Philippines) (Elected: October 1, 2016)
General Councillor for Africa - Madagascar	Guillaume MUTHUNDA HENGELELA (Congo - Congo/Angola) (Elected: October 3, 2016)
General Councillor for Asia - Oceania	Peter Karoly STOLL (Australia - Indonesia) (Elected: October 3, 2016)
General Councillor for Canada - United States	Warren BROWN (United States - General Administration) (Elected: October 3, 2016)
General Councillor for Europe	Antoni BOCHIM (Poland - Poland) (Elected: October 3, 2016)
General Councillor for Latin America	Luis Alberto HUAMÁN CAMAYO (Peru - Peru) (Elected: October 3, 2016)

## EVANGELIZARE PAUPERIBUS MISIT ME PAUPERES EVANGELIZANTUR

1. The thirty-sixth General Chapter, which was held during our 200th jubilee as a missionary Congregation, brought together eighty-two Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate representing different regions of the world to reflect together on what is central to our lives, the call to mission, and to elect a new Superior General and a new General Council. This month-long meeting has helped us realize once again how diverse is the face of the Congregation.
2. It is the call of Jesus and the charism of Saint Eugene which unite us in a way that goes deeper than all the rich differences coming from our various contexts, realities and cultures. Our shared Gospel and Oblate roots help us to read and interpret the signs of the times in a common way that respects the beautiful diversity of the whole Congregation.
3. It is, indeed, the Oblate charism, with the help of a working method accepted by the Chapter members, that has helped us come to this synthesis of the Oblate mission we now share through this document with the whole Congregation. The method used at the General Chapter followed these steps:
  - 3.1 identify the context, the questions, problems, and concerns about the chosen theme;
  - 3.2 identify the resources: Scripture, Oblate texts & practices, documents of the Church, etc.;
  - 3.3 discern the calls;
  - 3.4 choose orientations and strategies at the local, provincial, regional and congregational levels;
  - 3.5 indicate connections to other related areas: e.g. financial, or formation (first and ongoing).
4. This document is the fruit of our common discernment on the call to conversion in continuity with the central theme of the preceding 2010 General Chapter. We hope it will help the animation of the whole Congregation at its different levels and will serve as resource material for all Oblates and lay collaborators who would like to deepen the theme: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. Pauperes evangelizantur.*

### I – MISSION AND THE NEW FACES OF THE POOR

#### Context

5. As Oblates, for some time already we have spoken about the poor with their many faces. At this General Chapter, we have insisted on giving priority to the

new faces of the poor whose situation has the greatest claim on salvation understood in an integral sense that only the Gospel can offer. They are new because new social, political, religious and economic realities deprive them of their dignity, or because our more courageous reading of the signs of the times helps us to recognize them more clearly.

6. Around the world we affirm that Oblates and those associated with us are already serving the poor and abandoned people we love. Often this missionary work is carried out in light of the discernment made by the Congregation and the Units. Many times there is a prevalence of work accomplished through personal charisms. In this Chapter we have perceived other faces of the poor and we question whether we are really where we should be as Oblates.
7. Considering our different contexts, we have identified new faces of the poor in three different groups.
  - 7.1 We see spiritual poverty. Some people seek meaning in life as they struggle with addiction problems or are addicted to sectarianism, are attracted to fundamentalism or radicalism. Other people experience difficulties in their family life, such as divorced and lonely people, elders and those dependent and infirm. The Oblate family also experiences dysfunctionalities as well.
  - 7.2 Some people are on the move, especially migrants, refugees and homeless.
  - 7.3 Others are directly affected by situations which cry out for justice, peace and integrity of creation (JPIC), such as indigenous people, tribal people, Dalits, prisoners, victims of trafficking, abused and exploited women and children, etc. We have become more aware of the urgency to take care of the Earth, our Common Home.

## Resources

8. The Scriptures speak of being on a way or a journey. Jesus identifies himself as the Way (John 14:6). He was born to a family that was on the move (Matthew 2:13-23; Luke 2:1-7). Other books or passages may be considered in this perspective: Genesis, Amos, James, the Beatitudes, etc.
9. The Catholic Church has developed a rich magisterial teaching related to the new faces of the poor. We refer to these recent documents: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (The Love of Christ towards Migrants), *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si*. This last encyclical notes that “a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS 49).
10. Eugene de Mazenod’s life journey helps us to identify some new faces of the poor today. His dysfunctional family can evoke the dysfunctionalities of today’s families. His period of migration reminds us of the drama of the migrants in these present times and the related issues of justice and peace. His struggles to

seek a meaning of life and recognition as a young adult recall the spiritual poverty of our contemporary world.

11. Our Constitutions and Rules give us criteria to identify the new faces of the poor. We are called to announce Christ and his Kingdom to the poor with their many faces, but when the Church is well established, our commitment leads us towards the groups the Church touches least (C. 5). It means that in apostolic communities, we have to make a periodic re-evaluation of our commitments (C. 3; RR. 7a, 7d) to make sure that we are going towards the new poor. Our discernment may lead us to leave people, places and ministries we love, but this situation can become a way to live the paschal mystery (C. 4). No ministry is foreign to us, as long as we evangelize the most abandoned (R. 7b) or the new poor. In this missionary process, Mary remains our Mother and our companion (C. 10).

## **Calls**

12. On the basis of the guidelines and flexibility given by the Constitutions and Rules, we recognize the call to adopt a spiritual attitude of pilgrimage, like the migrants who are on the move. We must then consider our own units and with a spirit of discernment, identify the new faces of the poor to whom the Lord sends us in each context. The method used in the workshops of this General Chapter or a similar method may help us to identify the new poor.

## **Strategies**

13. General level:
  - 13.1 Establish a General Mission Committee so that at the level of the Congregation our missionary response can be strengthened by providing resources for community discernment on mission and by assisting us in deepening this reflection begun at the Chapter.
  - 13.2 The Committee of the Service of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Congregation would provide support and facilitate efforts in this field and collaborate with other Congregations and structures of the Church at various levels.
14. Regional level:
  - 14.1 Identify Oblates in the Region who can accompany local communities in the discernment process used in this General Chapter. An example would be to invite Oblates from local communities which are involved in responding to new faces of the poor to collaborate on the level of the Region. Our JPIC coordinators and our institutions of higher learning have a valuable role here to help in discovering practical responses to the situation of the new poor.

- 14.2 Identify three (3) communities of the region who already help some of the new poor in the three (3) groups identified in the section on context above, and make the choice to support these communities.
  - 14.3 Establish a Regional Mission Committee coordinated with the General Mission Committee (where it is possible).
15. Unit level:
- 15.1 Promote the methodology used in this General Chapter for discernment in apostolic communities.
  - 15.2 Offer accompaniment to apostolic communities who are ready to use this methodology.
  - 15.3 Collaborate with the local Churches and other Congregations.
  - 15.4 Promote a JPIC contribution in this discernment, for instance by forming an active JPIC committee to give training and awareness on a regular basis, and by elaborating a JPIC program at all formation levels (first and ongoing).
16. Local community level:
- 16.1 Use the methodology of the General Chapter to discern who the new poor are in the local context and how to engage with them. Make sure that JPIC concerns are included in the discernment.
  - 16.2 For this communal discernment, the personal charisms of each Oblate must be considered, because they can enrich the community projects implemented in partnership with the laity, especially young people.

## **Implications**

17. New needs demand new means. In responding to the Spirit's call to discover the new faces of the poor in our various contexts we have identified some of the implications:
- 17.1 Identifying prepared personnel to accompany the discernment process.
  - 17.2 Planning for financial support to sustain the mission.
  - 17.3 Preparing Oblates and lay people through immersion experiences in the milieu of the new poor in which listening and accompaniment are necessary postures in order to learn from the poor.
  - 17.4 Using the social sciences to understand the root causes which engender poverty.
  - 17.5 Developing synergic links within the Church (various levels of the Vatican, religious congregations, dioceses, parishes, lay movements), NGO's and all who work with those we have identified as the new poor.

## II - MISSION WITH YOUTH

18. The missionary heritage we have received from Saint Eugene clearly puts youth at the center of our call to mission. As in our Founder's time, so too today their situation cries out for an urgent response and invites us to discover new ways to accompany them with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

### Context

19. Being part of the young generation means sharing many values and concerns: we identify some of these elements such as the importance given to freedom; a strong sense of togetherness and friendship; a search for spirituality and meaning in life; and a capacity for joyfulness, happiness and generosity. We also identify counter-values among youth such as ... excessive dependence on technology, secularism, materialism, consumerism, relativism, addictions (drugs, alcohol, sex), freedom without responsibility, and busyness.
20. Poverty of all sorts affects youth. Many young people experience material poverty, such as a lack of education, health problems and unemployment. Not knowing Christ and having difficulty to find meaning in life are causes of spiritual poverty. Young people need to grow in an atmosphere of love, care and acceptance, in which they can experience affirmation. They need to belong to wholesome groups, and have role models to look up to. These needs meet obstacles, such as dysfunctional and broken families, individualism, relativism, and lack of human and spiritual education.
21. As Oblates, in our mission with the youth, we see some difficulties. There is not much collaboration among Oblates. Although this ministry is present in some Units, especially where someone is appointed as the coordinator, in most of the Units there does not seem to be an organized structure where all collaborate. Another difficulty is that we need more formation and professional development for the Oblate youth ministers and lay leaders.

### Resources

22. The first resource to provide inspiration for mission with youth is the Bible. In the Gospel, we admire Jesus in his closeness to young people. He heals Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:21-43). He raises the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:11-17). He calls the rich young man to leave everything and follow him (Matt 19:16-26) and he continues to say: "Come and you will see" (Jn 1:39). In other parts of the New Testament, we also remember John and Paul who are interested in the spiritual well-being of the youth (I Jn 2:13-14; I Tim 4:12-14).
23. The life of the Founder is also fundamental for inspiring our commitment to ministry with young people. Eugene de Mazenod experienced the saving love

of Jesus at the foot of the Cross and from this experience he was called to participate in Jesus' Mission. His priorities in proclaiming the Good News to the poor were prisoners, peasants, and young people. In fact, most of his ministry time as a young priest and later as the Founder of the Missionaries of Provence was devoted to the young people associated with him in the Youth Congregation of Aix.

24. The message for the World Youth Day published each year by the Holy Father also provides some guidance. In his message for the 31<sup>st</sup> World Youth Day in 2016, Pope Francis encourages young people to look at Jesus to find meaning for their lives: "Dear young people, [...] a look from [Jesus] can change your lives and heal the wounds of your souls. His eyes can quench the thirst that dwells deep in your young hearts, a thirst for love, for peace, for joy and for true happiness. Come to Him and do not be afraid! Come to him and say from the depths of your hearts: "Jesus, I trust in You!". Let yourselves be touched by his boundless mercy, so that in turn you may become apostles of mercy by your actions, words and prayers in our world, wounded by selfishness, hatred and so much despair."
25. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress on Mission with Youth that took place in Aix-en-Provence in March 2016 has been an opportunity to reflect on the presence of Oblates and collaborators among youth. The many recommendations it has formulated are now an important reference for our discernment in youth ministry.

## **Calls**

26. The Oblates have a long tradition of working with young people through parishes, education and existing youth ministries. In the context of this tradition, we hear the call of the Spirit to accompany young people in their journey to become human (i.e. discovering their dignity), later Christians and finally Saints. Just as in our Founder's time, so now today, we recognize that mission with youth and for youth is a priority because in the young people today we identify one of the new faces of the poor. This must be a real priority, and we want to re-affirm it as an authentic Oblate mission. Listening to the needs of today's young people, we are sensitive to the urgent call to develop a shared missionary vision for the Congregation and the Mazenodian family, giving our lives for mission with youth.

## **Strategies**

27. In response to the request from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress on Mission with Youth and as mentioned by the Superior General in his Report to the General Chapter, the documents presented by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress were reviewed by Chapter members who worked in a group dedicated to Mission with Youth. They propose the adoption of the following recommendations (for more details, see the report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress on Mission with Youth).

## 28. General level:

- 28.1 Establish a Permanent International Commission for Oblate Mission with Youth. This commission established by the Superior General in Council is to be made up of Oblates and lay people representing each region. A Director of the Mission with Youth will be appointed.
- 28.2 Support a local hosting for a World Youth Day to be organized by the Commission for Oblate Mission with Youth (if it is established).
- 28.3 Establish a Youth Solidarity Fund at the General Administration level – and where possible at the Regional level – to assist Units with hosting and participating in Youth events locally, regionally and worldwide.
- 28.4 Declare a Year for Oblate Vocations during the current mandate, as recommended by the Congress on Oblate Vocations.

## 29. Regional level:

Establish a stable committee to find ways of collaboration among local communities and Oblate Units. It would be composed of the Oblate coordinator of each Unit and other lay or consecrated people working with us in the Mission with Youth.

## 30. Local and Unit levels:

- 30.1 Establish missionary teams for Mission with Youth at the local and Unit levels. The team would be composed of Oblates, young people and Lay/vowed members of the Mazenodian Family. They will collaborate with local parishes.
- 30.2 Open our communities to young people, for instance those who would like to dedicate some time to mission.
- 30.3 Affirm a vocational dimension as essential to Mission with Youth.
- 30.4 Appoint a full time Oblate Unit Coordinator for Mission with Youth.
- 30.5 Have a plan on the missionary use of Information Communication & Technology (ICT) and Social Media.
- 30.6 Promote first and ongoing formation concerning Mission with Youth.

## Implications

- 31. The Youth Solidarity Fund that could be created by the General Administration – and at the Regional level where it is possible – would respond to material needs of the youth ministry.
- 32. The promotion of programs for the formation and training of Oblates already mentioned would respond to the need for formation.

### III – FORMATION FOR MISSION

33. As a missionary Congregation we consider formation from the perspective of mission. The significant transformations taking place within today's world impact Oblate mission and ultimately our programs of formation. These changes call for adaptation and continual updating in our way of doing formation so that we can be more effective and equipped with the best practices for mission.

#### Context

34. The context in which we do formation as Missionary Oblates is characterized by globalisation. In this world where communication and interculturality have become omnipresent, we must take into account today's reality in its many dimensions: political, social, economic, cultural, etc.
35. The Church in which we serve is pluralistic, especially if we consider the different possible ecclesiologies of our local Churches. Some visions of the Church promote clericalism and rigidity. It may have an impact on the atmosphere of our formation.
36. We are forming Oblates in a context in which we see the poor with their many and new faces, the world of young people, interculturality and the necessity of dialogue. We also see how the Earth, our Home, is deteriorating. In this context we are called to seek the best formation practices to prepare Oblates for today's mission. We must go further towards a formation centred on Christ, the Church and the mission to evangelize.
37. In considering concerns, questions and challenges of formation we first of all are aware that today's young people are different from those of yesterday. Our formation programs must respond to the youth who come to us. The starting point in organizing formation programs is to start from where young people are.
38. We are committed to form Oblates capable of integrating the lived values of the evangelical counsels into their missionary lives and who mature in these commitments throughout their lives. We must evaluate how we form for a life of chastity and healthy affectivity. Oblate formation needs to form missionaries who grow in inner freedom and remain available for the most urgent needs of the mission throughout their lives.
39. Formation fosters a life of coherence and integrity with all the values of consecrated life. It should help us integrate the JPIC dimension in our community lives and in the mission. Equal importance must be given to orthopraxis and orthodoxy.

40. Formation programs must prepare Oblates able to assume responsibilities for the Congregation and the Unit. The Unit must adapt its formation program to the growth or decline the Unit is experiencing.
41. We are responsible to ensure appropriate resources for formation: personnel, communities, finances. Units must be attentive to offer healthy apostolic communities to welcome and accompany candidates. The Unit must be creative in seeking ways to sustain the first formation programs financially. Attention and planning must be given to provide preparation in financial management for the formators.

## Resources

42. In the Scripture, we can consider the call to Moses: "The LORD said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey [...]. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them.'" (Exodus 3:7-8a.9)
43. There is also the call to the Apostles: "And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message." (Mark 3:14)
44. Our *Constitutions and Rules* and the *General Norms for Oblate Formation* remain essential tools to design formation programs in the Units.

## Calls

45. In order to provide formation for missionaries in today's challenging contexts, we are called by the Spirit to open our eyes to see reality and train ourselves to be in dialogue with today's world. Reading the signs of the times is a way to be obedient to the movement of the Spirit. This is faithfulness to a discernment process at the service of proclaiming the Gospel.
46. As consecrated men sent to difficult missions, we recognize that we are called to go beyond our fears in order to initiate new and more relevant approaches in the area of formation for mission. We are committed to invest ourselves in a process of life-long formation: this is holistic formation and not only academic.
47. We also hear a call to bring about personalized and contextualized formation.

## Strategies

48. We stress that before anything else, we see the implementation of the *General Norms for Oblate Formation* as a fundamental starting point for the Congregation and the Units.
49. Furthermore, we propose three basic directions for the Congregation over the next six years.

First: *Our identity as "apostolic men" in the light of the Oblate charism.*

We want to be clear that all of formation (first and ongoing) has as its goal the development and growth of consecrated men who are first and foremost "disciples who are missionaries."

- 49.1 We will ensure that the dimensions of Oblate consecrated life and missionary vision are central to formation programs, especially where formation takes place in diocesan institutions. Among these values, emphasis is to be given to apostolic community, interculturality, learning languages other than one's own and closeness and reciprocity with the poor.
- 49.2 Appropriate preparation will be given to formators so that they achieve the ability to function well as a team and are sensitive to interculturality.
- 49.3 In order to best prepare apostolic men for mission, each Region will continue to study consolidation of formation houses and the exchange of formators.
- 49.4 The entire Congregation takes ownership of first formation.

Second: *Life-long formation for mission in today's world.*

Oblate formation is life-long and has different steps and dimensions. It begins with vocational discernment.

- 49.5 The General Administration will ensure that the Centre International Eugene de Mazenod in Aix-en-Provence is available and accessible to all members of the Congregation.
- 49.6 Each Unit will have an ongoing formation program that will focus on integral formation, not only intellectual formation. This integral formation will include the development of capacities to face failure, emptiness, loneliness and the impotence to change things. Furthermore, it will help formandi develop capacities to grow in authenticity and transparency in our religious and missionary commitment. It will foster creativity and help the men to grow in more mature and pastoral relationships. Ongoing formation also includes help to face aging and the new meaning that mission takes at this moment of life.
- 49.7 Each Unit is committed to foster the safeguarding and protection of minors and vulnerable adults throughout first and continuing formation.
- 49.8 Each Unit will have a personalized «mentoring program» and a suitable accompaniment within an apostolic community for all young Oblates, especially those in their first five years.
- 49.9 Each Unit will have a well-planned sabbatical program for its members.

- 49.10 Inspired by the missionary outlook of Saint Eugene: « to see the reality of the world through the eyes of the Crucified Savior», each Unit will provide ongoing programs to regularly review our missionary practices and to reflect on them theologically in apostolic community.
- 49.11 Each Unit will ensure that its members take care of the physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of their well-being.

Third: *Formation of laity, with laity and by laity.*

We propose close collaboration with lay men and women throughout our life-long formation. Our lay brothers and sisters, including the poor, become our teachers. From them we learn much about life and receive practical wisdom and deep insights beyond that which we can offer.

- 49.12 Each Unit will involve lay people in the regencies of formandi.
- 49.13 Each Unit will develop opportunities to engage with families and promote respectful and mature relationships with men and women.
- 49.14 Each Unit will facilitate the integration of young men and women in our mission teams.

## Implications

### 50. First Formation:

- 50.1 Each Unit will have a policy regarding the specific formation of Oblate Brothers.
- 50.2 Each Unit will have clear guidelines regarding finances in the formation program.
- 50.3 Each Unit will encourage collaboration with other religious congregations in Oblate formation.
- 50.4 Each Unit will promote JPIC ministry as part of the formation program.

### 51. Ongoing formation:

- 51.1 Each Unit will create a centralized fund for sabbaticals.
- 51.2 Each Unit will ensure formation of superiors and leaders to animate community life.

## IV - MISSION AND INTERCULTURALITY

52. The demographic change underway in our Congregation and in the Church brings in its wake significant movement and change in the Oblate personnel in local apostolic communities. This new reality is sometimes a source of tension. Suddenly, there is felt in many places a need to readjust attitudes and structures to facilitate a better understanding between those arriving and those receiving them.

## Context

53. Interculturality differs from multiculturalism, which is already a reality. Interculturality emphasizes the meeting and exchange between cultures from both sides and where cultures are enriched, mingled, respected, confronted and enter into dialogue. Interculturality is an intentional process of conversion. It is a vision, a path and interculturality demands reciprocity.
54. Our societies are becoming increasingly multicultural. This new reality is accompanied, unfortunately, with fragmentation and with the disintegration of a cohesive society based on segregation. It creates an emphasis on identity which leads to exclusion, fear and even hatred of foreigners. This strengthens the walls of separation.
55. Interculturality faces obstacles. The emphasis on individualism that prevails in the industrialized countries of the northern hemisphere hinders a process of becoming intercultural. The blocking of certain cultures that are not ready to open themselves up also affects interculturality.
56. Other challenges to responding to the Spirit's call to become more intercultural are some of the effects of secularization and the religious differences which impact cultures. We are disposed more positively if we begin with an encounter between cultures.
57. The difficult meeting of cultures also affects us as Oblate missionaries. Oblates who arrive in a new Unit for mission do not always have a positive experience. Intercultural living and mission have a price, a psychological, physical and spiritual cost which requires a commitment to openness and integration in both directions. Intercultural living affects all the areas of a person's life, from simple, everyday aspects such as food and how one eats, to deeper realities such as how one approaches God, relates to men and women, etc.
58. As an international Congregation with a missionary outreach, we hear the Spirit calling us to intercultural living and working. We sometimes have to deconstruct our thinking in order to rebuild on new foundations. How do we go beyond diversity to arrive at a conversation and transparency on how we do mission? The 2010 General Chapter asked that part of the academic formation or the regency of post novices be lived abroad. How does one assess this or can we do more? Moreover, as Oblates, how do we help preserve minority cultures?

## Resources

59. The New Testament shows the way to interculturality. We can recall Jesus' encounters with non-Jews, like the Syro-Phoenician and the Samaritan women (Mk 7: 25-30; Mt 15: 21-28 & Jn 1:1-42), or the stories of the missionary journeys in the Acts of the Apostles (e.g. Acts 13:4 - 14: 28). The apostle Peter also experienced being thrown off balance during his meeting with Cornelius (Acts 10:1-

11:18). He and Paul came from the same culture, but they complemented each other by adopting different approaches to evangelization.

60. Interculturality marks our Oblate missionary tradition. The Founder spoke Provençal to reach people in their language. As Bishop of Marseilles, he visited all kinds of people in their homes and reached out to Italian immigrants. He sent missionaries overseas and not only within France. This has opened us up from the time of our origins to gradual movement toward this new concept of interculturality. During the missionary journeys of Oblates around the globe, other Oblates, too, have become models of announcing the Gospel through encounters with cultures, like Father Joseph Gerard.
61. From the outset, our Constitutions and Rules present the image of the apostles gathered around Jesus as the model of our missionary life. These men came from different backgrounds and were all sent out to different places (C 3). The passages of our Constitutions and Rules and the documents of the previous General Chapters reveal previous usages of the word “culture” among us.

## **Calls**

62. We perceive the Holy Spirit calling us to conversion in the area of interculturality: to live more deeply the creative tension between strong unity and rich diversity, being able to learn something new like a child, to develop the ability to learn, to unlearn and to rebound, to choose interculturality as a lifestyle, as a way of being in mission.
63. We recognize also the call to break down barriers, to give witness in intercultural communities as a prophetic sign against racism, i.e., identities that are exclusive and close one in and can trigger a clash of civilizations.
64. Again we hear the call to enter into an Oblate intercultural spirituality and to develop the skills that will enable us to grow in interculturality in our apostolic communities and formation communities.
65. In short, it is a question of conversion, moving from multiculturalism to interculturality in our Congregation and in our mission.

## **Strategies**

66. At the level of the Congregation:
  - 66.1 Promote mission studies.
  - 66.2 Consolidate the post-novitiate formation houses to promote intercultural experiences.
  - 66.3 Develop animation tools like the Triennium process to promote interculturality.
  - 66.4 Organize a symposium on interculturality and encourage the participation in conferences on interculturality.

- 66.5 Centralize formation at the general level to foster a process of interculturality and a greater missionary identity.
  - 66.6 Develop animation tools for superiors.
67. On the regional level:
- 67.1 Organize intercultural projects and promote the foundation of intercultural communities, especially in places where we find abandoned minorities.
  - 67.2 Organize a congress on the First Nations or the indigenous peoples that would include the dimension of reconciliation.
  - 67.3 Inventory available programs offered by our institutes and formation centers.
  - 67.4 Promote an exchange of formation staff (formators at the regional level).
68. At the Unit level:
- 68.1 Propose animation and awareness tools on the multicultural reality of the places where we live.
  - 68.2 Provide means to manage interpersonal conflicts (some tools already exist).
  - 68.3 Send scholastics to other countries for first formation.
  - 68.4 Apply the Region's decisions on sharing formation programs and exchanges of personnel.
69. At the local community level:
- 69.1 Invite everyone to tell their story in local community sharing and practice a review of life and community discernment.
  - 69.2 Encourage the learning of languages, especially our three Oblate international languages, and learning the local languages and cultures.
  - 69.3 Develop animation tools on the following topics: welcoming Oblates from outside one's unit, telling one's story and faith sharing, and conflict management.

## **Implications**

70. The above strategies have the following implications:
- 70.1 Foresee the financial implications of this choice of interculturality throughout the Congregation.
  - 70.2 Train formators in another international cultural context.
  - 70.3 Work with other Congregations to share available resource persons.

## V - MISSION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

71. Social media is like the new Areopagus of contemporary times. It cries out for the missionary presence of the Church. Among the numerous voices which fill this media and the many propositions it conveys, the Gospel must find its place to propose Jesus Christ.

### Context

72. "Social media" is a term used to describe a variety of Web-based platforms, applications and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online. Very often they are called New Media. Social Media starts with blogs and podcasts and authorship-centric tools like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, FaceTime, Skype, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Vine, Slideshare and many others. This means the newspaper, the television, and the radio are already "Old Media". In certain parts of the world these forms still exist as primary tools of communication. For example, in Bolivia, Zambia, Canada and many other places traditional media play an important role.
73. One of the defining phenomena of the present times which is reshaping the world as we know it, is the worldwide accessibility to the internet (1998). The child of the World Wide Web is social media, which comes in many forms, including blogs, forums, business networks, photo-sharing platforms, social gaming, microblogs, chat apps, and last but not least social networks.
74. Some people say that if you do not have your web page or your Facebook account, you do not exist.
75. Social media offers many opportunities. It is a way to promote social justice and to facilitate actions by groups. From the Oblate point of view, through the use of social media we can collaborate more with Lay Associates. At its best, social media allows us to connect and keep up with friends and people we do not see very often. It allows us to have short interactions with them that keep the relationships going when we do not have much free time.
76. At the same time, some challenges arise with social media. We could spend much time in virtual communication and have less time for face to face relationships. Even the relationships between formandi and formators are already affected by this situation. Being bullied in real life is bad enough, but bullying can actually get worse when kids are doing it on a social media site. Some people can end up with a "social media depression" caused by a high exposure to representations of peers who seem happier than oneself and whom one could envy.

## Resources

77. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15), says Jesus." The mandate to evangelize can be actualized in and through the realm of social media.
78. In the Oblate tradition, we can look to our *Constitutions and Rules* which give some orientations in social media:
- 78.1 R 66c. "Since the means of social communication profoundly influence attitudes and values, Oblates should understand how public opinion is formed and ought to develop their talents in the field of communications. They can thereby help to make Gospel values present and powerful in society."
- 78.2 R 149d. "Through different means of communication, the Oblate Communications Service provides for an exchange and sharing of information throughout the Congregation and beyond and fosters the use of media in ministry."

The Congregation has history, resources and experience in the area of social media that can be a contribution for this mission today. The Congress on the Oblate Charism in Context (2015) was held using media, as well as our 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter where we have used some social media.

79. The World Communication Day has been an occasion for Popes Benedict XVI and Francis to give some insights on social media:
- 79.1 "The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young". Pope Benedict XVI, 2013 WCD.
- 79.2 "Social networks, as well as being a means of evangelization, can also be a factor in human development. As an example, in some geographical and cultural contexts where Christians feel isolated, social networks can reinforce their sense of real unity with the worldwide community of believers". Pope Benedict XVI, 2013 WCD.
- 79.3 "In the digital world there are social networks, which offer our contemporaries opportunities for prayer, meditation and sharing the word of God. But these networks can also open the door to other dimensions of faith. Many people are actually discovering, precisely thanks to a contact initially made online (...)" . Pope Benedict XVI, 2013 WCD.
- 79.4 "Emails, text messages, social networks and chats can also be fully human forms of communication. It is not technology, which determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal." Pope Francis, 2016 WDC.

## Calls

80. Oblates are called to educate our collaborators, especially the youth, in the ethical use of social media.
81. We also recognize a call to be present in the social media in order to use it as a tool for evangelization. "Evangelizare media misit nos Dominus".

## Strategies

### 82. General level:

- 82.1 That the General Service of Oblate Communications promote greater networking in the Congregation among those involved in Media Ministry.
- 82.2 The General Service of Oblate Communications in consultation with the Central Government consider the viability of a congress on Mission and Media.
- 82.3 That the Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning discuss the topic of setting up regional centers or committees for communication.
- 82.4 The General Service of Oblate Communications in consultation with the Central Government produce a guide or "companion" for engaging in Media.

### 83. Regional level:

- 83.1 Encourage Regional Conferences to have a liaison person to be in contact with the General Service of Oblate Communications and Provincial local offices.
- 83.2 Encourage collaboration in workshops and research on the role of media.
- 83.3 Encourage all formation houses to have special courses on social media and a focus on media and missiology.

### 84. Unit and local level:

- 84.1 Unit and local communities commit themselves to promote an Oblate missionary approach in the use of social media (in pastoral communication).
- 84.2 Encourage establishing a communications committee and/or appointing an animator on the Provincial level (that they organize seminars in media education or educating for media).
- 84.3 Encourage Oblates to prepare professionally for ministry in social media through higher studies.
- 84.4 Invite Oblates presently working in media to engage with contemporary media associations in our respective Units to learn from their experience.
- 84.5 Strive toward professionally made website pages (interactive with social media).
- 84.6 Major superiors make a commitment to promotion of good use of social media.

- 84.7 Superiors of each community promote a personal and communal discipline which helps all to grow in a responsible use of social media, as discussed at this Chapter.

## VI - MISSION AND FINANCE

85. The mission of the Congregation must consider carefully and wisely the reality of finances. They will always be part of our lives and discussions as missionaries. The transformations of the world and the need for good financial planning have an impact on our recourse for money to sustain our life and mission. We need to examine how we can manage our resources for the good of the mission.

### Context

86. Living our vow of poverty is a challenge. As Oblates, we take this vow to follow Christ who became poor for our sake, to enter in a closer communion with Jesus and with the poor, and to hold all things in common. However, living a simple lifestyle is not evident among many of us in most Units. We suffer from individualistic attitudes as well as the influence of materialism and the desire to consume. Some Oblates do not disclose or share their sources of income and use of funds with the community. Others have “personal benefactors” who support them and their individual projects exclusively.
87. Transparency in the realm of finance is a challenge as well. In some of our Units and local communities, we hesitate to share about our financial reality. We have the same attitude towards the Office of the Treasurer General. This lack of transparency creates suspicion, mistrust and instability. Some signs of corruption and a false sense of entitlement by some superiors at local and Unit levels have undermined the very mission of the local community/Unit and have caused widespread distress, anxiety, malaise and demoralization of all the Oblates.
88. The growing Units need much attention regarding finance. In these Units, the first formation often accounts for 80-90% of the budget and even these promising areas for vocations feel much pressure to manage their finances differently. It makes us wonder whether the commitment to invite new members to join the Oblates truly remains a priority in the Congregation. Another concern are those Units who are not themselves sustainable, yet have a Mission attached to them. Several Units seek financial support directly from other Units and in some cases to supplement what is already received from the Congregation through the various funds. Moreover, the growing units need good planning of their finances in elderly care.
89. There exist other situations which are also sources of disappointment. Contracts with bishops are often not in place and where they exist between some Units and some Dioceses they are not honored or are often ignored. We see another

difficulty in remuneration which is often insufficient to sustain the Oblates in ministry. Finally, there are cultural aspects among us whereby Oblates see a duty or are expected to financially support their families.

90. Formation for the financial dimension of our lives is a significant preoccupation. Very often first formation neglects to prepare our men to have a basic knowledge and competency in dealing with finances for community and ministry responsibilities. Formation for responsible stewardship and transparency in finances is necessary. Attitudes inconsistent with our way of life prevail.

## Resources

91. In a letter to Jean-Baptiste Mille and the novices and scholastics on January 24, 1831, the Founder talks about the first Oblate house in this way: "The table that adorned our refectory was one plank laid alongside another, on top of two old barrels. We have never enjoyed the blessing of such poverty since the time we took the vow. Without question, it was a foreshadowing of the state of perfection that we now live so imperfectly. I highlight this wholly voluntary deprivation deliberately (it would have been easy to put a stop to it and to have everything that was needed brought from my mother's house) so as to draw the lesson that God in his goodness was directing us even then, and really without us having yet given it a thought, towards the evangelical counsels which we were to profess later on. It is through experiencing them that we learnt their value" (*Oblate Writings*, VIII).
92. On August 2, 2014, the Vatican has published *Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and in Societies of Apostolic Life* in which we find this remark: "Evangelical witness requires that the works are managed in full transparency, in compliance with canon and civil law, and made to address poverty in all of its manifestations. Transparency is critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of the mission."
93. In his Apostolic Letter at the occasion of the year of consecrated life (November 21, 2014), Pope Francis has words that may help us to see with new eyes the question of finance: "I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray. Consequently, I would hope that structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs."

## Calls

94. We are called to revisit our mindset towards finance in order to be able to say among us, "Your community is my community, your mission is my mission". It would mean changing the individual mindset regarding responsibility for fi-

nances and property to a community mindset: changing our community mindset to the Unit mindset; changing the Unit mindset to the Regional mindset; changing the Regional mindset to the mindset of the Congregation. This vision would help us to embrace a spirit of sharing. Sharing is a required value because of the demographic changes across the Oblate world. This value would strengthen a simplicity of lifestyle, detachment from possessions, and the capacity to find more joy in giving than in receiving.

95. At the same time, we recognize the call for each Unit to generate funds locally in order to improve a relative financial sustainability. As a consequence, we see the need to cultivate awareness and appreciation for this dimension of our life and mission so that we manage it with responsibility and integrity.

## Strategies

96. General level:

- 96.1 Re-evaluate the criteria for allocating funds within the Congregation to address the changing needs and challenges of our time.
- 96.2 Continue to encourage a spirit of interdependence in relation to personnel and finances.
- 96.3 Continue to encourage a spirit of sharing in order to enable relative financial sustainability of economically disadvantaged Units.
- 96.4 Study the financial implications of sharing personnel and offer guidelines for doing this between Units.

97. Regional level:

- 97.1 Facilitate conversations between Unit leaders and first formation teams in the Region in order to share the resources for the benefit of the whole Region.
- 97.2 Share the annual financial accounts between Units of the Region for the sake of transparency.
- 97.3 Establish regular meetings (at least every two years) of the Treasurers of the Region as mandated by the 2010 General Chapter.

98. Unit level:

- 98.1 Develop some familiarity with existing norms and the recommendations in the documents of previous General Chapters.
- 98.2 Externally audit finances on an annual basis.
- 98.3 Commit Oblates for preparation in financial administration and ensure a succession plan for treasurers.
- 98.4 Have an effective finance committee.
- 98.5 Restructure the Unit administration where it is necessary so as to address effective operations for the mission and its projects.
- 98.6 Make use of or employ professional finance personnel to assist with our responsible stewardship.

98.7 Discuss the financial accounts within the formation communities (formators and formandi) including the costs of studies and the running costs of the community.

99. Local level:

99.1 Report regularly within the community and bring together the members for open dialogue on preparing the budget.

99.2 Put in common the income generated by the local community.

99.3 Integrate JPIC in the ongoing formation of the local community.

99.4 Encourage local production and investment.

99.5 Value our work as one of our main financial resources.

## CONCLUSION

100. The entire Oblate Congregation along with all our Mazenodian family has observed and celebrated the Oblate Triennium as we have prepared ourselves spiritually for this anniversary jubilee of 200 years since the founding of the Missionaries of Provence by St. Eugene de Mazenod. Together in these past three years, especially through our faith-sharing in communities and making personal and communitarian commitments as signs of our conversion, we have celebrated our past with gratitude, lived the present with passion and looked forward to the future with audacity and courage. The General Chapter of 2016 has marked this bicentennial moment of our Congregation with a hope-filled vision to the future through its discernment, reflections and action proposals found in this document. It is our sincere hope that these words will not remain only on these pages, but will live within our hearts with faith, so that all Oblates and our entire Mazenodian family can truly be transformed as salt for the earth and light for the world. May St. Eugene de Mazenod our blessed Founder and Mary Immaculate our Mother and patroness intercede for us and continue to inspire us to preach the Gospel to the poor now and forever!

Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate!

# **Additional Recommendations, Resolutions, Authorizations, Directives and Mandates of the General Chapter**

## **A. Editing the Chapter Documents**

The 36th General Chapter delegates and authorizes such persons as shall be appointed for this purpose by the Superior General in Council to edit and prepare for publication the documents approved by the Chapter in proper grammatical and stylistic form in the original language in which they were approved by the Chapter and to provide for appropriate translations of the above-mentioned documents into the other languages of the Chapter.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 11, 2016)

## **B. General Administration**

1. The 36th General Chapter encourages the Superior General to exercise his authority according to C 135, and in dialogue with the major superiors, to consolidate houses of formation, to promote more intercultural experiences and exchanges (formators and formandi) and to implement the programs with a missionary spirituality and Oblate identity.
  2. The 36th General Chapter encourages the Superior General to exercise his authority according to C 135 and with his Council to draw up an overall plan of restructuring for the Congregation, to be implemented with the following steps:
    - Support those Units actively involved in restructuring so that they can make a life-giving transition for the benefit of the mission, personnel and finances;
    - Identify other Units which must be involved in the restructuring process soon after the General Chapter;
    - A three-year plan:
      - 1st year: The process begins with a discussion among these Units to present a proposal to the Superior General. If at the end of this first year no plan is drafted, the Superior General will draw up a plan to be implemented.
      - 2nd and 3rd years: Implement the process of restructuration.
      - 3rd (or 4th) year: Establish the new Units with all the requirements from the Constitutions and Rules and the Document "Discerning and Sustaining Oblate Mission".
- Restructuring flows from the Call to Conversion in the dimension of Mission. Communication and ongoing formation are important here.
  - Using the document "Discerning and Sustaining Oblate Mission" and its proposed methodology, we are committed to discernment concerning restructuration. This is a spiritual journey of conversion in view of the mission of evangelization.

3. The 36th General Chapter recommends to the General Administration that it begin a deeper reflection and study on the reality of community in our Congregation in view of the Mission, and the nature and place of District communities in our Oblate life and mission.
4. The 36th General Chapter recommends that the Central Government facilitate and call an international gathering of members of various lay groups within the Mazenodian family.
5. The 36th General Chapter recommends that the Central Government establish a General Mission Committee to give tools and help the whole Congregation in this communitarian discernment about the Oblate mission and to follow the reflection initiated by this same Chapter.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 10, 2016)

### **C. Finances**

1. The 36th General Chapter recommends that the Acts of the 35th General Chapter be implemented, more specifically:
  - training of Oblates in financial administration,
  - catastrophic medical insurance,
  - support from the General Administration to be withheld from units which do not have a clear working plan.
2. The 36th General Chapter noted from the Treasurer General's Report that not all units provide health & travel insurance when Oblates travel outside the country. The recommendation is for mandatory medical insurance of an Oblate when traveling outside his country of residence.
3. The 36th General Chapter recommends, for greater transparency, that Unit Financial reports be audited by an external audit firm annually. The Management Report of the Independent Audit is to be submitted to the Treasurer General along with the Consolidated Report each year.
4. The 36th General Chapter recommends to the Superior General in Council, in light of the responsibility of the whole Congregation for formation, that the 10% contribution from the sale of fixed assets (buildings and land) continue in order to build up the Soullier Formation Charitable Trust.
5. The 36th General Chapter recommends, in order to respond to the suggestions, directions, mandates and orientations of this Chapter, that the Superior General in Council exercise the authority given to him in C. 159, to adjust the per capita contribution requested of Oblate Units, if necessary.
6. The 36th General Chapter recommends to the Superior General in Council that the proposal made by the precapitular commission for the 36th General Chapter (The change of Venue for the next General Chapter) be seriously considered and a mandate be given to the Superior General in Council to study this and act on it if appropriate.

7. The 36th General Chapter recommends to the Superior General in Council that those Oblate Provinces and Delegations that have not already committed to contribute to the fund raising campaign (the Solidarity Campaign for First Formation) be urged to do so.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 10, 2016)

### **D. Proposal on the Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

The 36th General Chapter proposes that the Superior General appoint one member of the General Administration to monitor the implementation of the Units' policies and procedures for the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults.

- Liaising with competent professionals and with other religious and Church authorities
- Developing the awareness of safeguarding throughout the Congregation
- Reviewing and evaluating current practices within Units to support and advise
- Planning a budget to cost this important responsibility.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 10, 2016)

### **E. Mission with Youth**

The 36th General Chapter gives a recommendation to the Superior General in Council to establish a permanent Commission for Mission with Youth to support this ministry in the Regions and Units.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 10, 2016)

### **F. Communications Media**

1. The 36th General Chapter recognizes the enormous positive potential of Mass Media and Technology for evangelization, ministry, research and communication among Oblates.
2. Oblates increasingly make use of these communication tools at an individual level. This carries with it risks such as:
  - a. Internet dependence and its harmful consequences
  - b. The great amount of time absorbed by these activities takes away time used for and dedicated to others, in particular, time that could nurture fraternal life

3. The 36th General Chapter proposes that each Unit, each community and each Oblate study and implement a policy, a strategy, that helps them to understand Media better and to use it more responsibly. In particular, each Unit, community and Oblate is called to formulate a policy for Internet access, so that its use not be an impediment but rather assist us to being more faithful to our vocation as consecrated persons, in community for the sake of Mission.
4. Therefore, in addition to having a study and policy on the use of Media, it is necessary to also plan and implement periodic assessments of these policies.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 10, 2016)

### **G. Islam**

Since the beginning of the 36th General Chapter, we discussed the topic of Islam but only occasionally. Now, for the last 6 years, Islam has grown in many Western countries. In Europe in particular, the recent waves of jihadist attacks, makes Islam a fundamental issue in the Region.

Our Congregation, an “expert in internationality”, cannot be absent from these debates on Islam. Now, by our presence in various Muslim contexts where Christians are a tiny minority the Oblates living in these areas are an essential resource for understanding the phenomenon in its complexity.

Points of attention:

1. Renew our awareness that evangelization is not only the explicit proclamation of the faith and the Gospel.
2. Make an inventory of our missionary settlements in the Muslim world in the Congregation: gather in a document their experiences, expertise, visions and needs.
3. Support Oblate communities engaged in Muslim world with personnel.
4. Call some Oblates to train as Islamic scholars.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 10, 2016)

## Changes to the Constitutions and Rules approved by the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

(Text added or changed is indicated by *italics*)

### A. Changes to the Constitutions

**C 54.** The text is changed to read: “Candidates showing signs of an Oblate vocation will benefit from an appropriate program, prior to the novitiate, in an *Oblate* community. The goals of such an experience are to help them achieve the personal and Christian maturity necessary for a fruitful novitiate and to assess their suitability for our way of life.”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, eliminating the word *either* and the phrase *or by regular contacts with Oblates* and adding the word *Oblate* before *community* in the first sentence of the previous text.)

**C 61.** The text is changed to read: “The Provincial in Council admits to vows, whether temporary or perpetual. Admission to perpetual vows requires for validity the confirmation of the Superior General in Council.

Commitment in the Congregation is received by the Superior General in virtue of his office or by his delegate as determined in the Rules.”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, thereby eliminating the phrase *or definitive exclusion* from the first sentence of the previous text.)

**C 128.** The text is changed to read: “The members of the General Chapter are the Superior General, the members of the General Council, the Treasurer General, the Procurator to the Holy See, *the Superiors of Oblate Units (Provinces, Delegations and Missions) which have at least 60 members at the time of the convocation of the Chapter*, the elected delegates and the Oblates invited by the Superior General according to the Rules.

*In the composition of the General Chapter, the number of members elected by the Congregation must constitute the majority of the members.*

All remain members of the Chapter for its entire duration, even if replaced in office during the course of the Chapter.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, thereby eliminating in the first sentence of the previous text the phrase *the Provincial Superiors* and replacing it with *the Superiors of Oblate Units (Provinces, Delegations and Missions) which have at least 60 members at the time of the convocation of the Chapter*, and inserting a new second sentence (*In the composition of the General Chapter...of the members*) as a Rule for the composition of the General Chapter as proposed by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life {Prot. 51518/2009, 27 maggio 2016}.)

## B. New or Revised Rules

**R 7c.** “Oblate Brothers share in the common priesthood of Christ. They are called to cooperate in their own way in reconciling all things in him (cf. Col 1: 20). Through their religious consecration, they offer a particular witness to a life inspired by the Gospel.

Brothers participate in the missionary work of building up the Church everywhere, especially in those areas where the Word is first being proclaimed. Missioned by the Church, their technical, professional or pastoral service, as well as the witness of their life, constitute their ministry of evangelization.”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, whereby placing the word *Oblate* before *Brother* in the first sentence of the definitive French text and the Spanish text, the English text is not affected.)

**R 54a.** The text is changed to read: “*The Pre-novitiate is a time in which the Congregation will ascertain the candidate’s readiness for the novitiate. The Pre-novitiate will help pre-novices to discern and purify their motives for entering religious life. The program will also offer them an experience of Oblate life in its mission to evangelize the poor. Formators at this level will assess the pre-novice’s capacity to live and work in a religious community.*”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, the previous text of R54a now becomes R54c, the text unchanged.)

**R 54b.** *The Pre-novitiate is the first stage of initial formation. Its director is appointed by the Major Superior in Council and confirmed by the Superior General in Council. He will work with a qualified team of formators. The program is established by the Provincial according to the norms for formation. Its length is not to be less than six months. All candidates must go through such a program.*

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016)

**R 83a.** An *Oblate Brother* who has completed at least one year of perpetual vows in the Congregation may, with the necessary indult, be appointed Superior of a local community.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, whereby placing the word *Oblate* before *Brother* in the definitive French text and the Spanish text, the English text is not affected.)

**R 98b.** The text is changed to read: “A Province *must have at least sixty members in order to assure a proper functioning and stability. If the number falls below sixty, the Superior General will initiate a dialogue with the Province leadership in order to address the situation and provide for the future. Exceptions to this norm will be decided by the Superior General in Council.*”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, whereby the word *Normally*, and the phrase *should have some* were eliminated in the first sentence of the previous text,

and the phrases *must have* and *at least* were added. The word *significantly* was eliminated from the second sentence of the previous text. These changes were made in order to comply with the recommendation for changes in C 128 proposed by the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.)

**R 107a.** *The appointment of a Vicar Provincial is made by the Provincial in Council and is to be confirmed by the Superior General in Council.*

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, the previous text of R107a now becomes R107b, the text unchanged.)

**R 123f.** The text is changed to read: “An Oblate Brother representing his region will participate in the meetings of the Regional Conference.”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, thereby eliminating the words *regularly* and *certain* from the previous text.)

**R 128a.** The text of the following is changed to read: “Elected delegates will be determined on the following basis:

- (1) The elected delegates will be one for each *eighty* members of a Region.
- (2) The Oblates who are members of a Delegation or a Mission are counted only with the Region to which the Delegation or Mission belongs.
- (3) The Conference of the Region will determine the electoral units, the number of delegates and alternates to be elected in each electoral unit, and the necessary procedures for their election. The procedures will assure proportionate representation and the right to cast a direct and secret vote to each Oblate with active voice. *At least one of the elected delegates of each region must be an Oblate Brother.*
- (4) The Conference of the Region will submit for the approval of the Superior General in Council the eventual composition of electoral units, as well as the procedures for election, no more than six months after the convocation of the Chapter (Cf. 128b).
- (5) Members of the General House community and other Oblates attached to it *will constitute one electoral unit and will elect one delegate to the Chapter.*
- (6) The Superior General, after consulting the Council in plenary session, may invite up to *two* other Oblates to the Chapter. The invited capitulars have full voting rights in all capitular acts.”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016: {1} – the word *eighty* is added and the words *one hundred* are eliminated; also, the previous text *plus an additional delegate if the remaining fraction is sixty or more* is eliminated. {3} The final sentence *At least one of the elected delegates of each region must be an Oblate Brother* is added to the text and the entire number {6} from the previous text is eliminated. {5} The phrase in the previous text *will be counted in and vote in electoral units of their previous assignment* is eliminated and the new text is added *will constitute one electoral unit and will elect one delegate to the Chapter.* {6} The previous text of number 7 becomes number 6 and the word *two* is added and *four* is eliminated.)

**R 128b.** The text is changed to read: “The total number of Oblates of each Region, on which the number of elected delegates will be based, is fixed on the date of convocation.”

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, whereby eliminating the second sentence of the previous text: *This is determined... method of election.*)

**R 128c.** The text is changed to read: “Capitulars may not normally relinquish their right and duty to attend the Chapter. For serious reasons and with the consent of the Superior General, a Superior eligible by right according to C 128 to attend the Chapter may choose in Council another Oblate to replace him, and an elected delegate may yield his place to the alternate who then replaces him for the duration of the Chapter.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, whereby eliminating the text *a Provincial in Council may choose* and inserting the phrase *a Superior eligible by right according to C 128 to attend the Chapter may choose in Council.*)

**R 149a.** The text is changed to read: Among the General Services are the Procuration to the Holy See, the Postulation, the Oblate Communications Service; the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Service; the General Archives and *the General Service of Oblate Studies.*

Each General Service is under the direction or supervision of an Oblate appointed for a specific term of office by the Superior General in Council in plenary session.

(Approved by the Chapter on October 3, 2016, eliminating the phrase *the Service of Hospitality at the General House* and adding *the General Service of Oblate Studies.*)