

# **Directory of Oblate Associations**



## **Sharing the Charism of Saint Eugene De Mazenod**

**General Administration  
Rome, Italy**

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## Introduction

Dear Brother Oblates and all those who share in the Oblate charism,

I am very happy to present to you this revised *Directory of Oblate Associations* during this 200<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the foundation of the Missionaries of Provence.

Before Saint Eugene de Mazenod brought together the first Missionaries of Provence on January 25, 1816, he was collaborating with lay people in his ministry to prisoners, in his work with young people and in charitable works. From the very beginning of his ministry as we know, Saint Eugene lived a special quality of closeness to the poor and to those lay people who were collaborating in his apostolic works. There was a deep sense of respect for the diverse gifts that lay people brought to the various ministries and he regarded them as real co-operators in mission.

This collaboration and association with the vowed Oblates has developed in many rich expressions in these more than 200 years. One of the aspects of my visits to the various Units of the Congregation has been to spend time with those who share in the Oblate charism. It has been a very inspiring and beautiful reality to see how much people all over the world have a very real love for Saint Eugene and his charism and strive to live his missionary spirit with great love for Jesus, the Church and the poor. I have been enriched by witnessing, in so many beautiful ways, the spirit of leaving nothing undared for the Kingdom of Christ!

This booklet is the fruit of some years of work by the Internal Mission Committee under the direction of Fr. Gilberto Piñón, Assistant General for Mission. I am grateful to each member of the Committee who has worked to bring together this very useful *Directory*.

I would like to encourage all vowed Oblates to deepen the mutual relationship between us and all those who share in the Oblate charism. This communion in the charism of Saint Eugene will strengthen the mission to preach the Gospel to the poor and most abandoned.

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

*Louis Lougen, O.M.I.*

Father Louis Lougen, OMI  
Superior General



## **Foreword**

The Official Directory of Oblate Lay Associations first published in 2001; then, in 2004, has been updated in this Booklet form. Thus, we hope, to deal with what has been said and done in previous Administrations and continue building on that. The term “Oblate Lay Associations” refers to the lay people who join a group associated with the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate because they feel called to live according to the Charism of Saint Eugene.

The situation of the organization of the Lay Associations in the Oblate Congregation is complex, because in some Units there are different groups of lay collaborators, such as, Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate, Oblate Associates, Oblate Collaborators, Oblate Partners, Lay Associates, Friends of St. Eugene, Mazenodian Family, etc. and in some places they include sections of Youth Groups. In some units these Associations overlap with each other and they do not share the same objectives.

We, Oblates and Oblate Lay Associates, are in many ways still on the Emmaus walk like the Disciples of Jesus “with our hearts burning with new vision, new hope, and new energy.” (Letter from the 35th General Chapter of 2010, p. 13)

Since the beginnings of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate both Oblates and Lay persons have been collaborating in bringing the Good News to the Poor. Following the spirit and mandate of the 2010 General Chapter this new edition of the **Directory of Oblate Associations** comes to light.

### **In tune with the Church**

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People invites us all who share the Charism of Saint Eugene to reflect on our origins and history, thanking God for the variety of gifts which we discover together as we collaborate in our common Oblate life and mission. (cfr. Pope Francis’ Epistolic Letter to All Consecrated People, I,1)

Pope Francis explains clearly that “around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a “charismatic family”, which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality.” (cfr. Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People, III,1)

In tune and feeling with the universal Church the 2010 Chapter wished to state the following:

1. We appreciate the voluntary, complementary and co-responsible role that lay groups and Associates assume in the Congregation’s missionary endeavors. We acknowledge their desire to participate more fully in the Oblate charism and mission.
2. We invite them to dialogue with the local and regional units and explore ways as to how this can be achieved, respecting the special character of each group.
3. In view of achieving the above, it will be necessary for us, Oblates and laity, to create instruments of planning and evaluation so that we can better gauge and express whether our efforts are moving towards the desired results.
4. We request the Oblate Units and their respective communities to assist the Associates in their spiritual formation and their missionary involvement.
5. We encourage all Oblate Units and Regions to work closely with lay groups to identify priorities that consider especially the poor of today and engage in a process of mutual personal and communal conversion to the values of God’s Kingdom.
6. We call on all Oblate Units to work together with the Associates in promoting the ministry of Oblate missionary vocations.
7. We wish to persuade all Associate groups to live the specific characteristics of St. Eugene’s charism as enunciated in the 1996 Aix Congress through Regional Congresses, regular meetings with Oblates and encounters in daily life. We draw inspiration from our common charism, which strengthens the spirit of the Oblate family.

8. We support the laity in their efforts to invite others to live and share the Oblate charism. (2010 Chapter Document, Conversion, Chapter 5, C, “Declaration to Oblates and Associates”)

Our Superior General wishes that this Directory helps us keep “*our hearts burning with new vision, new hope, and new energy.*” May this be a helpful tool of information and animation to “*fan the flame of our Oblate Charism*” as we celebrate the 200 Anniversary of our Foundation.

A special thanks to the previous General Administrations who prepared the Directory of Oblate Lay Associations, first published in 2001; then, in 2004, when it was revised and updated. We hope to continue building on what has been done by previous Administrations.





## I. HONORARY OBLATES

### 1. A Brief History

Even if the term "Honorary Oblate" seems to be of recent vintage, the practice of granting a sharing in the prayers and merits of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate goes back to the time of the Founder. So it is that we find an explicit document to this effect dated September 25, 1842 in which Bishop de Mazenod granted to Mr. and Mrs. Olivier Berthelet of Montreal this kind of sharing. These friends of Father Leonard Baveux had donated to the Oblates their property in Longueuil. As an expression of gratitude, in an August 13th letter, Fr. Honorat requested that Bishop de Mazenod issue a letter granting a sharing in the privileges and merits of the Oblates. (cf. *Oblate Writings*, vol. I, p. 27). The same day, a similar letter was sent to two other lady benefactors: Mrs. Jules Quesnel who made a number of monetary donations to the Oblates, and Olivier's sister, Miss T. Berthelet. It was she who had prevailed upon her brother to give the Oblates the house. (cf. *idem*, p. 26, footnote 11)

A few years later on May 24, 1848, the same privileged sharing in prayers and merits was granted to the Nursing Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal "*in recognition of services to members of our Congregation.*" In it we read: "*We grant you forever a full and entire communication of all the holy sacrifices, prayers, penances and of all works of piety and zeal which by the grace of God are performed and will be*

*performed in future in the various houses of our Institute as much in America as in other parts of the world...." (cf. ibid. p. 196).*

Consequently, General Chapters gave their stamp of approval to this expression of our gratitude toward our outstanding benefactors or collaborators. The 1947 Chapter spoke of "*Honorary Oblates*" and restated that "*it is the Superior General's prerogative to confer the title of honorary Oblate upon deserving members of Laity*" (cf. Circular 181, p. 68). The Chapter of 1959 would refer to this same directive.

## **2. What is an Honorary Oblate?**

*An honorary Oblate is a person who is associated with the Congregation so as to share in all the spiritual benefits of membership. It is the highest mark of esteem that we can bestow on a non-Oblate. (Administrative Directory 2013, Chap. III, A, n° 120, p. 33)*

The following norms, approved by the Superior General in council are to be followed in making someone an Honorary Oblate:

*1° The naming of Honorary Oblate is reserved to the Superior General. He will consider nominations on the recommendation of a Provincial, who must forward a curriculum vitae of the person proposed. Posthumous nominations will not be considered.*

*2° A person proposed should be distinguished by years of devoted service to the Congregation and its mission in the Church.*

*3° The life of the person proposed should give evidence of personal identification with the ideals and goals of the Congregation. (Administrative Directory 2013, Chap. III, A, n° 121, p. 33)*

In the life of our Congregation, it was by these criteria that provincials and major superiors made the request that the title of Honorary Oblate be conferred, especially on lay people, men and women, married couples, but also on religious men and women, diocesan priests or bishops.



### 3. The Certificate of Title

The decision to confer the title of Honorary Oblate is made by the Superior General based on documentation submitted by a major superior. The Title and Certificate thereof are ordinarily conferred in the course of a public ceremony in which the Congregation expresses its gratitude to the person it desires to so honor.

The actual text of the Certificate of Title reads as follows:

*Blessed be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate!*

*The Most Reverend Father General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in solemn acknowledgment of faithful, zealous and charitable interest in the missionary endeavors of the Missionary Oblates hereby testifies and declares .....Name..... to be in this life and after death an **Honorary Member** of the congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, thereby sharing in its prayers, sacrifices, merits and good works. May Our Lord Jesus Christ, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate and Saint Eugene de Mazenod, grant you here below the fullness of his graces and reward you with His glory in Heaven.*

*Given in Rome*

*Signature of Superior General*

An Oblate Cross is conferred along with the Certificate of Title.



## **II. MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF MARY IMMACULATE**

### **1. A brief history**

Initiatives of three different kinds led to the foundation of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate (MAMI). First of all, there were the resolutions taken by the General Chapters of the Founder's day. At the Chapters of 1850 and 1856, motions were made to set up an organization which would be a kind of third order. The Chapter of 1879 approved in principle the idea of a confraternity with a view to affiliating lay people to the Congregation as a benefit for them and as a support of the Congregation in its works.

Drawing its inspiration from initiatives taken by the Oblates in France and England, the General Chapter of 1893 approved two resolutions. One resolution called for the founding of an association or a third order; and the second resolution called for the creation of an association to provide financial support for juniorates. The Chapter of 1898 admitted the Marian Missionary Association (*Marianischer Missionsverein* which still exists today under this title) of the German province to a sharing in the prayers, suffrages and good works of the Congregation.

In 1929, Bishop Augustine Dontenwill, elected Superior General in 1908, wrote circular n°141 addressed to all members of the Congregation. The circular treated of the Association. He asked every province to appoint a provincial director and outlined what would be their main responsibilities. He also appointed Father Jean Pietsch as first Secretary General for the Association. (cf. Circular Letter #141). As a result of this circular, there was a real blossoming of the Association throughout the Congregation as one can see from the reports of several provinces at the General Chapter of 1947.

The delegates of this Chapter elected Leo Deschâtelets as Superior General and asked him to write a circular which would lay out in detail the conditions for commitment, the spiritual benefits granted to members, Masses to be said, etc. Father Deschâtelets fulfilled this mandate by writing circular n° 182, dated January 25, 1948, with the title, *The Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate*.

The most positive element of this circular was the emphasis it placed on the spiritual formation of the members. It also indicated what title the Association should bear. The inclusion of *missionary* in the title became obligatory.

A new impetus had been given. Missionary publications of the provinces were considered to be instruments at the service of the Association. But we have to admit that in spite of the effort to impose standardization, MAMI remained in point of fact a federation of associations functioning each in its own way just as it had been until that date. The centre and heart of the activities of MAMI were not located at the General House in Rome, but rather in the provinces where account was taken of the history and needs of the local situations. (Source: William Woestman, OMI., article, *Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate*, in *Dictionary of Oblate Values*, Rome, 2000)

## **2. What is the MAMI?**

The Association wants to be an extension of our Congregation among the laity. Its aim is to gather around the Oblates the friends of Oblate apostolic works, especially of their missions. Association members commit

themselves to work according to their means to support the Oblates and to help them in their missionary apostolate.

That is what is briefly referred to in Rule 37b: *"Faithful to Oblate tradition, the communities will have their heart set on promoting the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate for the formation of lay people and participation in Oblate spirituality and apostolate."*

As specified in article 123 of the Administrative Directory 2013: "Lay people become members through enrollment in a provincial Association. Membership obligations, in general, involve some form of prayer and almsgiving and the fostering of missionary vocations. Membership benefits include sharing in the prayers of Oblates throughout the world and in Masses offered daily for members, both living and deceased." (Administrative Directory 2013, Chap. III, A, n° 123, p. 33)

The following article 124 treats of Directors: "In the provinces, the MAMI Director is appointed by the provincial to supervise and promote the Association.

At the discretion of the Superior General a member of either the Central Government or the General Administration is designated to coordinate, when necessary, MAMI activities and to update the calendar of intentions of the prayers of Oblates throughout the world and Masses offered daily for living and deceased MAMI members." (Administrative Directory 2013, Chap. III, A, n° 124, p. 33-34)

In February of 1978 a meeting of the provincial directors of MAMI was held in Rome. On this occasion, Father Fernand Jetté, elected as Superior General in 1974, gave a speech in which he developed two points in particular: 1) What our lay brothers and sisters of MAMI bring to us; 2) what we, their Oblate brothers, as religious and priests should bring to them. (Cf. Fernand Jetté, *The Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate*, Rome, 1985, pp. 129-135)

### **3. Calendar of Masses celebrated by the Oblates.**

It was on the occasion of the publication of the 1947 administrative circular letter that the first "*calendar*" of Masses to be celebrated by Oblates was established. Indeed, we read on page 18: "Since the Congregation has committed itself to have Mass celebrated each day for the living and deceased members of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate, it was decided that the responsibility for this was to be shared among the different provincial directors." And it adds: "Consequently, each provincial director will be obliged *sub gravi* to celebrate or to have celebrated a certain number of Masses according to the dates determined by the following timetable...."

From that time on, several editions of this timetable have been published in order to keep pace with the development of the Congregation. It is a living example of the continuous prayer of the Missionary Oblates for members of MAMI, a prayer which, in a way, circles the globe. Here it is:

## **Masses to be celebrated for the Intention of MAMI members**

### **Calendar**

#### **January**

- **01 to 10 - France - Vietnam**
- **11 to 20 - Anglo-Irish**
- **21 to 25 - Ukraine**
- **26 to 31 - France-Benelux**

#### **February**

- **01 to 10 - Belgium-Netherlands - Surinam**
- **11 to 20 - Central European Province**
- **21 to 28 - Poland, Scandinavia - Turkmenistan**

## March

- 01 to 10 - Mediterranean - Italy
- 11 to 20 - Mediterranean - Italy - Spain - Sahara
- 21 to 25 - Belorussia
- 26 to 30 - Romania

## April

- 01 to 10 - United States, Baja California
- 11 to 20 - Lacombe, Kenya
- 21 to 30 - Assumption

## May

- 01 to 10 - N. D. Du Cap
- 11 to 20 - Haiti - French Guyana
- 21 to 31 - Mexico - Cuba

## June

- 01 to 05 - Guatemala
- 06 to 10 - Bolivia
- 11 to 15 - Peru
- 16 to 20 - Colombia
- 21 to 30 - Paraguay

## July

- 01 to 10 - Argentina-Chile
- 11 to 15 - Uruguay
- 16 to 25 - Brazil
- 26 to 31 - Venezuela

## **August**

- 01 to 05 - Nigeria
- 06 to 15 - Senegal
- 16 to 25 - Cameroon
- 26 to 31 - Zambia

## **September**

- 01 to 10 - Congo
- 11 to 20 - Namibia
- 21 to 30 - Northern PSA

## **October**

- 01 to 09 - Central PSA
- 10 to 18 - Lesotho - Botswana
- 19 to 26 - Natal - Zimbabwe
- 27 to 31 - Madagascar

## **November**

- 01 to 05 - Pakistan
- 06 to 10 - India
- 11 to 15 - Bangladesh
- 16 to 20 - Thailand - Laos
- 21 to 25 - China
- 26 to 30 - Japan-Korea

## **December**

- 01 to 06 - Colombo
- 07 to 12 - Jaffna
- 13 to 18 - Indonesia
- 19 to 24 - Australia
- 25 to 31 - Philippines



### **III. OBLATE ASSOCIATES**

#### **1. A brief history**

The road the Oblates traveled toward new forms of association with the laity started especially in the wake of Vatican II. The new Constitutions and Rules drawn up by the 1966 General Chapter (the first Chapter following the Council) mention the laity in a general way.

The Oblate Congregation:

- Recognizes the charism of the laity – C47.
- Promotes the laity for role in Church and Society – C3, 47; R4, 12, 25.
- Works with the laity – C2; R25, 40.
- Welcomes the laity into Oblate communities – R20 .
- Affirms that Oblate Brothers have a special affinity to Laity – R40.



It was not until the 1972 Chapter document, *The Missionary Outlook* that for the first time mention was made of “*new forms of association*” with the Congregation (n °. 10). It also mentions in n° 17 that Basic Ecclesial Communities form lay leaders.

In the document, *Oblate Community*, after asserting how useful these new forms are it is stated that this is “*indeed a far reaching and complex question, but we should not be timid in facing it*” (n° 19). This Chapter Document also states that:

- Many (Oblate) communities are opening up to laity: Associates, Catechists, Youth, n°2.
- Oblate community is the core community; others are around it, n° 19.

The General Chapter of 1980 was the first to introduce two rules on the laity. The one we already mentioned earlier with regard to MAMI is Rule 28; the other is Rule 27 which specifically introduces new forms of association with the mission, the ministries and the community life of the Oblates. The distinction between the two Rules did not seem to be all that clear however; nevertheless, experiments and initiatives in this area appeared in various places.

The 1986 Chapter document, *Missionaries in Today's World*, would address this question of the mission of laity in the Church in a general way. Little space would be devoted to the question of lay associates. It is very clear that Oblates must promote the role of laity in society by sharing our Charism. n° 73, 75 and 76.

We would have to wait for the Chapter of 1992 to see treated at length “*new ways of associating the laity with the Congregation*” in the document *Witnessing in Apostolic Community*. There we see a significant statement: “*We are not the owners of our charism; it belongs to the Church. And so we are happy to see that lay persons who are called by God want to share it*” (n° 40). Therefore this document promotes these initiatives and provides some guidelines to be followed as principles to new ways of association with Laity for mutual dynamism:

1. Share expectations of the Laity.
2. Support existing forms of collaboration and promote new ones.
3. Share information and experience.
4. Respect specific character of laity.
5. Provide appropriate formation.
6. Change of mentality and mutual openness and trust – the Oblate Congregation does not own the Charism of our Founder.

Suffice it to mention briefly the following stages that helped formulate an Oblate Policy:

1. In October of 1993, a questionnaire on the laity was sent to all major superiors.
2. In September of 1995, an international seminar on the laity was held in Rome. Nine lay people and three Oblates were in attendance. The conclusions of the seminar encouraged the Oblate Regions and the Oblate Units to begin walking this path.
3. In the course of the Inter-chapter meeting in Bangkok in November of 1995, the Congregation saw a convergence of views on several points and a growing interest to proceed.
4. Another important step, a decisive one, was the first International Congress of Lay Associates held at Aix-en-Provence, May 18 to 21, 1996 in the house where the Oblates were founded. This congress brought together 32 laity and 11 Oblates coming from each of the Oblate Regions. The conclusions of this congress were recorded in a document appended in n° 3 here below.
5. A second questionnaire was sent to all Oblate Units at the beginning of 1998. The responses revealed that the number of associated groups had grown rapidly. Twenty six of the provinces and delegations then had lay associates. These groups, usually arising from a local initiative and taking their origin from a wide variety of experiences, retained their own nomenclature: Associates, Cooperators, Friends of Saint Eugene, Lay missionaries, etc.
6. As follow-up to the congress at Aix, the General Council took certain initiatives, among others, the publishing of the quarterly,

*The Link*, and the suggestion to have the laity speak at the 1998 Chapter, a suggestion which was accepted by the Pre-Chapter Commission.

7. From August 28 to 31, 1998, ten lay representatives from each region gathered in Vermicino, near Rome, to prepare their chapter intervention and to assess the experiments being carried out. And finally, for the first time in the history of the Congregation representatives of the Lay Associates participated at a plenary session of the General Chapter. Their message had an impact on the chapter members, especially when they heard them say: "*Your charism makes us live*" (EPM 35) This Chapter of 1998 introduced Rule 37a which states:

- "*Lay people recognize that they are called to share in the charism according to their state of life,*
- "*... and to live it in ways that vary according to milieu and cultures.*
- "*... in a spirit of communion and reciprocity amongst themselves and with the Oblates.*
- "*... to live more intensely the mission of evangelization... some lay people gather in associations.*"

In the General Chapter of 2004 we see that the Oblates must discover the rich potential of Associates:

- General Council invites each Oblate Unit to review and evaluate its experience and commitment to forms of association. (9.1) p.29
- General Council will establish a commission of Oblates and Associates to explore structures that will promote many aspects of associations. (9.2) p.29
- General Council convokes a gathering of Oblates and Associates. (9.3) p.29

The experience lived in different Oblate Units has shown that the organization of Lay Associates varies considerably. It has developed well at the local level in many Oblate Units. Formation and organizational structures have always been determined at this level.

The Lay Associates in union with the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate in some cases overlap in their ministry of service:

- Associates in a life of prayer
- Associates in an apostolic mission
- Associates in sharing fraternal community life at the local level
- Associates in financial assistance
- Associates as Honorary Oblates

## **2. What does it mean to be an Associate?**

To meet expectations and clarify the concept of a Lay Associate, the new Rule 37a has as its goal the actual thrust in the Universal Church focusing on the laity to be allowed to have a deeper and more active involvement with their dioceses or a closer cooperation with religious missionary congregations. Christifideles Laici (n° 31) tells us that “*the life of ecclesial communion (Oblate Communion with the Laity) becomes a sign for the world and a very compelling force that leads people to faith in Christ.*” This text from Christifideles Laici n° 31 clearly expresses that the purpose of our living in community and collaborating with Oblate Associates is decisive in evangelizing, especially in our current cultural context. What evangelizes is our “*communion*”, living in fraternal union, which is a sign of the living presence of the Resurrected One in the midst of the community.

Basing ourselves on the final document of the Aix congress, we can define Lay Associates like Eugene de Mazenod was:

- with a passion for Jesus Christ
- passionately committed to mission ministry
- with love for the Church, the Body of Christ
- with a fraternal bond of union with the Oblates of a local community.

It was not by accident that this Rule 37a was placed right in the section which bears the title "*The Apostolic Community*" and under the Constitution which specifically mentions "*community and mission*".

### **3. The final document of the Aix-en-Provence Congress**

This text is the final synthesis of the sharing of lay associates and Oblates gathered in congress in Aix-en-Provence in May of 1996. Here, we will find only the first part; the second part deals with concrete proposals, more immediate concerns or dreams that have already been realized or which would need to be realized (cf. *Vie Oblate Life*, 1996, p. 307-311).



#### **Impassioned for Christ, the Church and the Mission**

##### **The identity of Lay Associates**

"In response to a call from Christ, Lay Associates live their baptism, enlightened as they are by the charism of Eugene de Mazenod. Animated by a family spirit, they share among themselves and with Oblates the same spirituality and missionary outlook.

"Lay Associates are *impassioned for Jesus Christ*. They are disciples of his in the footsteps of the Apostles. They give living witness to Christ the Saviour in the midst of the world. They deepen their relationship with Christ through their frequent contact with the Word of God, meditation, prayer and liturgy. The Eucharist and the Gospel are wellspring and center of their whole life. Their model is Mary who gives Christ to the world.

"Lay Associates are *impassioned for mission*. Impassioned for humanity, they have faith in the dignity of every person before God. They see the reality of the world through the eyes of Christ the Saviour and Evangelizer. Fully involved in secular realities, they make the family one of the priorities of their mission. They live this mission with daring, initiative, creativity and perseverance. They give value to proximity, to attention for and listening to persons. They reach out to them. They make a privileged option for the poor with many faces. They name, denounce and fight injustices, all the while making certain to take an active part in the history of their people.

"Like the Founder, they love the Church, the Body of Christ, the People of God, sign and instrument of Jesus Christ in today's world and its new calls. They wish to build as Church, to answer to the challenges of today's world and to new calls.

"Lay Associates have a living link with the Oblates, normally with a community. This link may vary in form according to situations, but it is essential.

"Oblates and Lay Associates acknowledge their needs for each other. There is a living relationship of reciprocity in openness trust and respect for every person's vocation. All deepen Eugene de Mazenod's charism according to their

own specific vocation and enrich others with their discoveries and experiences. Oblates and Lay Associates live and complement one another in mutual growth.

"Lay Associates and Oblates come together to renew their lives and their commitments in the world -- in the light of the Word of God and of the Founder's charism. The identity of Associates, however, is realized as well through their associating among themselves.

"To be Associates supposes a simple life-style, marked by togetherness, characterized by charity, fraternity and openness to others. They are persons of prayer. Conscious of their poverty before God and before others they live in solidarity with the people of their area.

"Various modes of formal or informal commitment are possible, according to Regions and the will of the lay associates themselves."



## **IV. Role and Responsibility of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate**

### **1. Role of the Central Government**

The Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate has the deep conviction of fostering and strengthening all persons that desire to live their Christian Vocation following the footsteps of St. Eugene de Mazenod. The Central Government rejoices because the Spirit of Jesus is calling many persons, young and adult, from many walks of life to follow Him today.

Because of the nature and the historical development of the MAMI and Oblate Associates it is not the role of the Central Government to directly be in charge of these Associations. It pertains to the local Oblate Unit. Our congregational tradition calls us all to collaborate in this missionary effort.

Rule 37a in the revised Constitutions and Rules of 2012 calls us to recognize that:

- The charism of Saint Eugene is a gift of the Spirit to the whole Church
- Lay people are called to live the oblate charism according to their state of life and to live it in ways that vary according to milieu and cultures
- The Laity share in the charism in a spirit of communion and reciprocity with the Oblates
- Each local Oblate Unit will submit to the Superior General for approval its criteria for the recognition of associations



This same R37a continues saying that in order to live more intensely the mission of evangelization some lay people gather in associations and calls the General Administration:

- To be in tune with the Provinces and Delegations who will foster the development of such associations
- To assure that they faithfully reflect the Oblate charism
- To contribute to the formation of the laity by giving them access to the sources of the charism
- To specify the relations between the Congregation and the associations
- To take the initiatives that it judges opportune to promote communication between Provinces and Delegations and a common outlook in the Congregation

Rule 144 states that the responsibility of coordination of association in the Congregation is assigned to the Vicar General or to one of the Assistants General.

## **2. Role of the Local Oblate Unit**

It is the Oblate Major Superior who directly is responsible for the official recognition and animation of the Oblate Lay Associates. Rule 37a recommends that *“each unit will submit to the Superior General for approval its criteria for the recognition of associations”*.

In relation to other Religious and Secular Institutes Rule 37c recommends: *“Each Province or Delegation will seek to strengthen those spiritual bonds, and, if possible, to establish concrete forms of apostolic cooperation, with all due respect for the autonomy of these institutes.”*

At all levels we who follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Eugene must nourish friendly and collaborative relationships. The following recommendations will help us to be faithful to the Oblate Charism.

Each Oblate Unit must have:

- An Oblate Coordinator as liaison person, appointed by the Major Superior in Council to coordinate the different groups of Associates in the Unit.
- A set of Statutes of the MAMI and Oblate Lay Associates (Administrative Directory 2013, Chap. III, A, n° 126, p. 34)

### **3. Role of the Local Oblate Community**

The local Oblate community is like a cell in a living organism; what happens there reflects and has repercussion in the whole Congregation. It is here that life takes place and where both Oblates and Lay Associates live their Christian life commitments.

Rule 37b recommends that to be faithful to our Oblate tradition, oblate local communities will have their hearts set to:

- promote the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate
- contribute to the formation of lay people
- guarantee the participation of the laity in Oblate spirituality and missionary activity

Rule 7f recommends that all Oblates:

- support the laity in discerning and developing their own talents and charism
- undertake ministries
- take on the responsibility which is proper to them

## **Conclusion**

At all levels we recognize the value of our Oblate History: Saint Eugene's desire was to unite to his apostolic mission other collaborators. Our historical experience of 200 years teaches us to "listen" and to be "sensitive" to the calls of the Spirit in others: both Lay People and Religious Institutes. Together we are collaborators and co-responsible in

Jesus' mission. We share the same Charism of Saint Eugene and we live in communion with each other.

The Internal Mission Committee of the Central Government thanks all those that have helped in bringing to life this new edition of the Directory. It is done with the hope that it will help everyone to collaborate more with a renewed vision, hope, and energy to bring about the Kingdom of God.

## **Appendix**

1. Address Directory of MAMI and Lay Associates: Adapted during the year and distributed as needed.
2. Liturgical Celebration for Honorary Oblates: Distributed as needed.



Revised May 2016, Rome  
The Internal Mission Committee

