



MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

The Superior General

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Centred on Jesus Christ, celebrating our Constitutions and Rules

Letter of the Superior General on 17 February 2025

LJC et MI

Dear Oblates and all the brothers and sisters of our charismatic family.

We are living in a time of grace that illuminates our pilgrimage. The celebration of the Jubilee Year of the Catholic Church has the added incentive of being a year of preparation for the 200th anniversary of the pontifical approval of our Institute and its Constitutions and Rules. So much grace has been poured out! Let us not let it fall on deaf ears! I would like to share with you, in all humility, a question that has haunted me since the beginning of the Jubilee Year.

1. Is Jesus Christ really at the centre of our lives?

This question was addressed to all Oblates by the Pope, St. John Paul II, in his address to the members of the General Chapter on October 2nd, 1986. It was a Chapter dedicated to discerning how to be missionaries in today's world, a Chapter that opened a period of missionary expansion in our Congregation. I still remember the positive shock that this question, solemnly presented by the Pope, produced in me. A grateful memory for the good it has done me throughout my life in the various missions and services the Congregation has entrusted to me.

I ask myself again today, in the context of the Jubilee Holy Year celebrations, is Jesus Christ really at the center of my life?

The key to the vitality of our missionary family and the renewal we seek lies in rediscovering Jesus Christ as the center of our lives and all our decisions. In this context, I am challenged by what Constitution number 2 proposes to us: *“We are men “set apart for the Gospel” (Rom 1:1), men ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus. The desire to cooperate with him draws us to know him more deeply, to identify with him, to let him live in us. We strive to reproduce in ourselves the pattern of his life. Thus, we give ourselves to the Father in obedience even unto death and dedicate ourselves to God’s people in unselfish love. Our apostolic zeal is sustained by the unreserved gift we make of ourselves in our oblation, an offering constantly renewed by the challenges of our mission.”*

Let us allow ourselves to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit by praying unhurriedly with these words. Let us accept in our hearts the call to conversion. Let us ask the same Spirit for the courage to confidently set out in his choice and grace. What do we have to give up to follow Jesus Christ? How can we know him more intimately, identify with him and let him live in us? What steps must we take to reproduce him in our lives? How can we renew our oblation for which we have already offered our life to the Father, even unto death, to place ourselves at the service of his people with unselfish love?

Only with Jesus Christ at the center do our missionary lives have meaning. Only with Him at the center does community life have a Gospel flavour. Only with Him at the center can we leave ourselves and embrace the poorest. Only with Him at the centre do we allow ourselves to be evangelized by those we are sent to. Only with Jesus at the center does our love for the Church overcome partisan ideologies. Only with Him at the centre do our structures and institutions serve the mission, our houses of formation form missionary saints, our illnesses or limitations collaborate in His plan of salvation... In short, everything we can experience, including our contradictions and sins, attains a missionary dimension when we allow Jesus to be at the centre of our lives.

Let us devote quality prayerful moments to meet Jesus and feel that it is He who asks us, am I really at the center of your life, of your feelings, of your relationships, of your missionary activities, of your decisions, ...? Nothing can replace a personal dialogue with Jesus, heart to heart, to answer these questions honestly. Let us set out as pilgrims to respond to God's grace in this Jubilee year. Let us encourage one another to renew our missionary oblation in response to Jesus, who chooses us and sends us.

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2. Celebrate our Constitutions and Rules

We read in C. 163: *“The Constitutions and Rules set out a privileged means for each Oblate to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. They are inspired by the charism lived by the Founder and his first companions; also, they have received the approval of the Church. Thus, they allow each Oblate to evaluate the quality of his response to his vocation and to become a saint.”*

To help us put Christ at the centre of our lives, we have a tool with authoritative confirmation of the Church. Our CC and RR help us evaluate whether we are genuinely following Christ, whether we are indeed responding to his call to embrace Oblate life, whether we are indeed on the path to holiness and whether we are faithful to the mission we have received. In all humility, we must recognize that we can always move forward and do better. By placing our trust in the Lord, we can always take new steps on this pilgrimage of hope. We are not hindered by our past, nor our age, nor by our health conditions, or the circumstances around us; on the contrary, it is all this that contextualizes and makes our missionary oblation take flesh.

As missionaries, we are called to preach the Gospel by living it with consistency and humility. That is why, in recent years, we have been called to convert and renew ourselves. We have also been called to improve the quality of our community life and how we live the evangelical counsels as we seek to renew our mission. I wonder if we have embraced the concrete proposals of the CC and RR to live more evangelically. I am often surprised to read with new eyes some of the articles of our CCs that challenge my life in different

missionary contexts or circumstances of age and health. I have shared experiences with others that the Holy Spirit precedes us and helps us to move from reading and prayer to life.

The 37th General Chapter invites us to read, pray and promote animation in living the Constitutions and Rules. In this year, 2025, we will welcome many initiatives that will help us rediscover our CC and RR, including a new commentary and new materials to deepen our community meetings. These tools have been prepared by many brothers and sisters who express the rich variety of our charismatic family. Oblates in the first formation and others responsible for ongoing formation are also making simple videos to make CC and RR available to all. These initiatives join a lengthy list of valuable materials produced earlier that help us to pray and evaluate our lives with the CC and RR. We have a rich and abundant library that can help us and is waiting for us!

This effort must be made in **creative fidelity** (C.168). It is essential to consider the different contexts and conditions in which we live the charism. The CC and RR are formulated in such a way that they leave enough room for creativity and adaptation. A beautiful task we are all called to do is to contextualize our charism by welcoming all that is good from the cultures, life situations and environments in which we live. In this way, we will enrich our common heritage. Moreover, each of us has a personal and unique gift with which we contribute to this common heritage, a gift that we must share because in some way it belongs to all of us. Community discernment will help us to overcome self-referentiality and to be faithful to the calls of the Spirit. It is, therefore, a matter of joining forces to become, with God's grace, holy missionaries.

Let us ask the Lord for a determined and persevering attitude to read, pray and live the CC and RR this year. This is the best way to live the Holy Year and prepare us to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the pontifical approval of our Rules. Imagine what would happen if we embarked on this adventure this year. Why not think, with a hope that does not disappoint, that this will bear many fruits of missionary holiness? How good it would be if we helped each other with this task by sharing our discoveries with the whole charismatic family!

3. Some proposals.

In my letter of 8 December 2024, I made some proposals for living the Jubilee Holy Year. I renew my invitation to put them into practice. I would now like to make some new proposals to prepare to celebrate in 2026 the 200th anniversary of the approval of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and their CC and RR.

3.1 During this Jubilee Holy Year, each member of the charismatic family will evaluate his or her response to following Christ by reading, praying, and living the CC and RR.

3.2 That each local Oblate community propose community meetings and celebrations to read, pray, and live the CC and RR in common. Monthly retreats could be appropriate times. In some places, this could be done together with other members of the charismatic family.

3.3 Each Oblate Unit organizes ongoing formation and annual retreats in 2025 and 2026 based on the CC and RR.

3.4 Oblates in each Institution or ministry they serve (parishes, shrines, schools, universities, JPIC offices, spirituality centres, etc.) propose at least one public event to present the Oblate charism from the CC and RR to society and the local Church.

3.5 In each Unit in 2026, a Thanksgiving celebration or celebrations for our pontifical approval be scheduled. Globally, we are working towards an Audience with the Pope and will be able to give more details soon.

The saints are the incarnation of the Gospel. Oblate saints are the incarnation of the Gospel in our CC and RR. Those who have been beatified and canonized are wonderful expressions of various aspects of our charism: let us look to them for inspiration. We have also met many who have been encouraging us to live our charism and give ourselves more passionately to our mission. They are Oblates, consecrated and lay saints 'next door' who intercede for us. To Mary Immaculate, we entrust this Holy Year to her, asking her to help us live the 'two jubilees' by letting Jesus be the centre of our lives and by living our missionary oblation with more remarkable dedication.

Your brother pilgrim of hope in communion.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'L' and 'R'.

Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI

Superior General.

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