



Walking With The Lord

*A resource for members of
the Oblate family*



The
OBLATES
ALWAYS CLOSE *to the* PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

At Eugene de Mazenod's canonisation in December 1995, Saint John Paul II said of him: "His influence is not limited to the age in which he lived. but continues its effect on our time. His apostolate consisted in the transformation of the world by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What Saint Eugene wanted to achieve was that, in Christ, each individual could become a fully complete person, an authentic Christian, a credible saint. The Church gives us this great Bishop and Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate as an example of heroic faith, hope and charity."

The canonisation of St. Eugene was a transformational moment in the ongoing story of the Oblates as we discovered that his charism had to move out beyond ourselves as it had now been recognised as God's gift to the entire Church. As scripture says, "there are many rooms in my Father's house" and the Friends of St Eugene, the Oblate Associates and others who share both our spirituality and mission are a sign to us that St. Eugene's charism will continue to be present and will nourish the lives of people for many years to come.

Pope Francis in his message to us as Oblates said, "Adequate, evangelical, and courageous responses to the questioning of the men and women of our time must be sought. For this reason, look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope".

I am delighted to introduce this new resource book for the Oblate Family. It has been developed to support the various groups that come together in faith to respond to the present moment in the spirit of St Eugene. It is the fruit of the experience of the Friends of St. Eugene in Britain and Ireland and the work of the members of the Partners in Mission project. It is our hope that it will help all who use it to grow in faith and enable them to reach out to those who may be struggling on the margins of our Church and society.

Around the world people are discovering different ways to follow the example of St Eugene as they seek to walk in the footsteps of the Lord. No matter what path we may take let us look to the future with hope and continue to remember the words of St. Eugene that we should "never waver in trusting God completely."

Fr. Lorcan O'Reilly OMI

INTRODUCTION

The material in this booklet is the culmination of the experience gained over the last five years and the sessions have been used with groups comprised of lay people and vowed Oblates. Since their foundation, the Friends of St. Eugene groups in Britain and Ireland have continued to share their spiritual journey and meet regularly. This resource reflects some of the fruits of their on-going formation they have received from Partners in Mission team.

This resource builds on the initial formation programme called *“Impassioned for Christ”* which was developed for the Friends of St Eugene. This new programme seeks to enable people to develop their appreciation of the spirituality of St. Eugene De Mazenod, the early Oblate communities and the wider vision of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

It is our hope that this book can be a resource for other Adult Faith groups across the Oblate family world. Its aim is to help promote the spiritual journey of the Friends of St. Eugene locally and their desire to deepen their relationship with Christ and live the Oblate spirituality through their daily lives. The themes of the particular sessions reflect the core values that are embedded in Oblate spirituality. By presenting these values, our hope is that there will be interaction and engagement which help deepen the spiritual life of the individual and the specific group concerned.

Prayer, Friendship and Service continue to be the ‘pillars’ which underpin the spirit and ethos of the Friends of St. Eugene monthly sharings. In living the Service pillar, our groups reflect on the needs of their local community at the given time and they try identify one or two service ministries and respond to them collectively in some small, manageable way.

Learning for all of us is a lifelong process and we would welcome any feedback you have on the different sessions. You can email us with your comments or suggestions at pim@oblates.co.uk We also invite you to adapt the content of this resource book to your own local context and culture. You will also find an electronic copy of this book together with additional resources online at www.oblates.ie. You will notice in the book that we often use the phrase ‘Friends of St. Eugene’ (FoSE) when we refer to the members of our groups. Other places use terms such as Oblate Associates or members of the Mazenodian family. Whatever name is chosen we hope that everyone involved will be encouraged to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ for he is our Way, Our Truth and Our Life.

The Partners in Mission Team (Anglo Irish Province)

SUGGESTED WAYS OF WORKING WITH THESE SESSIONS

Helpful hints for giving people confidence

The Facilitator ensures that the meeting starts and finishes at the designated times and reinstates that no one is required to read or share unless it is their wish to do so. The Facilitator needs to be sincerely appreciative of each person's contribution.

Confidentiality

Provide a warm, supportive atmosphere in the group to set the tone for honest and open sharing. Stress the importance of trust among the members of your group. Remind the participants to respect the confidentiality of what's been shared.

Recommendations for sessions

- * Each session is intended to last for approximately an hour (60 / 75 mins).
- * Each session begins and ends with a time of prayer.
- * It is suggested that the **opening prayer** and **closing prayer** be centred on either the liturgical season or the celebration of a feast day. It may also be focused on a local church issue or according to local practice and tradition.
- * There is a lot of material in each session. Do not feel obliged to cover everything. Please choose what is most relevant to your group.

Arrangements for Discussion Groups

The numbers present at the meeting will dictate how the group discussions will be arranged. The Facilitator may decide to proceed to work with the group as a whole or the need may be to break into pairs or smaller groups for the questions and discussion time.

Supplementary Resources

There are sections designated for **Handouts, Additional ideas for service projects** which are located at the back of each session. Also, additional *prayers, poems, reflections* can be found on website: **oblates.ie**

OBLATE VISION STATEMENT OF THE ANGLO-IRISH PROVINCE

Profoundly respecting the dignity and sacredness of each person, we seek to grow close to Christ and to make him known through our way of life and ministry. We commit ourselves principally to those on the margins of church and society.

MISSION STATEMENT of the FRIENDS of ST. EUGENE

Friends of St. Eugene respond to the call to live the charism of St. Eugene De Mazenod in their daily lives, in their own unique way. They support each other through FRIENDSHIP, PRAYER and SERVICE to make a difference in their local area and so further the Reign of God'.

KEY VALUES of the FRIENDS of ST. EUGENE

- 1. To recognise the dignity of all people**
- 2. To be closely engaged with local people**
- 3. To be willing to learn from everyone and every situation**
- 3. To be a voice for the voiceless regarding justice issues**
- 4. To be a risk taker - leaving nothing undared for the Gospel**
- 5. To be passionate for Christ, the Church and the Oblate Mission**
- 6. To be aware of and use all my God given gifts and talents**
- 7. To affirm each other's gifts and talents**
- 8. To be open to the chance encounter**
- 9. To be respectful of the environment**

Session 1:

‘COME AND SEE WHAT YOU ARE IN THE EYES OF GOD’ (Part I)

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and present theme of the session	2 mins
Opening Prayer	10 mins
Input 1 & Group response	10 mins
Input 2 & Group Reflection & Response	30 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	3mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i). The Madeleine sermon of Fr. Eugene De Mazenod
- (2). Picture of the new Madeleine Church & Artist Paul Cezanne
(google search)
- (3). Copies of Opening and Closing prayer for the group

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (2 mins)

Opening Prayer (10 mins)

A short time of SILENCE.... give people a chance to be present... help the group be aware of their breathing in order to help them be present.

Suggested Hymn: sing / listen to:

“Open my eyes to see” (CJM music)

Open my eyes to see

Open my ears to hear

Open my heart to live your calling

Open me Lord to love.

(Repeat all a few times)

Alternatively, use a hymn known in your context.

Litany to St. Eugene de Mazenod

St. Eugene, the Church has recognised your holiness and proclaimed you as a model for others in their search for Christ. Pray with us as we intercede for ourselves and others in their need.

St. Eugene, you experienced the love of God	pray for us
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St. Eugene, preacher of the Good News	pray for us
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St. Eugene, lover of the Blessed Sacrament	pray for us
--	--------------------

St. Eugene, intercessor for all who live in poverty	pray for us
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St. Eugene, you brought others to God's love	pray for us
--	--------------------

St. Eugene, encourager of youth	pray for us
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St. Eugene, founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate	pray for us
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St. Eugene, faithful to the example of Mary our Mother	pray for us
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With St. Eugene, we pray for those who suffer the pain of broken relationships	<i>Lord hear our prayer</i>
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With St. Eugene, we pray for those who live in exile	<i>Lord hear our prayer</i>
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With St. Eugene, we pray for those in prison	<i>Lord hear our prayer</i>
With St. Eugene, we pray for those who live in fear	<i>Lord hear our prayer</i>
With St. Eugene, we pray for those who are persecuted	<i>Lord hear our prayer</i>
With St. Eugene, we pray for those who work for justice	<i>Lord hear our prayer</i>

Facilitator: Let us pray (together):

God of joyful hope and faithful love: you call us to share more fully in the mission of your Son. Inspired by the charism of St. Eugene, may we be witnesses to the power and presence of Jesus and guided by the Holy Spirit, may we always be disciples of the Good News, especially among the poor and most abandoned. Amen.

INPUT 1: Introduce the background to the Madeleine sermon which was shared in the Madeleine Church at Aix-en-Provence, France. **(10 mins)**

This particular sermon was written and delivered by St. Eugene at the huge new Madeleine Church in 1813 since the old Church had been destroyed by the French Revolutionaries. The only thing salvaged was the baptismal font in which the child Eugene was baptised in and it is now placed in the new Madeleine Church.

(The Facilitator could show a picture of the new Madeleine Church).

This Church is an Old Dominican Church that was built in the 13th century and transformed in the 17th century. The front of the Church dates back from the 19th century. The Church was closed for restoration in 2011. A famous painter Cezanne was baptised in this huge Church in 1839. **(a picture of Cezanne from Google)**

The Church of the Madeleine is a religious building which was renowned for being used by Preachers at Aix-en-Provence. Eugene followed in the Preachers' tradition. He gave a series of nine sermons to domestic servants, porters and unskilled workers, who would attend the **6am mass** before going to work for the aristocrats. His sermons were preached in Provençale, the local dialect, as most poor people did not understand French. His first sermon has become the most well-known in the Oblate world. We do not have a full text of what he said, only his notes on it.

INPUT 2: Fr. Eugene becomes aware of the class system in Aix: (20 mins.)

Read Madeleine sermon section – “Artisans” (Voice 1)

Read Madeleine sermon section – “Servants” (Voice 2)

Question to think about in pairs: What words or images come to your mind from Eugene's Madeleine sermon to the Artisans and Servants of his time?

Feedback with the large group

Read Madeleine sermon section – “Farm Hands & Peasants” (Voice 1)

Read Madeleine sermon section – “Poor and needy” (Voice 2)

Question to think about in pairs: What words or images can you picture from Eugene's Madeleine sermon to the Farmers and needy of his time?

Feedback with the large group

SMALL GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE (10 mins.)

Question in pairs / small group: Today, within our community, who would you name as the marginalised people who lack any dignity both within our Church and Society?

Feedback from the group

To sum up: Fr. Eugene accompanied notorious criminals like “Germaine” to the Guillotine. She had a poor track record with the justice system. She would certainly have not been welcomed by mainstream Church due to her atrocious behaviour, however, Eugene took an unorthodox stance on this issue and he accompanied her to the guillotine. She received the sacrament of reconciliation before going to her death.

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS: (5 mins)

CLOSING PRAYER (3 mins) – *Prayed together*

St. Eugene, Your charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the whole world. Through your intercession, help me to reach out with the healing touch of Christ, who calls each one of us to holiness and to Mission. Guide me to accept God's call in my life with strength and love. Let me act and make choices that bear witness to my belief in the dignity of each person and the compassion of God for all peoples, especially the poor and marginalised. By your example, help me to see Jesus in others, to help all those in need, and to have the courage to do God's will, leaving nothing undared for the Gospel. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate **pray for us**

Saint Eugene **pray for us**

Session 1:

'COME AND SEE WHAT YOU ARE IN THE EYES OF GOD' (Part II)

HANDOUT for PARTICIPANTS

A Reading from one of St. Eugene's Lenten Homilies at the Madeleine.

The time had come for Eugene to make his debut as a preacher in his own town of Aix. His Master, the young Jesus of Nazareth, had made a similar debut – and was driven out of town! In Eugene's case, it did not go that far, but there were certainly a lot of people in the town who would have liked to see the back of him. Once again Eugene was not fitting in!

We do not have a full text of what he said, only his note. He begins with a question:

"During this holy season of Lent there will be numerous instructions given to the rich and learned. Will there be none for the poor and unlearned?..."

The answer is clear: "The Gospel must be taught to all people and in a way in which it can be understood. The poor, that precious part of the Christian family, cannot be left uninstructed.

"So important did our Saviour consider them that He took great pains to instruct them personally and, as one of the proofs that he was the Messiah, he pointed out that the poor were having the Gospel preached to them. Our sermons will be given in language that even the least educated will understand. Like the father of a family, we shall gather our children about us and reveal a treasure we have for them..."

Then came the message:

"Artisans! How does the world look upon you? In its eyes, you are a class of people who were meant to toil laboriously all your lives in an obscure occupation which deprives you of your independence and makes you dependent upon the whims of those from whom you must solicit employment.

"Servants! What are you in the eyes of the world? A class of people enslaved by those who pay your wages, subject to contempt, injustice, and even ill-treatment on the part of exacting masters...

"And you **farm hands and peasants!**... No matter how valuable your work may be, your worth is determined simply by the strength of your arms and if, indeed, with distaste they take your sweat into account, it is only appreciated in so far as it makes the earth bountiful by watering it."

"And what about you **poor beggars**, obliged by man's injustice or the harshness of fate to go cap in hand for your pitiful sustenance, to beg brazenly the bread you need for staying alive. The world

sees you as the scum of humanity, to be kept out of its sight and avoided so as not to be pained by your plight that they have no wish to relieve ».

That is what the world thinks. That is what you are in its eyes! But all the same that is the master you have chosen, the one you have so far grovelled to. What reward can you expect? Insult and contempt, that is the reward it sets aside for you; you will never have any other from that source.

Was this an attack on the rich? No, but it showed up the way “the world” makes its judgments.

Judgments which the poor themselves all too often shared. This was their deepest poverty.

Eugene’s response was that of the Gospel. It was the lifting up of the poor and humble that Mary sang of in her canticle. It was giving them back the dignity that was theirs in Jesus Christ, with the confidence, hope, and courage that spring from it.

“Come then, and learn what you are in the eyes of God! All you poor of Jesus Christ, you afflicted, unfortunate, suffering, infirm, diseased, you who are crushed by misery. My brothers and sisters, my very dear brothers and sisters, my revered brothers and sisters, listen to me”.

“You are the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, co-heirs of His eternal Kingdom, the cherished portion of his inheritance”.

The working class flocked to hear him, and Eugene thanked them. “I feel so overjoyed... Feeling as I do that I have been called to be the servant and priest of the poor, and hoping to devote my life to their service, I cannot but be touched by their eagerness to hear my voice”.

The Church today is also being moved by this spirit and reaches out to be the Church of the poor.

CLOSING PRAYER :We pray together:

St. Eugene, Your charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the whole world. Through your intercession, help me to reach out with the healing touch of Christ, who calls each one of us to holiness and to Mission. Guide me to accept God’s call in my life with strength and love. Let me act and make choices that bear witness to my belief in the dignity of each person and the compassion of God for all peoples, especially the poor and marginalised. By your example, help me to see Jesus in others, to help all those in need, and to have the courage to do God’s will, leaving nothing undared for the Gospel. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate **pray for us**

Saint Eugene **pray for us**

(The first Eugene prayer card created by PIM)

Session 2:

‘COME AND SEE WHAT YOU ARE IN THE EYES OF GOD’ (Part II)

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and present theme of the session	2 mins
Opening Prayer	5 mins
Input 1 & Group Reflection & Response	30 mins
Input 2 & Group Reflection & Response	15 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	3mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (1) The Madeleine sermon of Fr. Eugene De Mazenod
- (2) Power point projector if available (alternatively) make notes from Fr. Frank Santucci OMI input from youtube on “the Madeleine sermon”.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amSgOyHUFKc>
- (3) Scripture Meditation: “I am precious” sheets
- (4). Copies of Opening Reflection & Closing Prayer for the group

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (2 mins)

Opening Reflection (5 mins)

A TOWEL PEOPLE

By Fr. Paul Byrne OMI

You are a towel people, soothers, cleansers, healers
of feet tired and sore and cut from the journey.

Veronica people,
wiping away the dirt and blood and spittle of the world's hatred,
spewed onto the faces of the weak.

You are the towel people.
This is your badge of service,
on your knees before others, like bootblacks, Cinderellas, floor scrubbers.
On your knees in service of others and in homage to them.
for Christ is there.
Except that it won't be as romantic as it sounds,
because feet and dirt and blood and spittle have no romance.

And though you are a sent people, those with a mission,
you won't go striding out into the world, because only the arrogant stride,
as if the poor deserved you and you were the solver of everything.

What had Veronica solved as Christ continued up the hill?
No, servants and children do not stride,
nor will you, who have the sense to be afraid of what is all around you,
and even more of what is ahead.

So you will reach out and clutch God's hand;
God who has hunkered and stooped to you,
Loving you, and needing you and your towel.

(A moment of **SILENCE** to ponder on the message of the poem)

EUGENE's OUTREACH TO THE POOR

INPUT 1: Eugene is aware of the need for change in his outreach to the poor:

Read Madeleine text section: (7 mins) *"During this Holy season of Lent... reveal a treasure we have for them".*

Question: Hearing those words of Eugene, what do you think he is trying to say to us today with that same message?

Feedback from the group

Facilitator: *(If you have access to the internet, please use this next section, otherwise move on to the following section.)*

We are going to listen and watch a short youtube clip from a South African Oblate Fr. Frank Santucci who gives us a beautiful summary of Fr. Eugene's Lenten sermon shared at the Madeleine Church.

Watch the youtube clip: (13 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amSgOyHUFKc>

"St. Eugene speaks to us: The challenge of the Madeleine Sermon Then and Now with Fr. Frank Santucci OMI"

Group Reflection and Responses (10 mins)

Question: What are your first impressions after watching that video clip?

What do you see are the 'tools for social change' needed in our neighbourhood today?

INPUT 2: Fr. Eugene becomes aware that God's love is hidden in the poorest (10 mins)

Read Madeleine section: *"Come then, and learn..... listen to me".*

Activity: Use Scripture Meditation: *"I am precious" sheet.*

Each person spends some time meditating on the sheet .

INPUT 3: Eugene becomes aware that God calls each person to be stewards: (5 mins.)

Read Madeleine text: *"You are the children of God....inheritance"*

Read the final Section on the Madeleine sermon: *"The working class flocked... Church of the poor".*

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER (3 mins.)

We pray together:

St. Eugene, by your example, teach us to see Jesus in others, to help those in need, and to have the courage to do God's will. We ask you to intercede on our behalf for a special need.....

May God, through your intercession, guide us to accept the difficulties on our journey and to work towards a happy and healthy life. May we accept God's will for our lives with strength and love. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate **pray for us**

Saint Eugene **pray for us**

(Novena prayer to St. Eugene De Mazenod)

SUPPLEMENT SECTION: You might like to invite your group to take on a suggested action for the coming month.

GROWING IN PERSONAL AWARENESS (A 'take home' exercise)

A suggestion: Slowly, prayerfully and silently read the whole Madeleine sermon text once or twice. Sit in silence for 2 or 3 minutes and then read it aloud slowly. Stop at any word or phrase that draws your attention. If you want to, you can underline it.

Session 2:

'COME AND SEE WHAT YOU ARE IN THE EYES OF GOD' (Part II)

Handout for Participants – “I am precious” Scripture sheet

The spring of our hope is the belief that each of us has a special place in God's purpose. We each receive a special calling from God. As the Lord said to Jeremiah: *“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you came to birth, I made you sacred. I have appointed you as prophet to the nations”*. So God calls each one of us in this very place where we are “sitting” with our lives just now.

Each of us is unique, never to be repeated. No one will ever again be presented with the same opportunities for putting into effect the Word of God, through our calling and the events of our lives.

In each blank space add your own name into it

I am loved by God **AS I AM** and not how I should be. God knows me by my name:

“See I have branded you on the palms of my hand”. (Isaiah 49:16)

God can never look at His hands without seeing my name.

And my name, _____, that's ME.

God loves me with my ideals and disappointments, with my successes and failures.

God is the deepest ground of my being.

Scripture verses for you to add your name into it

a. I made you _____ in my image and likeness, and when I made you _____ I saw you _____ were very good. **(Gen. 1:27, 31)**

b. I chose you _____ to live with me. **(1 Tim. 5:9)**

c. I am silently planning for you _____ in love. **(Eph. 3:17)**

d. I will look after you _____ **(Lk. 12:28)**

e. Your name _____ is written on the palm of my hand. **(Isa. 19:16)**₁₆

HANDOUT - CLOSING PRAYER

We pray together:

St. Eugene, by your example, teach us to see Jesus in others, to help those in need, and to have the courage to do God's will. We ask you to intercede on our behalf for a special need.....

May God, through your intercession, guide us to accept the difficulties on our journey and to work towards a happy and healthy life. May we accept God's will for our lives with strength and love. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate **pray for us**

Saint Eugene **pray for us**

(Novena prayer to St. Eugene De Mazenod)

SESSION 3

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome & present theme of the session	2 mins
Opening Prayer	10 mins
Input 1 & Group Reflection & Response	20 mins
Input 2 & Group Reflection & Response	20 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	3 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i) Story of the “birth of the Oblates”
- (ii) Quote from Oblate Constitutions 21
- (iii). Some pens / pencils for the group
- (iv). Some instrumental music, a candle and matches
- (v). Copies of Opening prayer and Closing Reflection

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (2 mins)

OPENING PRAYER – A PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT (10 mins)

Instrumental music is played, a candle is lit... some silence moments...then, the group prays together:

**Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created; And you shall renew the face of the earth.**

Let us pray:

**O God, teach the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit,
grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his
consolation, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.**

(Oblate prayer book)

INPUT 1: A story related to the birth of the Oblates (5 mins)

*On 24th January 1831, Eugene wrote to Fr. Mille and the novices and scholastics at Billens
(Switzerland):*

A volunteer to read the story

*"Tomorrow, I celebrate the anniversary of the day, sixteen years ago, I left my mother's house to go
and set up house at the Mission. Fr. Tempier had taken possession of it some days before. Our lodging
had none of the splendor of the mansion at Billens.... My camp-bed was placed in the small passageway
which leads to the library; it was then a large room used as a bedroom for Fr. Tempier and one
other.... It was also our community room. One lamp was all our lighting and, when it was time for bed,
it was placed in the doorway to give light to all three of us. 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".*

(Volume 8, Eugene's letters, page 11)

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE (15 mins)

What images or words come to mind as you heard that story of the first Oblate community?

To sum up: *(Note to Facilitator: You might have your own Oblate stories from your local
environment to add into this section)*

When we look back from this little gathering, about 200 years later, we recognise how much the
Oblate family has grown from those simple beginnings as they now have a presence in 67 countries
with over 4,000 Oblates approximately. We call to mind as to how they made a difference by
bringing the Gospel and we recognise the vital contribution and presence of the Oblates in difficult
circumstances.

A few examples of how Oblates have made a significant impact and difference to people's lives worldwide. We remember the time when the Oblates ministered to the 'Innu' people of Canada as they faced tough living conditions along with extreme wintry conditions for long periods of time. Another example would be the contribution of the Oblates to the Basuthos in Lesotho, Africa. One of the pioneers sent out from France was Blessed Joseph Gerard OMI. He patiently waited for eight years before his first convert had accepted the Christian faith!

We also ponder on the time when Archbishop Denis Hurley, a South African Oblate together with other Oblates had made a crucial stand against the apartheid regime in South Africa and as a consequence, encountered a lot of personal danger. Also, Denis Hurley made a significant personal contribution to the modernisation of the Church with regards to its Liturgy Reform at the Vatican II Council.

We call to mind the modern day martyrs of Pozuelo, Spain and Laos. They reveal to us the length and breath that Oblates went to for the sake of their Catholic Faith. From these few examples, we can recognise why the Oblates were called the "pioneer of difficult missions".

INPUT 2: A Reading from the Oblate Constitutions (CCRS 21) (5 mins)

"The Spirit prompted the first Christians to share everything. Under the influence of that same Spirit we hold all things in common. Our members adopt a simple lifestyle, remembering that it is essential for our religious institute to give collective witness to evangelical detachment".

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE (15 mins)

You may underline with a pen or pencil which words speak to you as a Friend of St Eugene?

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins)

CLOSING REFLECTION: (3 mins)

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

Without my voice, something vital will go unsaid.

Without my action, something necessary will go undone.

One voice and one word can make a huge difference,

One action and one gesture can change our world.

Then, I hear a voice say to me,

Will you speak out and say what needs to be said?

Will you stand up and do what needs to be done?

Will you do what it takes to make and be the difference?

What one thing will I say or do to be the change in our world.

Br. Michael Moore OMI

Mary Immaculate **pray for us**

Saint Eugene **pray for us**

All our Oblate Martyrs **pray for us**

SESSION 3 - WE ARE ALL CALLED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A HANDOUT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Opening Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created; And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray: O God, teach the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation, through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.** *(Oblate prayer book)*

A story related to the birth of the Oblates

On 24th January 1831, Eugene wrote to Fr. Mille and the novices and scholastics at Billens (Switzerland): *"Tomorrow, I celebrate the anniversary of the day, sixteen years ago, I left my mother's house to go and set up house at the Mission. Fr. Tempier had taken possession of it some days before. Our lodging had none of the splendor of the mansion at Billens.... My camp-bed was placed in the small passageway which leads to the library; it was then a large room used as a bedroom for Fr. Tempier and one other.... It was also our community room. One lamp was all our lighting and, when it was time for bed, it was placed in the doorway to give light to all three of us. 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".*

A Reading from the Oblate Constitutions (CCRS 21)

"The Spirit prompted the first Christians to share everything. Under the influence of that same Spirit we hold all things in common. Our members adopt a simple lifestyle, remembering that it is essential for our religious institute to give collective witness to evangelical detachment".

CLOSING REFLECTION: CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

Without my voice, something vital will go unsaid.

Without my action, something necessary will go undone.

One voice and one word can make a huge difference,

One action and one gesture can change our world.

Then, I hear a voice say to me,

Will you speak out and say what needs to be said?

Will you stand up and do what needs to be done?

Will you do what it takes to make and be the difference?

What one thing will I say or do to be the change in our world. *(Br. Michael Moore OMI)*

SESSION 4

WE ARE ALL MINISTERS OF GOD'S MERCY

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and present the theme of the session	2 mins
Opening Prayer	10 mins
Input 1 & Group Reflection and Response	25 mins
Input 2 & Group Reflection and Response	15 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	3 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i) OMI prayer card: "We are all ministers of God's mercy"
- (ii) A photo of the Oblate Mission Church at Aix-en-Provence, France
(use google images: type in Oblate Mission Church, Aix, France)
- (iii). "Song of Mercy" by Andy Severyn on youtube link:
<https://youtu.be/sKWah9-1LDg>
- (iv). Handout – 10 key points from "Face of the Father's mercy" – Pope Francis
- (v). *Additional resource section:* youtube clip of Jo Boyce

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (2 mins)

OPENING PRAYER (10 mins)

Watch, play and listen to song: "Song of Mercy" by Andy Severyn written for "The Year of Mercy – 2015-2016". The Youtube link is: <https://youtu.be/sKWah9-1LDg>

(or)

Use an **alternative song** which people can relate to the theme of "Mercy" in your context.

This Prayer can be said together

Dear Lord, help me to be a companion in the Spirit to those with whom I share my life. Let me not be too reluctant in speaking of all the good gifts you give to me. Help me to remember always in my prayers those who are suffering and those who have died. Let me hold them before you, for You alone are the source of all mercy and consolation. Lord, teach me to be as gracious to others as you are to me. Use me as you will.

(Adapted from "A pilgrimage companion for the Year of Mercy 2015-2016)

INPUT 1

Brainstorm: (5 mins.) words and images on the "Ministers of Mercy" prayer cards particularly paying attention to the Eugene quote: **"We are all ministers of God's mercy"**.

Questions & thoughts & Observations on OMI prayer cards (10 mins.)

* Imagine you are there in the Mission Church at Aix, France (***share a photo by Oblate "Mission Church"***) and you are hearing Eugene speaking these quotes from the banner personally to you for the first time...

* **Facilitator reads out the two Eugene quotes:** *"We are all ministers of the Mercy of God..."* and *"Let us never waver in trusting God completely"*.

A few silent moments

Question: What do you understand from these two quotes?

Feedback to your group

Facilitator: St. Eugene said: *"we are all ministers of God's mercy"*. So, today, think about how can you be a minister of God's mercy?

Invite each person to pencil down one specific action

Facilitator response:

- * In Eugene's time: prisoners were excluded from receiving the Sacraments of the Church, however, Fr. Eugene challenged the Church of the time by walking with condemned prisoners to the guillotine and giving them *last rites*. For a moment, imagine what it feels like to be those prisoners as they approach the guillotine and they hear Eugene's tone of voice saying to them: *"let us never waver in trusting God completely"*
- * Eugene and his first companions had little income at the start of their Oblate journey, so they wrote to donors explaining the purpose of their mission and they responded. Eugene asked his Oblates to put complete trust in God for the sake of the Oblate Mission since he believed that God would provide whatever the circumstance.

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSES (10 mins.)

- * **Are you drawn to any particular faces on this prayer card? Why were you attracted to this particular person?**

INPUT 2 - The Face of the Father's mercy

(Note for facilitator: If there is use of internet, then suggestion is to use this very short youtube clip of Jo Boyce. Alternatively, if internet is not available, then, you may share key points of Pope Francis relating to similar content.)

If Internet is available: Introducing Jo Boyce. She is a Liturgical musical composer based in Birmingham, UK. She had written a song based on insights into Pope Francis' document on the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy: *"The face of the Father's mercy"*. (*Misericordiae Vultus*).

She shares 3 core themes shared in Pope Francis's document: *"The face of the Father's mercy"* which we will explore after we have watched the short clip.

Introduce the 3 minute youtube clip

– **Watch Youtube clip (3mins. 09)**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOhjde420Nk&feature=em-subts_digest

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSES (10 mins.)

- * What came to mind as you watched this youtube clip?

To sum the 3 core themes from "The Face of the Father's Mercy" document :

- (a) The opening phrase is that **"Jesus Christ is the Face of the Father's mercy"**.
- (b) The theme of the year was to be: **"merciful like the Father"** and that our gaze is on the Father,

particularly the Father's mercy is the beginning and Jesus is the face. This is also evident in **Psalm 136: "For His mercy endures forever".**

(c) We are called to be merciful as the Father is merciful.

In the document reference is made to *"The Church's life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy".*

(OR)

If no Internet is available

Pope Francis' 10 key points on 'the face of the Father's mercy (15 mins.)

The Facilitator uses the handout which shows the 10 key points present within the document - *'The face of the Father's mercy' of Pope Francis.*

Choose a key point that appeals to you and share with the group

A Closing Thought:

Pope Francis said that **"God has caressed us with his mercy. Let us bring God's tender caress to others, to those who are in need".** (9th March 2016)

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins)

CLOSING PRAYER: (2 mins.) ("Ministers of Mercy" prayer cards)

St. Eugene said: "We are all ministers of the mercy of God....."

Let us never waver in trusting God completely".

St. Eugene, your charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the whole world. Through your intercession, help me to reach out with the healing touch of Christ, who calls each one of us to holiness and to Mission.

Guide me to accept God's call in my life with strength and love.

Let me act and make choices that bear witness to my belief in the dignity of each person and the compassion of God for all peoples, especially the poor and marginalised.

By your example, help me to see Jesus in others, to help all those in need, and to have the courage to do God's will, leaving nothing undared for the Gospel.

I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SESSION 4 - WE ARE ALL MINISTERS OF GOD'S MERCY

HANDOUT

“We are all ministers of Mercy of God”



A HANDOUT
10 KEY POINTS FROM POPE FRANCIS'
'FACE OF THE FATHER'S MERCY' DOCUMENT
(MISERICORDIAE VULTUS)

1. Jesus is the face and revelation of God the Father's mercy.
2. God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is seen as the mark of His goodness.
3. "His mercy endures forever". Christians are called to live the same mercy which Jesus lived: it is an inexcusable imperative for all Christians and the criterion of the true children of God.
4. Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life: it is her mission to announce God's mercy based on the love of Christ. On it depends her credibility.
5. We must adopt God's mercy as our lifestyle.
6. Pilgrimage and its steps. Mercy is the goal. Personal conversion, which involves rediscovering and living the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, is the way to reach the goal and the criteria upon which we will be judged.
7. We say 'No to indifference' during the season of Lent.
8. Justice goes in co-relation with mercy.
9. Peaceful dialogue with other religions.
10. Mary, the Mother of mercy.

(For further information see www.catholicsstrivingforholiness.com)

SESSION 5

THE CROSS IN OUR DAILY LIVES

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and present theme of the session	2 mins
Opening Prayer	12 mins
Input 1 with Group Reflection & Group Response	10 mins
Input 2 with Group Reflection & Group Response	12 mins
Yoke and Oxen summary	6 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	3 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i) Focal point – An Oblate cross and a coloured cloth
- (ii) A song related to the cross – suggestion to use Ray Boltz: “At the foot of the cross”
- (iii) Yoke & Oxen story
- (iv) ‘Cross’ leaflets & pencils / pens

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (2 mins)

OPENING PRAYER (12 mins)

Facilitator: We hold and pray with **the Oblate Cross** for a special personal intention. After a few moments, we quietly pass it on to the person beside us.

After the passing of the Oblate cross is completed: we pray together:

God of compassion, you sent Jesus, to proclaim a time of mercy reaching out to those who had no voice. Open our ears that we may listen with respect and understanding. Touch our lips that we may speak your words of peace and forgiveness. Warm our hearts that we may bring wholeness to the broken-hearted and dissolve the barriers of division. Help us to shape a world where the flames of hatred are quenched and where all can grow together as one. We make this prayer through your Son, Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate **pray for us.**

Saint Eugene **pray for us.**

(The 'joy of conversion' prayer card)

INPUT & GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE: (10 mins.)

"Carrying your cross": Spend some time thinking about what cross you carry in your daily life?

Feedback from the group

Responses may be varied:

- it may be carrying a personal tragedy in their lives
- it may be quietly carrying a long term illness or hidden pain or disability
- Acceptance of challenges of carrying out responsibilities in a toxic atmosphere for their home, school or workplace.

To sum up:

Simon helped Jesus to carry his cross to Calvary.

When we experience the cross in our own lives, we can reach out to others who are suffering. We can become another "Simon" to them and help them to carry their cross.

INPUT 2: A Reflection Question (12 mins.)

Who is “Simon” figure to you in your life?

SHARE IN PAIRS & LARGE GROUP

INPUT 2a:

The Oblate Constitutions and Rules tell us that:

“The cross of Jesus Christ is central to our Mission. Like Paul, we “preach Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor.2.2) If we bear in our body the death of Jesus, it is with hope that the life of Jesus too may be seen in our body (2 Cor. 4.10)”. (CCRS 4)

The Oblate Cross which the Oblates receive at their final vows is a constant reminder of the love of the Saviour who wishes to draw all hearts to himself and sends them out as his co-workers.

(CCRS 63)

Here is a scripture quote from the Risen Christ: *“Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11: 2-30)*

YOKE & OXEN Summary (Show the images of the yoke and oxen.) (6 mins.)

A **yoke** is wooden piece of farm equipment. It is put over the necks of two oxen which helps them to walk together so that they don't pull away from each other. These two oxen have to work together and help each other, otherwise there can be trouble, as you can imagine!

So when Christ invites us to shoulder **His** yoke, he is telling us that he will walk by our side so that he can help lighten whatever burden we are carrying. When we experience difficulty, pain, set back or suffering of any kind, we are in a real way carrying our own cross. But we are never alone. Christ does not abandon us. This is where our real strength comes from – Christ walking by our side. We are not alone – ever! So, we have a deeper understanding of the Scriptures when Christ tells us: *“if anyone wants to come with me, they must carry their cross and follow me”*.

Share in pairs – your thoughts and reactions to content that has been presented.

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER (3 mins)

Listen to Reflective song: a suggestion to use Ray Boltz's song: “At the foot of the Cross” (available online through youtube) or alternate song reflecting on the message of the cross.

SUPPLEMENT SECTION: Additional resources you may use for this session

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY: Give Handout with “empty cross” & pencil / pen could be used to write words that come out in personal reflection time

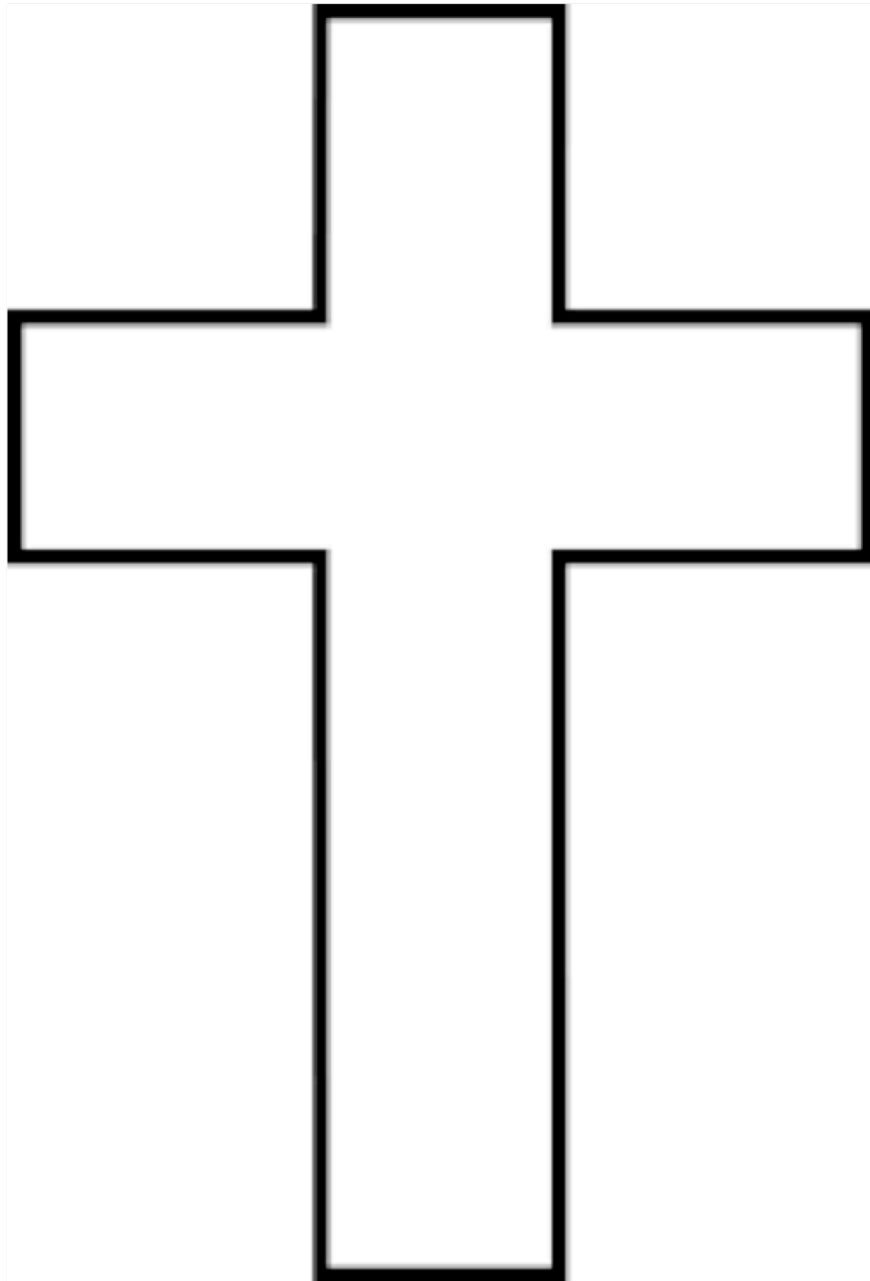
The Cross exercise

In the handout, we see the empty cross which symbolises the resurrection of Jesus and new life to all.

Write down IN and AROUND the empty cross what words describe this new life to you?

SESSION 5 - THE CROSS IN OUR DAILY LIVES

HANDOUT – “Empty cross” – to be used for individual reflective activity



HANDOUT – Image of “Yoke” and “Oxen”



SESSION 6

EUGENE, OUR LADY AND CHARITY

Suggested timings for the 60 minute session

Welcome and introduce the theme	3 mins
Opening Prayer	10 mins
Input 1 -Brainstorming – option for the poor	5 mins
Input 1a & Group Quiet Reflection	10 mins
Input 1b & Group Reflection & Response	15 mins
Input 2 & Group Reflection & Response	10 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	2 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i) Handout INPUT 1a: Description of slums of Marseille in Eugene's time
- (ii) Handout INPUT 1b: Story of Confirming the sick woman
- (iii) The Scripture passage: "The Visitation": Luke 1: 39-45
- (iv) (Optional) – laptop, youtube + speaker to play short video of Fr. Vincenzo OMI – "Friend to the homeless"

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER (10 mins)

- (i) The Facilitator may play some quiet instrumental music
- (ii) The Scripture passage: "The Visitation": Mary visits Elizabeth: Luke 1: 39-45 is read.
- (iii) A Time of Silence
- (iv) A volunteer may read the Scripture passage again
- (v) Invite the group to spontaneously share a word that spoke to their hearts.

We pray together:	Hail Mary....
Mary Immaculate	pray for us
Saint Eugene De Mazenod	pray for us



INPUT 1a - Description of the slums of Marseille in Bishop Eugene's time (8 mins)

Facilitator: Eugene de Mazenod proclaimed the Gospel to the poor, the marginalised and the most abandoned. He believed deeply that preaching faithfulness would enhance this goal and dedication to Our Lady, which marked his own prayer life, that lead him to reach out to those untouched by society and church. When he was Bishop, Eugene used to go to visit people in the slums of Marseille who were in need of him. Here is one story which describes what it looked like in his time.

Reader: "Go to the *rue des Fumiers* which is almost exclusively for the poor. You have to go down a damp, dark alley where the air is humid and chilled, as in a cave. To get an idea of how it feels to enter such miserable lodgings, you should experience the sensation of your foot slipping on the filthy street, and the fear of falling in the mud...

On each side of the alley, the walls ooze trickles of dirty water. Enter one of the doors, if the terrible odour you breathe does not throw you back. Note that uneven floor is not paved even though the cracks are filled with such a coating of muck that you can hardly tell the difference.

A sack of straw, a covering of tattered rags, rarely washed because it is the only one there is, occasionally sheets or a pillow - there you have what passes for the bed.

No need for clothes closets or dressers in such a dwelling....

As for the man of the house, he looks for nothing and hopes for nothing beyond the daily bread to feed his family, beyond the bottle of wine to momentarily blind his consciousness of the pain. For him, **living means not dying!**".

(SOURCE: pg. 159 - "Living in the Spirit's Fire" - Fr. Alfred A. Hubenig OMI)

Here is a second story of Bishop Eugene in Marseille

INPUT 1b: Story of Confirming the sick woman (4 mins)

Facilitator: Into these same back streets near the port (rue de L'Echelle – street of the Ladder) was where the 77year old Bishop Eugene in cassock, surplice and stole walked to bring consolation to the sick and dying. On Jan. 8th, 1859, he penned in his journal after returning from confirming a sick person in the slums. He mentions the warm welcome he received from the poor he ministered to. He goes on to say:

Reader: “They vied with one another to see who could best keep me from slipping!

They appeared at doorways to receive my blessing. They were astonished and loudly expressed their satisfaction and gratitude at seeing me visit their poor neighbourhood.

In the house of the sick woman, the closest neighbours were gathered to receive me, and the sick person herself was in ecstasy to see that the bishop had not been deterred by her miserable state, but had come to see her. What the good lady did not know was that I considered myself just as blessed as she to be able to approach the poorest of my children in this way and fulfil the duties of my ministry towards the unfortunate class of people who claim my interest more than the world’s richest and most powerful could”.

(SOURCE: pg. 176, “Living in the Spirit’s fire” – Fr. Alfred A. Hubenig OMI)

GROUP REFLECTION AND RESPONSE (15 mins)

Invite the group to share in pairs, and then within your large group on this question:

What can you say after having heard these stories about Bishop Eugene and the slum dwellings through which he went in order to visit his sick parishioners?

To sum up:

When he was Bishop in Marseille, Eugene did not solely sit at his desk waiting for people to come to him, he got into the world of the poor and visited them in their squalor, always showing care and compassion to those in need.

Mary, our Mother, too, showed her strong faith and compassion when she dropped everything to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

INPUT 2: Luke 1: 39-45 - SCRIPTURE TEXT to reflect on (2 mins.)

Reader: The Visitation: Mary visits Elizabeth: Luke 1: 39-45.

SILENCE

To sum up: In the gospel, Mary goes '*with haste*,' *immediately*,' or '*quickly*,' to see Elizabeth. Mary has received and heard the Good News that she is to be the Mother of Jesus. She is the first to *bear* the Good News. When she goes to see Elizabeth, she is the first to *share* the Good News, but she does not keep the Good News to or for herself. As always, she leads others to Jesus.

GROUP REFLECTION AND RESPONSE in large group (8 mins)

Reflection question

St. Francis said: 'preach the Gospel (Good News) and use words where necessary'.

As FoSE, how and where can we put this into practice in our daily lives?

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS: next meeting date (5 mins)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 mins)

Pray a Decade of Rosary: 2nd Joyful mystery – Visitation – Intention: for those FoSE who are not able to be at our meetings and may need a visit from us.

SUPPLEMENT SECTION:

If Internet is available, here is an additional resource which you may like to use.

Watch short video clip via youtube:

"Friend to the Homeless" - Fr. Vincenzo OMI – 6 mins. 53secs

An Oblate who is a cook in Korea to the Homeless people.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e08nz_E-hG0

SESSION 6 – EUGENE, OUR LADY AND CHARITY

HANDOUTS Section

HANDOUT - INPUT 1a: Description of slums of Marseille in Eugene's time

Reader: “Go to the *rue des Fumiers* which is almost exclusively for the poor. You have to go down a damp, dark alley where the air is humid and chilled, as in a cave. To get an idea of how it feels to enter such miserable lodgings, you should experience the sensation of your foot slipping on the filthy street, and the fear of falling in the mud...

On each side of the alley, the walls ooze trickles of dirty water. Enter one of the doors, if the terrible odour you breathe does not throw you back. Note that uneven floor is not paved even though the cracks are filled with such a coating of muck that you can hardly tell the difference.

A sack of straw, a covering of tattered rags, rarely washed because it is the only one there is, occasionally sheets or a pillow - there you have what passes for the bed.

No need for clothes closets or dressers in such a dwelling....

As for the man of the house, he looks for nothing and hopes for nothing beyond the daily bread to feed his family, beyond the bottle of wine to momentarily blind his consciousness of the pain. For him, **living means not dying!**”.

(SOURCE: pg. 159 – “*Living in the Spirit's Fire*” – Fr. Alfred A. Hubenig OMI)

HANDOUT: INPUT 1b: Story of Confirming the sick woman

Facilitator: Into these same back streets near the port (rue de L'Echelle – street of the Ladder) was where the 77year old Bishop Eugene in cassock, surplice and stole walked to bring consolation to the sick and dying. On Jan. 8th, 1859, he penned in his journal after returning from confirming a sick person in the slums. He mentions the warm welcome he received from the poor he ministered to. He goes on to say:

Reader:

“They vied with one another to see who could best keep me from slipping!

They appeared at doorways to receive my blessing. They were astonished and loudly expressed their satisfaction and gratitude at seeing me visit their poor neighbourhood.

In the house of the sick woman, the closest neighbours were gathered to receive me, and the sick person herself was in ecstasy to see that the bishop had not been deterred by her miserable state, but had come to see her. What the good lady did not know was that I considered myself just as blessed as she to be able to approach the poorest of my children in this way and fulfil the duties of my ministry towards the unfortunate class of people who claim my interest more than the world’s richest and most powerful could”.

(SOURCE: pg. 176, “Living in the Spirit’s fire” – Fr. Alfred A. Hubenig OMI)

SESSION 7

COMMUNITY WITH JESUS AS OUR CENTRE

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and present theme of the session	2 mins
Opening Prayer	10 mins
Brainstorm activity	10 mins
Input 1 & Group Reflection & Response	13 mins
Input 2 & Group Reflection & Response	13 mins
Summary - Thought from Pope Francis	5 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	2 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

Handouts on:

- (i) Oblate Constitution **CCRS 3**.
- (ii) Scripture reading: Acts of the Apostles 2: 42-47.
- (iii) A summary on “Community” - article 13.

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (2 mins)

OPENING PRAYER (10 mins) *(invitation to say it together)*

Give us, O Lord, the vision to see the path you set before us.

Grant us the courage to follow your way, that through the gifts and talents you have given us, may we bring your life and your love to others. We ask this through Jesus, your Son and our brother. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts of the Apostles 2: 42-47

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved”.

PAUSE FOR SILENT REFLECTION

LITANY

Holy Mary, Mother of God	pray for us
Mary Immaculate, Mother of the Oblates	pray for us
St. Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Oblates and bishop of Marseilles	pray for us
St. Eugene, a person of ardent faith	pray for us
St. Eugene, a person with burning zeal	pray for us
Our Oblate & Lay Martyrs of Spain	pray for us
Our Oblate & Lay Martyrs of Laos	pray for us
Blessed Joseph Gerard of Lesotho	pray for us
Blessed Joseph Cebula of Poland	pray for us
Faithful Oblates who gave your life for the gospel	pray for us
Praised be Jesus Christ	and Mary Immaculate

Brainstorm - Different kinds of community (5 mins)

Everything today is community based. How many communities can you think of?

Group Responses (5 mins)

To sum up:

Family is the basic community where we learn to share life and all that it offers. We are members of the Oblate family, our Friends of St. Eugene community is like another family where we share not only some of our lives as friends but also our faith. The first Christian community was a faith sharing community.

INPUT 1: HOW ST EUGENE REFLECTED ON THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY (3 mins)

CCRS 3: *"The community of the Apostles with Jesus is the model of our life. Our Lord grouped the twelve around him to be his companions and to be sent out as his messengers." (cf. Mark 3:14)*

"At the start, on the one hand, the Oblate community did not have a well-defined structure; while on the other, the value of communion that should animate it was clear. The house of Aix, in my mind and my hopes, must reproduce the perfection of the first disciples of the Apostles – that of the first Christians in Jerusalem. I base my hopes on that much more than eloquent discourses. Have they ever converted anyone?"

(Fr. Eugene De Mazenod, Letter to Fr. Tempier, November 15, 1815)

Group Reflection and Responses (10 mins)

Is this more like our group? Discuss.

Can we name core values of the First Christian Community which are currently missing from our Friends of St. Eugene group?

INPUT 2: An Oblate understanding of developing community spirit (3 mins)

From the 1972 General Chapter document: *"Community should signify a web of relationships within which we are 'at home'. This means that we are accepted as we are. The charity of which we speak as the bonds of community is scarcely charity if it remains cold, distant and intermittent, always questioning, and nearly always criticising. Is acceptance really present if all effective sharing is perpetually banished from among us? Although a healthy measure of privacy is necessary, are we not seeking today a degree of human sharing that goes beyond mere sociability? Many seek the type of relationships which are going to support them in their difficulties, challenge them in their convictions, forgive them in their faults and provide that measure of opposition that alone brings out that which is most **authentic**".*

(Community, article 13)

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE (10 mins)

Does this reflect our group? If so, then how?

What can we learn from this statement about making our community stronger?

TO SUM UP (5 mins)

A thought from Pope Francis with regards to welcoming people into our Church communities

Pope Francis invites the Church as the body of Christ *'to be a place of God's mercy and hope, where all feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live according to the good life of the Gospel. To make others feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged, the Church must keep its doors wide open so that ALL may enter. We must go through these doors and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ'.*

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER - A community prayer (2 mins)

We pray that our community may grow in real companionship, charity and love following in the footsteps of the first Christians who bore witness to their faith in Jesus Christ by responding willingly to the needs of the community.

SESSION 7 - COMMUNITY WITH JESUS AS OUR CENTRE

HANDOUTS Section

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts of the Apostles 2: 42-47

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved”.

OBLATE TEXTS FOR REFLECTION

CCRS 3: *“The community of the Apostles with Jesus is the model of our life. Our Lord grouped the twelve around him to be his companions and to be sent out as his messengers.” (cf. Mark 3:14)*

“At the start, on the one hand, the Oblate community did not have a well-defined structure; while on the other, the value of communion that should animate it was clear. The house of Aix, in my mind and my hopes, must reproduce the perfection of the first disciples of the Apostles – that of the first Christians in Jerusalem. I base my hopes on that much more than eloquent discourses. Have they ever converted anyone?”

(Fr. Eugene De Mazenod, Letter to Fr. Tempier, November 15, 1815)

COMMUNITY: From the 1972 General Chapter document:

*“Community should signify a web of relationships within which we are ‘at home’. This means that we are accepted as we are. The charity of which we speak as the bonds of community is scarcely charity if it remains cold, distant and intermittent, always questioning, and nearly always criticising. Is acceptance really present if all effective sharing is perpetually banished from among us? Although a healthy measure of privacy is necessary, are we not seeking today a degree of human sharing that goes beyond mere sociability? Many seek the type of relationships which are going to support them in their difficulties, challenge them in their convictions, forgive them in their faults and provide that measure of opposition that alone brings out that which is most **authentic**”.*

(Community, article 13)

SESSION 8

“FRIENDSHIP” BETWEEN THE FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome, present theme & Opening Prayer	10 mins
Friends of St. Eugene Mission Statement	5 mins
Friendship activity	8 mins
Group Reflection & Group Response	15 mins
Fr. Eugene’s model of Friendship	15 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	2 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- * “Circle of Friends” picture symbolising model of First Apostolic Community. They worked together with their different gifts. The image is distinctively circular and non-hierarchical (see handout section)

(ii) A picture of Saint Eugene

(iii) **Friends of St. Eugene (FoSE) leaflets** which contains **FoSE Mission Statement**

(iv) On bits of paper, have qualities associated with “Friendship” linked with living in a community as a Friend of St. Eugene. For example: *trust, reliable, faithful, perseverer, listener, caring, empathetic, generous, active.*

WELCOME, INTRODUCE THE THEME (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER: (7 mins.)

Suggestion to display the “**Circle of Friends**” picture in the centre of room to help visually focus on friendship theme.

Ask the group to think about a Friend who needs a prayer just now....**Time of silent prayer...**

Scripture text: ‘I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you’. *(John 15:15)*

Hail Mary....

Mission Statement of the Friends of St. Eugene (5 mins.)

The **Mission Statement** of the Friends of St. Eugene is read out and briefly discussed. At this meeting, we are going to talk about *Friendship*.

Friendship activity (8 mins.)

(a). Here’s some ideas that tell us about friendship. On a small table in the centre of meeting room, place the caption of “*Friendship* and around it add other words essential to Friendship like for example: *Trust, Reliable, Faithful, listener, caring, empathetic, generous, active*.

Talk with person next to you: Choose a word of friendship that stood out for you in the words displayed on the table?

(b). What makes a friend? What is the key positive value you look for in a friendship?

GROUP REFLECTION & GROUP RESPONSE (15mins)

(c). How do you see yourself as a friend?

Use the ‘**Circle of friends image**’ to pass it around as you share your feedback to the group.

Fr. Eugene’s model of Friendship - (15mins)

Who was Fr. Eugene’s key friend?

Answer: Fr. Henri Tempier who was his companion and spiritual director.

Fr. Eugene’e letter to his first diocesan companion Fr. Tempier who was the first to join him and endorse his name to the common mission. This fraternal warmth is clear from one of the very first letters that Eugene had written to Fr. Henri Tempier.

“First companion of mine, you have from the first day we came together grasped the spirit which must animate us and which we must communicate to others; you have not deviated in the slightest from the path we resolved to follow; everyone knows this in the Society and they count on you as they count on myself”.

(Letter to Henri Tempier, 15 August 1822, EO VI n 86)

We see the bonds of friendship being built strongly in these letters.

“We will find our support in friendship and in fraternal life, in apostolic commitment to all,” is the call today to each Oblate in our Rule of Life.” (Constitution 18).

Its origin is clearly visible from the first moments of community life for Eugene.

The support in friendship and fraternal life that Eugene lived with Henri Tempier and the community overflowed to the members of the youth congregation in Aix. They were not considered merely as the “beneficiaries” of the apostolic commitment of the Missionaries, but they were regarded as “our friends”.

A thousand regards for all friends, great and small. I think of them every day in the holy sacrifice. Let them not forget us.

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER (St. Eugene prayer cards) (2 mins.)

St. Eugene, Your charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the whole world.

Through your intercession, help me to reach out with the healing touch of Christ, who calls each one of us to holiness and to Mission.

Guide me to accept God’s call in my life with strength and love.

Let me act and make choices that bear witness to my belief in the dignity of each person and the compassion of God for all peoples, especially the poor and marginalised.

By your example, help me to see Jesus in others, to help all those in need, and to have the courage to do God’s will, leaving nothing uncared for the Gospel.

I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate pray for us

St. Eugene pray for us

SESSION 8 - "FRIENDSHIP" BETWEEN THE FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE

HANDOUTS Section



FRIENDSHIP

MISSION STATEMENT of the FRIENDS of ST. EUGENE

Friends of St. Eugene respond to the call to live the charism of St. Eugene De Mazenod in their daily lives, in their own unique way. They support each other through FRIENDSHIP, PRAYER and SERVICE to make a difference in their local area and so further the Reign of God'.

Closing Prayer card

St. Eugene, Your charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the whole world. Through your intercession, help me to reach out with the healing touch of Christ, who calls each one of us to holiness and to Mission. Guide me to accept God's call in my life with strength and love.

Let me act and make choices that bear witness to my belief in the dignity of each person and the compassion of God for all peoples, especially the poor and marginalised. By your example, help me to see Jesus in others, to help all those in need, and to have the courage to do God's will, leaving nothing uncared for the Gospel. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate pray for us

St. Eugene pray for us

SESSION 9

“PRAYER” AND THE FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome, present theme & introduce prayer symbol	5 mins
Brainstorm activity on Prayer	10 mins
Fr. Eugene - importance of a prayer life	10 mins
Group Reflection and Response	10mins
Prayer: something new locally (or) Taizé prayer	15mins
Debrief Prayer & Local Group Announcements	10 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

(i) Oblate cross or any cross needed.

(ii) Friends of St. Eugene Mission Statement

(iii) In this session, participants will have an opportunity to experience a new way of praying. The Facilitator selects an appropriate type of prayer. The following list may help the facilitator make the selection.

Examples are: **(i)** Quiet Meditative prayer paying attention to pattern of breathing. **(ii)** Charismatic -praise and worship; movement and dance expressions. **(iii)** Praying with simple TAIZE chants **(iv)**. Inter-faith prayer using lit candles & walking rituals to pray for specific intentions like knife crimes, gun violence. **(v)**. Catholic Family prayer of the Rosary. **(vi)**. Sign language prayer with groups for people who are registered deaf. **(viii)**. Exposition in front of the Blessed Sacrament - devotions and litanies prayed. **(ix)**. Using circular dance as a form of prayer to bring up offertory gifts. **(x)**. Praying using the Arts (paints, collage, colour). **(xi)**. ORAISON (Oblate tradition) - using silence in front of Blessed Sacrament; **(xii)**. Praying and reflecting on following Sunday's Gospel readings - in silence and allowing a phrase to speak to you, otherwise known as Lectio Devina.

WELCOME, introduce the theme & the visual symbols (5 mins)

Introduction to the Oblate cross (or an ordinary cross) and word 'PRAYER'

which are displayed at a focal point in centre of the room.

(i) *The Oblate cross* to create a focal point in the room.

(ii). Display placard: "PRAYER".

The Facilitator reads out **Mission Statement**. At this meeting, we are going to talk about Prayer and experience a form of prayer.

Brainstorm Prayer question: (10 mins.)

Do we spend enough time in prayer at our meetings and with each other as a group of Friends of St. Eugene?

Fr. Eugene's thoughts on the importance of developing a strong prayer life (10 mins)

Realistically, Eugene realised that in order to enter into prayer he had to struggle to break away from the grip of work and its demands – otherwise his attempts at prayer will be like swimming against a torrent of water that is impossible to conquer.

'Then enter a state of absolute mental and physical relaxation without striving to produce anything. It would be tantamount to swimming against the stream with a lot of stress and little success to act in any other way on leaving behind this commotion, this pile-up of business of every kind in which I am habitually mired'.

Here he touches the essence of prayer: the necessity to work for a mental and physical relaxation so that God can take over. This relaxing is an integral part of the process of prayer – it is prayer. "Let go, let God".

'Once the torrent has subsided and I begin to be alone with myself, I will ask God for his grace to make a fruitful retreat. I will pray with all the fervour I am capable of to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, my guardian Angel and other saints'.

(Retreat resolutions, October 1831, EO XV n 162)

Group Reflection and Response to Fr. Eugene's thoughts (10mins)

Question: How do you like to pray?

Some Examples are: **(i)** *Quiet Meditative prayer paying attention to pattern of breathing.* **(ii).** *Charismatic -praise and worship; movement and dance expressions.* **(iii)** *Praying with simple TAIZÉ chants* **(iv).** *Inter-faith prayer using lit candles & walking rituals to pray for specific intentions like knife crimes, gun violence.* **(v).** *Catholic Family prayer of the Rosary.* **(vi).** *Sign language prayer with groups for people who are*

registered deaf. (viii). Exposition in front of the Blessed Sacrament - devotions and litanies prayed. (ix). Using circular dance as a form of prayer to bring up offertory gifts. (x). Praying using the Arts (paints, collage, colour). (xi). ORAISON (Oblate tradition) - using silence in front of Blessed Sacrament; (xii). Praying and reflecting on following Sunday's Gospel readings - in silence and allowing a phrase to speak to you, otherwise known as Lectio Devina.

Taizé PRAYER session (15 mins)

Notes for Facilitator:

The Facilitator finds someone who can offer a new form of prayer to the group. The question for the facilitator to think about is how can the prayer life of the Friends of St. Eugene group be improved.

Here is a sample example to offer your group that was offered to some groups in the UK who had not experienced a **Taizé form of prayer around a cross.**

Setting up resources needed for TAIZÉ prayer

If the Taizé prayer is happening in a meeting room, then, you may place the cross at the centre as it visually shows your group's connection to Christ. (If you are meeting in Church, then, just try to see if adjusting the light to dimmer lighting is possible. A cross is already there). If it is possible to dim the lighting in the room, then, it helps to create a powerful, reflective atmosphere for prayer. Light a few candles if they are available.

Choose some simple Taizé tunes that people are familiar with in your community and intersperse them in between with periods of SILENCE and a short scripture reading like **"Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10)** (or) **"And if you have faith, everything you ask for in prayer you will receive."** (Matt. 21:22)

After the time of prayer, ask a reflective question:

Did you enjoy that type of praying?

Feedback from the group

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins.)

CLOSING REFLECTION

In all that I am today, all that I try to do,
all my encounters, reflections - even the frustrations and failings
and especially in this time of prayer,
in all of this may I place my life in your hands.
Lord, I am yours. Make of me what you will. **Amen.**

(Sacred Space)

SOCIAL get together (optional)

SESSION 9 - "PRAYER" AND THE FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE

HANDOUTS Section

PRAYER

MISSION STATEMENT of the FRIENDS of ST. EUGENE

Friends of St. Eugene respond to the call to live the charism of St. Eugene De Mazenod in their daily lives, in their own unique way. They support each other through FRIENDSHIP, PRAYER and SERVICE to make a difference in their local area and so further the Reign of God'.



CLOSING REFLECTION

In all that I am today, all that I try to do,
all my encounters, reflections - even the frustrations and failings
and especially in this time of prayer,
in all of this may I place my life in your hands.
Lord, I am yours. Make of me what you will. **Amen.**

(Sacred Space)

SESSION 10

“SERVICE” AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome & introduce the theme	3 mins
Opening Prayer	15 mins
FoSE Mission Statement	5 mins
Service - naming it for ourselves	15 mins
Looking to the future: a possible model	15mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	2 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

(A). A picture of St. Eugene

(B). The **Friends of St. Eugene Mission Statement**

(C). Before the meeting, you and members of your group may need to look around in your own area to see and identify what needs to be done and can be offered by your group at a simple, practical level. Work to a time frame having a beginning and end time where the group service is manageable as people have lives to live as well! Some examples of **“SERVICE”** undertaken by the Friends of St. Eugene include:

(i). Supporting Food centres to help the poor. (ii.) Homeless shelter – working with other churches; (iii) Christmas meal for people living on their own; (iv). Collecting re-usable plastic containers for homeless; (v). Raising awareness in the parish by organising Advent / Lenten appeals to collect men’s and women’s toiletry items for refugees and asylum seekers; (vi). parishioners signing Christmas cards which are sent to prisoners; (vii). Welcoming parishioners before and after mass on Sundays.

(D). Handout: looking to the future – a possible model.

WELCOME & introduce theme to the group (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER (15 mins) -

Display a 'St. Eugene' picture at a central point with a candle lit

(i) *St. Eugene picture* to create a focal point in the room. The symbol remind us that Eugene tried to do the work by himself to support Austrian prisoners suffering with Typhus and it almost killed him! It made him realise that he needed to invite his Diocesan companions like Fr. Tempier to join him in this special work to build up the Kingdom of God. Likewise, we are unable to do this work all by ourselves.

Suggestion to use the **Scripture text 1 Cor. 4-6:**

"There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of SERVICE to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them".

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be...

Opening Statement: The facilitator reads out **the Friends of St. Eugene Mission Statement** . At this meeting, we are going to talk about *SERVICE*. **(5mins)**

SERVICE - naming it for ourselves! (15 mins.)

Question: Is there something around the area that we can do to make a difference to our community?

If we have done something already, then, how did it go for us?

Feedback from the group

Looking to the future: a possible model (15 mins)

The Oblate *Partners in Mission group (PIM)* in the UK have at their core these values of **Continuity, Innovation, Responsiveness**. It helps the PIM to have a clear focus on what they are doing. We offer these values to help you discern how you can better serve your local community.

Continuity: What do we think we need to continue keep doing?

Innovation: What would we like to do that is new and possible for our group?

Responsiveness: Where do we see the need to respond in our local area with a renewed fresh energy?

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins)

CLOSING REFLECTION – Disturb me Lord (2 mins)

**Disturb me, Lord, when I am too pleased with myself,
when my dreams have come true because I dreamed too little,
when I arrived safely because I sailed too close to the shore.**

**Disturb me, Lord, when with the abundance of things I possess
I have lost my thirst for the waters of life;
having fallen in love with life,
I have ceased to dream of eternity and in my efforts to build a new earth,
I have allowed my vision of the new Heaven to dim.**

**Disturb me, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
where storms will show your mastery;
where losing sight of land, I shall find the stars.
I ask you to push back the horizons of my hopes;
and to push back the future in strength, courage, hope and love.**

(attributed to Sir Francis Drake – adapted)

SESSION 10 - "SERVICE" AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE

HANDOUT Section

Looking to the future: a possible model

The Oblate *Partners in Mission group (PIM)* in the UK have at their core these values of **Continuity, Innovation, Responsiveness**. It helps the PIM to have a clear focus on what they are doing. We offer these values to help you discern how you can better serve your local community.

Continuity: What do we think we need to continue keep doing?

Innovation: What would we like to do that is new and possible for our group?

Responsiveness: Where do we see the need to respond in our local area with a renewed fresh energy?

Handout - CLOSING REFLECTION

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when my dreams have come true because I dreamed too little,
when I arrived safely because I sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb me, Lord, when with the abundance of things I possess
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Disturb me, Lord, to dare more boldly,
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where storms will show your mastery;
where losing sight of land, I shall find the stars.
I ask you to push back the horizons of my hopes;
and to push back the future in strength, courage, hope and love.

(attributed to Sir Francis Drake – adapted)

SESSION 11

EXPLORING OUR KEY VALUES AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE – PART A

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and introduce theme of the session	3 mins
Opening Prayer	5 mins
Key value 1 & Group Reflection & Response	12 mins
Key value 2 & Group Reflection & Response	12 mins
Key value 3 & Group Reflection & Response	20 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	3 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

Focal point: Circle of Friends with Candle + instrumental music.

- (i) 'Look and listen' reflection - copy for participants
- (ii) The "Our Father" dialogue (*2 voices needed for it. The two people need to have looked at this dialogue before the session*).
- (iii) A Bible to find the various Scripture quotes

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER:

Focal point: Circle of Friends with Candle + instrumental music.

‘LOOK AND LISTEN’ (5 mins.)

Moses said: "I am slow of speech",

Jeremiah said: "I am too young",

Amos said, "I am no prophet",

Mary said, "How can this be"?

Peter said: "Leave me Lord, I am too sinful"

The centurion said: "I am not worthy",

Paul said: "I know that nothing good lives in me".

Today it is your turn.

God calls and doesn't ask if we are suitable. Only if we are available.

Author unknown

Time for silent reflection on how God is calling us to be available today.

Our Father.... prayer

Exploring The Key Values of St. Eugene and Friends of St. Eugene striving to live them in their lives and communities

(1) TO RECOGNISE THE DIGNITY OF ALL PEOPLE. (12mins.)

Scripture quote: 1 Peter 2:9 – “*You are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and a redeemed people*”.

Question: Who is not included in that group? Who is not given their dignity today?

St. Eugene quote: “*Come now and learn what you are in the eyes of faith.*

Poor of Jesus Christ, afflicted, wretched, suffering, sick, covered with sores, all you who misery oppresses, my brothers, dear brothers, respected brothers, listen to me. You are God’s children, brothers of Jesus Christ. You are in some way Gods!”

(Opening of Mission in Provence 1813 –Eugene’s Lenten sermon at the Madeleine Church)

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the ‘Eugene’ quote.

(2) TO BE A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS (12mins)

Scripture quote: Mark 1: 1-3 – reference to St. John the Baptist – “a voice cries in the wilderness...”

Question: Who are the groups of people who have no voice today? Who needs to be heard who has no voice today?

Story 1: St. Oscar Romero SJ– Archbishop of San Salvador.

Through his ministry, he gave a voice to the voiceless and stood up for the basic human rights of the people. This provoked hostility from the Government, the Army and their Allies. The persecution culminated with the assassination of Archbishop Romero as he celebrated mass at the convent on March 24th 1980.

“I have often received death threats. I must tell you that, as a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadorian people”.

“As a pastor, I am obligated by divine commandment to give my life for those I love... even for those who would assassinate me... for that reason, I offer God my blood for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador... Martyrdom is a grace that I don't believe I merit. But if God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may my blood be the seed of liberty and sign that this hope will soon become a reality. May my death, if it is accepted by God, be for the liberation of my people and a testimony of hope in the future”.



St. Eugene quote: “We preach the Gospel among people who have not yet received it **and helps them see their own values in its light.**” (*Constitution 5*)

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the ‘Eugene’ quote.

(3) TO BE PEOPLE PASSIONATE FOR CHRIST, THE CHURCH AND THE OBLATE MISSION. (20 mins)

Scripture quote: Matt. 9: 27-31 – Read the Scripture passage once.

Refer to the story of the two Blind men who were healed by Jesus and they couldn't keep to themselves what they heard, seen and experienced.

Question: Why do you think it is important to share good news messages from our lives?

DIALOGUE WITH GOD: 2 voices needed to speak the part of Narrator and God.

Note for the Facilitator: Use the handout 'Dialogue with God'. Choose 2 strong voices from your group. Ideally the person playing the voice of "God" in character needs to be unseen from the group and yet heard! So a desired effect can be made from the shared encounter.

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE

What new insights did you receive upon listening to the 'Dialogue with God'?

Oblate quote: Read out the Oblate Vision statement as given by the Oblates of Britain and Ireland.

'Profoundly respecting the dignity and sacredness of each person, we seek to grow close to Christ and to make him known through our way of life and ministry. We commit ourselves principally to those on the margins of church and society'.

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the Oblate quote.

Share with the person beside you a response from the quote.

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS: (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER - Glory be..... prayer. (3 mins)

SESSION 11:

EXPLORING OUR KEY VALUES AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE – PART A

HANDOUTS Section

OPENING PRAYER: 'LOOK AND LISTEN'

Moses said: "I am slow of speech",

Jeremiah said: "I am too young",

Amos said, "I am no prophet",

Mary said, "How can this be"?

Peter said: "Leave me Lord, I am too sinful"

The centurion said: "I am not worthy",

Paul said: "I know that nothing good lives in me",

Today it is your turn.

God calls and doesn't ask if we are suitable. Only if we are available.

Author unknown

HANDOUT - DIALOGUE WITH GOD

NARRATOR: Our Father Who Art In Heaven.....

GOD: Yes?

NARRATOR: Don't interrupt me. I'm praying.

GOD: Oooh!!!! But you called me.....

NARRATOR: Called you? No, I didn't call you. I'm praying.

Our Father who art in Heaven.....

GOD: There -- you did it again!

NARRATOR: Did what?

GOD: Called ME. You said, "Our Father who art in Heaven" Well, here I am. What's on your mind?

NARRATOR: Oh my God!!

GOD: You sound surprised.....

NARRATOR: I didn't expect you to answer.

GOD: But when you pray to me, don't you expect me to listen?

NARRATOR: Well yes, but I don't expect you to talk to me.....

GOD: Now that I am talking to you, what did you want to say?

NARRATOR: Well, I was just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of doing my duty.

GOD: Well, all right. Go on.

NARRATOR: Okay, Hallowed be thy name

GOD: Hang on a minute. Do you really think so?

NARRATOR: Think what?

GOD: That my name is hallowed? Of course you know what it means! Right?

NARRATOR: It means, it means... well, I'm not sure what it means.
How should I know? It's just a part of the prayer. Anyway, what does it mean?

GOD: It means Honoured, Holy, Wonderful. You mean that, right?

NARRATOR: Of course!

GOD: Then how about yesterday, you were coming home in the rush hour on the number 97 bus. My name was not quite so hallowed then, was it?

NARRATOR: I didn't mean what I said – I was in a rush....

GOD: How would you like it if whenever someone stubbed their toe or was delayed, they said, 'Oh *(insert name of the Narrator)*'"

NARRATOR: Sorry....

GOD: I forgive you. Go on.

NARRATOR: You know this is going to take forever if you keep interrupting me like that?

GOD: Would that be so bad?

NARRATOR: Would what be so bad?

GOD: Talking to me forever?

NARRATOR: I don't know, I never thought about it like that.

GOD: Well do, it might happen.....

NARRATOR: Oh.

GOD: Go on, continue.

NARRATOR: Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.....

GOD: Do you really mean that?

NARRATOR: Yeah, sure.

GOD: Well, what are you doing about it?

NARRATOR: Doing? Why, nothing, I suppose. I just think it would be kind of cool if you got control, of everything down here like you have up there. We're kinda in a mess down here, you know!

GOD: Yes, I know; but, have I got control of you?

NARRATOR: Well, I go to church.

GOD: That isn't what I asked you. What about your bad temper? You've really got a problem there, you know. And then there's the way you spend your money -- all on yourself. And what about the kind of books you read?

NARRATOR: Now hold on just a minute! Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of the rest of those people at church!

GOD: Excuse ME. I thought you were praying for MY will to be done. If that is to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you -- for example.

NARRATOR: Oh, all right. I guess I do have some problems. Now that you mention it, I could probably name some others too.

GOD: So could I.....

NARRATOR: I haven't thought about it very much until now, but I suppose I would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to be really free.

GOD: Good. Now we're getting somewhere. We'll work together -- You and I. I'm proud of you.

NARRATOR: Look, Lord, if you don't mind, I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does.

NARRATOR: Give us this day, our daily bread.....

GOD: You could actually do to cut down on the bread....

NARRATOR: Hey!! What is this? Here I am doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden you break in and remind me of all my problems.

GOD: Praying is a dangerous thing. You just might get what you ask for. Remember, you called ME -- and here I am. It's too late to stop now.

GOD: Keep praying. (...pause...) Well, go on.

NARRATOR: I'm scared to.

GOD: Scared? Of what?

NARRATOR: I know what you'll say.

GOD: Try ME.

NARRATOR: (saying it fast) Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.....

GOD: What about Ann?

NARRATOR: See? I knew it! I knew you would bring her up! You know Lord. She's told lies about me, spread stories. She never paid back the money she owes me. I'm still waiting for her to emigrate to the North Pole!

GOD: But -- your prayer -- What about your prayer?

NARRATOR: I didn't mean it.

GOD: Well, at least you're honest. But, it's quite a load carrying around all that bitterness and resentment isn't it?

NARRATOR: Yes, but I'll feel better as soon as I get even with her. Have I got some plans for her! She'll wish she had never been born.

GOD: No, you won't feel any better. You'll feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. You know how unhappy you are -- Well, I can change that.

NARRATOR: You can? How?

GOD: Forgive Ann. Then, I'll forgive you. Then the hate and the sin will be Ann's problem -- not yours. You will have settled your heart.

NARRATOR: Oh, you're right. You always are. And more than I want revenge, I want to be right with You . . (sigh).

NARRATOR: All right, all right. I forgive her. I'm sure she's pretty miserable if I think about it. Anyone who does the things she does must have a problem. Please show her the right way.

GOD: There now! Wonderful! How do you feel?

NARRATOR: Hmmm. Well, not bad. Actually, not bad at all! In fact, I feel wonderful! You know, I don't think I'll be so wound up going to bed tonight. I haven't been getting much rest, you know.

GOD: Yeah, I know. But, you're not through with your prayer are you? Go on.

NARRATOR: Oh, all right. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.....

Hang on - isn't that a funny thing to pray? You're not going to lead me into temptation?

GOD: Well you spend half the time asking me to. You love being tempted. You're always hoping I'll arrange your situations so that you will be in a precarious predicament.

NARRATOR: What do you mean by that?

GOD: You know what I mean. Don't watch TV all night when things need to be done. And what about the company you keep? All that time drinking coffee and gossiping about people – if you can't say something nice, maybe you should think about the value of your friendships?

NARRATOR: But a little innocent excitement isn't so bad once in a while, is it? What's so wrong with wanting to win the lottery, or have a perfect body or the most expensive car?

GOD: But you don't need to use me as an escape.

NARRATOR: What do you mean?

GOD: Yeah you do. You always do it. You put yourself in an awkward situation, get into trouble and come running to me saying, "Lord, help me out of this mess and I promise you I'll never do it again!" Remember those deals you tried to make?

NARRATOR: Yes, I'm ashamed Lord, I really am.

GOD: So which bargain are you remembering?

NARRATOR: Well there was the night that Dave (*opposite gender to person praying*) was away on business and the kids and I were on our own. The rain was so heavy that we were terrified that we would be flooded. I remember praying "Oh God, if you spare us I'll never miss saying my prayers again!"

GOD: Did you?

NARRATOR: I'm really sorry Lord. Until now I thought that if I just prayed the Lord's Prayer every day I could do what I liked. I never expected this to happen like it did today.

GOD: Go ahead. Finish your prayer.

NARRATOR: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.

GOD: Do you know what would bring me glory -- What would really make me happy?

NARRATOR: No, but I'd like to know. I want to please you now. I've really made a mess of things. I want to truly follow you. I can see now how great that would be. So, tell me...
How do I make you happy?

GOD: YOU just did.

Session 12

EXPLORING OUR KEY VALUES AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE – PART B

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and introduce the theme	3 mins
Opening Prayer	5 mins
Recap of previous key values covered	2 mins
Key value 4 & Group Reflection & Response	12 mins
Key value 5 & Group Reflection & Response	15 mins
Key value 6 & Group Reflection & Response	15mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	3 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i) Various quality cards – suggestion for 12 good qualities
- (ii) A Bible to find various Scripture quotes
- (iii) Oblate Cross, a candle, matches.
- (iv) A4 card for each person + a coloured felt pen (or) a pen
- (v) Copies of Handouts – Opening and Closing Prayer

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER: (5 mins.)

Light a candle.... short period of silence...

Then, Facilitator invites group to pray this prayer together

'God our Father, we thank you for the gift of the charism which you have given us through St. Eugene de Mazenod.

You have called us to a missionary life in order to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned: "He has sent me to evangelize the poor". "The poor are being evangelized."

At this special time of the existence of our Oblate family, we ask you for the grace of finding in your Son, Jesus Christ, the centre of our life and of our mission.

We hear the call to a profound personal and communal conversion. Help us to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world, so as to proclaim in today's world the values of your Kingdom in word and deed.

We beg you, Lord, to send upon us your Spirit. Help us to be yours, inflamed with your love, sparing no effort to extend your Kingdom and totally committed to the good of today's poor.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our Mother, and of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Amen.

(A prayer used at the OMI General Chapter 2016)

RECAP Previous 3 key values of Friends of St. Eugene (2 mins.)

Facilitator names the previous key values of Friends of St. Eugene which were covered in a previous session.

(1) To recognise the dignity of all people

(2) To be a voice for the voiceless regarding justice issues

(3) To be passionate for Christ, the Church and the Oblate Mission

Today, we will be exploring a few more key values for a Friend of St. Eugene.

(4) TO BE A RISK TAKER – "LEAVING NOTHING UNDARED FOR THE GOSPEL"
(12mins)

Read Scripture quote: Matthew 25: 35 – 40 – "For I was hungry, you gave me to eat...."

Question: What was the risk you didn't take and you feeling frustrated?

(OR) When have you ever taken a risk in life and found it rewarding?

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE

Feedback from the group

'RISKS' poem is read aloud

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool,

To weep is to risk being called sentimental.

To reach out to another is to risk involvement.

To expose feelings is to risk showing your true self.

To place your ideas and your dreams before the crowd is to risk being called naive.

To love is to risk not being loved in return,

To live is to risk dying,

To hope is to risk despair,

To try is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken, because the greatest risk in life is to risk nothing.

The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing, and becomes nothing.

He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow or love.

Chained by his certitude, he is a slave; he has forfeited his freedom.

Only the person who risks is truly free.

*(This poem is often attributed to the poet and thinker, Leo Buscaglia,
the real author of this inspirational verse is **Janet Rand.**)*

St. Eugene quote:

"But what must be remembered is that our regions are without any help, that their peoples must not be abandoned. Yet abandon them we would if we joined you because we alone, and not you, can help them. **We have to speak in their own tongue in order to be understood by them.**

We have to preach in Provençale. Should we form a band, nothing would prevent us from affiliating with you if such a union would be for the best. (1814)

Note: Eugene could have been arrested for preaching in an illegal language of the time, yet he took risks for the sake of the Kingdom.

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the 'Eugene' quote.

(5) TO BE CLOSELY ENGAGED WITH LOCAL PEOPLE (15 mins)

Scripture quote: Jer. 22: 3 – *“The Lord says this: Practise honesty and integrity; rescue the person who has been wronged from the hands of their oppressor; do not exploit the stranger, the orphan, the widow; do no violence”.*

Question: Why is it essential that we are asked to look out for the stranger, the widow and the orphan in our communities?

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE

Feedback to the large group

Play on CD and Listen to song: “How can I heal your broken heart” by Fr. Brendan O’Sullivan and Friends (Album: Light in Life, 2007) or alternate song could be used related to closeness with the people.

St. Eugene quote:

“We want to be close to them so as to share what they have and what we have, in order that we might see the world from their perspective. Thus, we are evangelized by them.”

(Ministry to Young People. Superior General OMI. 1996 – Marcel Zago)

Oblate quote: CCRS 8-8a: *“We will always be close to the people with whom we work, taking into account their values and aspirations.....we will let our lives be enriched by the poor and marginalised as we work with them, for they can make us hear in new ways the Gospel we proclaim. We must always be sensitive to the mentality of the people, drawing on the riches of their culture and religious traditions”.*

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the ‘Eugene’ & Oblate quotes.

(6) TO BE RESPECTFUL OF THE ENVIRONMENT (15mins.)

Scripture quote: PSALM 148 – A Cosmic hymn of Praise

“Let the heavens praise the Lord:

Praise Him, heavenly heights....

Praise Him, sun and moon,

Praise Him, shining stars,

Praise Him, highest of heavens...”

Question: How and where is God inviting you to recognise Him in His Creation today?

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE: Feedback to the large group

Activity: Discuss examples where the environment is not being treated as sacred...

For example: it could be litter picking being neglected on the local streets .

What is your group being drawn to consider in order to look after your local environment?

St. Eugene quote:

Is there anything, in fact, more joyful than the countryside, or much richer than nature, especially when the soul, that is as religious as it is sensitive, discovers in every leaf and on the wing of each atom, the great name of the Eternal One .

(Letter to Adolphe Tavernier 1891)

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the 'Eugene' quote.

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS: (5 mins.)

CLOSING REFLECTION (3 mins)

Poem: "The Washing never gets done"

The washing never gets done.

The furnace never gets heated.

Books never get read.

Life is never completed.

Life is like a ball which one must continually

Catch and hit so that it won't fall.

When the fence is repaired at one end

It collapses at the other. The roof leaks.

The kitchen door won't close, there are cracks in the foundation,

The torn knees of children's pants....

One can't keep everything in mind.

The wonder is that beside all this one can notice

The spring which is so full of everything

Continuing in all directions – into evening clouds,

Into the redwing's song and into every

Drop of dew on every blade of grass in the meadow,

As far as the eye can see, into the dusk.

(Author: Jan Kaplinski)

Session 12 -

EXPLORING OUR KEY VALUES AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE – PART B

HANDOUTS Section

OPENING PRAYER:

'God our Father, we thank you for the gift of the charism which you have given us through St. Eugene de Mazenod.

You have called us to a missionary life in order to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned: "He has sent me to evangelize the poor". "The poor are being evangelized."

At this special time of the existence of our Oblate family, we ask you for the grace of finding in your Son, Jesus Christ, the centre of our life and of our mission.

We hear the call to a profound personal and communal conversion. Help us to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world, so as to proclaim in today's world the values of your Kingdom in word and deed.

We beg you, Lord, to send upon us your Spirit. Help us to be yours, inflamed with your love, sparing no effort to extend your Kingdom and totally committed to the good of today's poor.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our Mother, and of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Amen.

(A prayer used at the OMI General Chapter 2016)

Handout - Poem: "The Washing never gets done"

The washing never gets done.
The furnace never gets heated.
Books never get read.
Life is never completed.
Life is like a ball which one must continually
Catch and hit so that it won't fall.
When the fence is repaired at one end
It collapses at the other. The roof leaks.
The kitchen door won't close, there are cracks in the foundation,
The torn knees of children's pants....
One can't keep everything in mind. The wonder is
That beside all this one can notice
The spring which is so full of everything
Continuing in all directions – into evening clouds,
Into the redwing's song and into every
Drop of dew on every blade of grass in the meadow,
As far as the eye can see, into the dusk.

Jan Kaplinski

Session 13

EXPLORING OUR KEY VALUES AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE – PART C

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and introduce the theme	3mins
Opening Prayer	5 mins
Recap of previous key values covered	2 mins
Key value 7 & Group Reflection & Response	15mins
Key value 8 & Group Reflection & Response	12mins
Key value 9 & Group Reflection & Response	8mins
Key value 10 & Group Reflection & Response	8 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	2mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i) Various quality cards – suggestion for 12 good qualities
 - (ii) A Bible to find various Scripture quotes
 - (iii) A Cross, a candle, matches.
 - (iv) A4 paper for each person + a coloured felt pen (or) a pencil
 - (v). Human qualities like Leader, Charismatic, Inspirational, Joyful, Loving etc..
- At least about 25 qualities written on separate sheets of paper

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER: (5 mins.)

Light a candle and place it around a Cross.... short period of silence...

Then, Facilitator invites group to pray this prayer together

A missionary prayer: God, our Father, we give you thanks for calling St. Eugene de Mazenod to follow Christ the Saviour and Evangeliser. Impassioned for your Son, Jesus, and sharing in his compassion for humanity, he placed himself unconditionally at the service of your Church for the evangelisation of the poorest peoples. Grant us by his intercession the same compassion of Christ, who calls us to sanctity and mission. May we help to build communities which will be signs of your presence. May we proclaim the good news of salvation to all peoples. We ask our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Eugene de Mazenod **teach us to love Jesus Christ.**

Saint Eugene de Mazenod **help us to be compassionate.**

Saint Eugene de Mazenod **be our companion on the journey.**

RECAP Previous key values of Friends of St. Eugene (2 mins.)

Facilitator names the previous key values of Friends of St. Eugene which were covered in previous two sessions.

(1) To recognise the dignity of all people

(2) To be a voice for the voiceless regarding justice issues

(3) To be passionate for Christ, the Church and the Oblate Mission

(4) To be a risk taker - leaving nothing undared for the Gospel

(5) To be closely engaged with local people

(6) To be respectful of the environment

(7) TO BE AWARE OF AND USE ALL MY GOD GIVEN GIFTS AND TALENTS.

(15 mins)

Scripture story: Matt. 25: 14 – 30 – the Parable of the Talents

Question: How is God calling you to use your gifts and talents today?

Share with person next to you.

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE

Have an A4 paper for each person and ask them to write their NAME on it.

They pass this paper to the other people in the group and each person writes a special quality around that person's name. The sheet is returned back to the person whose name is on it.

To sum up: Being the person I am called to be to the best of my ability.

Oblate quote: CCRS 39: *"Each of us offers his friendship and places his God-given talents at the service of all. This enriches our spiritual life, our intellectual development and our service to others".*

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the 'Eugene' and Oblate quote.

(8) TO AFFIRM EACH OTHER'S GIFTS AND TALENTS (12 mins.)

Scripture story: The Parable of the crafty steward (Luke 16: 1-13)

Summarise this scripture story and highlight points on affirmation.

Question: Take some time to celebrate the special gifts the members bring to your group. Think about what would be really missing if these unique individuals were not in your group?

GROUP ACTIVITY and RESPONSE: On individual pieces of paper or card, have good qualities we look for in human beings printed on them. eg. Enabler; Positive; Joyful, Leader. Then, lay these individual cards out either on the floor or table which is in front of the group. Invite each person to share one gift they receive from the person beside them in the group. The cards can help to be prompts for the person who is doing the sharing of the person beside them.

St. Eugene quote:

"You would not believe the joy I felt on reading your letter. Be sure that I regard it as most important that you be one of us. I count on you more than on myself for the regularity of a house which, in my mind and my hopes, must reproduce the perfection of the first disciples of the apostles."

(Letter to Henri Tempier after he had agreed to become a member of the community November 15th 1815)

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the 'Eugene' quote.

(9) TO BE OPEN TO THE CHANCE ENCOUNTER (8 mins.)

Scripture story of Lydia: (ACTS 16: 14): *“One of these women was called Lydia, a devout woman from the town of Thyatira who was in the purple-dye trade. She listened to us, and the Lord opened her heart to accept what Paul was saying. After she and her household had been baptised, she sent us an invitation: ‘if you really think me a true believer in the Lord’, she said: ‘come and stay with us’; and she would take no refusal.”*

(For your information: Purple dye trade was linked to pagan Romans. Lydia used a providential moment to listen to Paul.)

Personal Reflection and sharing: Think about a moment when you experienced a providential moment in your life. Quietly give thanks to God for this special grace received in your life.

St. Eugene quote:

‘We must acknowledge the storm which forced us to put into port at Palma.....was a nudge from Providence which sent us in pursuit of these souls whom God wanted us to save’.

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the ‘Eugene’ quote.

(10) TO BE WILLING TO LEARN FROM EVERY ONE AND EVERY SITUATION – ESPECIALLY IN SITUATIONS WHEN WE NEED TO TAKE ENOUGH REST AND BEING CAREFUL WITH OUR HEALTH. (8 mins)

Scripture quote: Mark 6:31 – *“you must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while; for there were so many comings and goings that the apostles had no time even to eat. So, they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves”.*

Personal Meditation: For a few moments, a candle is lit... facilitator invites group to close their eyes and just spend a few quiet moments paying attention to their breathing and listen to their name being called by the Lord. Spend some time resting in the Lord.

St. Eugene’s quote:

In response to reading one of Eugene’s many calls to his zealous Oblates to look after their health, a lay associate wrote, 200 year later: “When I take care of myself then I will also be able to care for

others. And like those earlier Oblates I need to be reminded of this over and over again.” Eugene’s zeal for the salvation of souls was contagious, but he had to remind the young Oblates constantly to be reasonable or else they would burn themselves out and become useless for ministry.

Your zeal is not compatible with reason: You do not know how to be moderate:

Never undertake to do more than you can:

In the first place and above everything: rest, rest, rest. Your first duty is to ensure it for your collaborators. So, whatever arrangements you make, as long as you are young, you will put fifteen days interval between one mission and another. Never undertake to do more than you can. If you have committed an impudence of this kind, revoke any promise that has been too lightly given.

(Letter to Jean Baptiste Honorat, 21 February 1828, EO VII n 295)

A short pause ... to allow people to ponder on the ‘Eugene’ quote.

Re-visit the Key values of the FRIENDS of ST. EUGENE

- (1) To recognise the dignity of all people**
- (2) To be a voice for the voiceless regarding justice issues**
- (3) To be passionate for Christ, the Church and the Oblate Mission**
- (4) To be a risk taker - leaving nothing undared for the Gospel**
- (5) To be closely engaged with local people**
- (6) To be respectful of the environment**
- (7) To be aware of and use all my God given gifts and talents**
- (8) To affirm each other’s gifts and talents**
- (9) To be open to the chance encounter**
- (10) To be willing to learn from everyone and every situation**

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS: (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER: (2 mins).

One Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...

Session 13 –

EXPLORING OUR KEY VALUES AS FRIENDS OF ST. EUGENE – PART C

HANDOUT Section

OPENING PRAYER

A missionary prayer

God, our Father, we give you thanks for calling St. Eugene de Mazenod to follow Christ the Saviour and Evangeliser. Impassioned for your Son, Jesus, and sharing in his compassion for humanity, he placed himself unconditionally at the service of your Church for the evangelisation of the poorest peoples. Grant us by his intercession the same compassion of Christ, who calls us to sanctity and mission. May we help to build communities which will be signs of your presence. May we proclaim the good news of salvation to all peoples.

We ask our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Eugene de Mazenod	teach us to love Jesus Christ.
Saint Eugene de Mazenod	help us to be compassionate.
Saint Eugene de Mazenod	be our companion on the journey.

SESSION 14

EUGENE's FAMILY SPEAKS TO US TODAY

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and introduce the theme of session	3 mins
Opening Prayer	10 mins
Input 1	10 mins
Group Reflection & Response	15 mins
Input 2	10 mins
Group Reflection & Response	5 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	2 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

- (i) The written out phrase on paper which reads: **"Together we make a family"**
- (ii) A Picture of Rembrandt's Prodigal Son (from Google)
- (iii) 5 slips of paper and a pen/pencil for each person
- (iv) A main candle and a votive candle for each person and matches.
- (v) A quote from Eugene De Mazenod: *"Diary of the Exile in Italy, EO XVI"*

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER: 'TOGETHER WE MAKE A FAMILY' (10 mins.)

Prayer Resources needed: a candle, small candles & matches

Placard: "Together we make a family"

(i). Who is in your family? Who do you consider to be a part of your family even though they are not related by blood to you?

(ii) Play Reflection song connected to family relationships

(iii) Picture of Rembrandt 's Prodigal Son as the song is being played

(iv) Open-ended prayers for our families – each person may light their small candle from the bigger candle after they have offered up a prayer for a family member.

Prayer for the Family (said together)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Holy Family of Nazareth

We turn to you with confidence.

We pray that our homes will be centres of communion and prayer,

Where the Gospel is lived and loved.

We pray for families who suffer violence, isolation and division:

We pray for those who have been hurt or abandoned by their families.

May those in need receive from us understanding and consolation. Amen.

INPUT 1 – Five objects activity (10 mins)

Each person writes down on small slips of paper **five** precious objects that they value most.

Emphasise that it needs to be objects and not people. Invite each person to fold their slips of their paper and spread them out in front of them and leave them there.

The only person who can touch these bits of paper is the facilitator.

The facilitator starts by saying that they are going on a special journey by ship and the expenses have all been paid for by a generous family or friend member. Give a port name that your group are familiar with where they start their journey and mention another port they are familiar with where they propose to end their journey. Use the imagination of the group to briefly describe the kinds of people who are with the group on their journey and the various precious objects they have each brought on this special journey and the special facilities for music or entertainment or food available on their journey. Describe the fine weather conditions available for sailing...

Then, suddenly, along the way, the ship starts to encounter problems with its engine, encounters ice, and is dangerously close to sinking.... The passengers are all safely evacuated on to life boats... however, with regards to their precious objects on board, decisions have to be made quickly!

The leader goes around and removes 2 objects... (the participants are still not allowed use of their hands to prevent the leader from taking their precious objects!).. the ship continues to sail across the high seas....and then, another catastrophe happens to the ship vessel and a further 2 objects are removed from the ship vessel until finally, the person is left with just ONE object. The ship just about gets to its intended port and destination.

Each person now has use of their hands and they may look at their ONE object.

GROUP REFLECTION and RESPONSE (15 mins)

(a) How do you feel with what object you have been left with?

(b), What would you have preferred as your given object?

©. Which did you not mind letting go off?

Families are faced with all sorts of crises, some are obvious and some are private crises.

We hear about crises of economic migration where families have to leave everything.

What does that feel like?

Can you imagine what it would feel like to start again?

Isaiah 43: God says to each person present: *'You are precious in my eyes'.*

INPUT 2: A short presentation of Eugene's family and upbringing (10 mins)

Eugene's family background

Eugene did not have an ideal start in life. Being in exile to that of experience divorce of his parents. So it is from a broken family, he starts to have a deeper appreciation and recognises importance of family.

Eugene's mother's side of the family

Eugene's mother's family pressurised her to return to France and continued to interfere negatively in her relationship with her husband. In 1802 she legally divorced him.

Eugene's father's side of the family

Eugene's father was fully, but unsuccessfully, occupied in trying to earn a living in Venice and did not have much time to look after his son.

The Zinelli family took Eugene into their home

Even though Eugene's own family had broken up, he learnt the importance of being part of a family through the loving environment created by his adopted family – The Zinelli family. This is what he said:

A quote from Eugene De Mazenod

'Four years passed by in this way: the affection of everyone in this very worthy family which had adopted me grew in proportion to the attachment I experienced myself in its regard...

How could I fail to make progress in such a good school? The family in whose bosom I lived was outstandingly Christian, and Don Bartolo, who was chiefly responsible for me, was really canonizable as a saint...'

(Diary of the Exile in Italy, EO XVI)

Summarise INPUT 2 section:

These events in Eugene's life were to have a deep impact on his life. "Losing" his family as an adolescent made him appreciate and value family life throughout his adult life. We can never underestimate the importance of relationship / or lack of it with his own family. This led to his desire to create a sense of family among his youth congregation. This image of family and the importance of family was the model he used when he founded the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Indeed, it was one of the seeds, which influenced the development and expression, of his spirituality and ours as Friends of St. Eugene!

GROUP REFLECTION (5 mins)

Let us take a few minutes to think about the people who have travelled or journeyed with us at important times of our lives.

(some time for silence)

Share with the person next to you what you feel comfortable sharing.

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER: *a prayer for wounded families (2 mins)*

(We pray together)

Almighty and loving God, You led St. Eugene through the sufferings and challenges of a broken family to a life of holiness. Through his constant intercession bless those whose relationships are damaged and broken. Grant them the gifts of understanding, patience, love and courage to overcome the problems of life. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

SESSION 14 - EUGENE's FAMILY SPEAKS TO US TODAY

HANDOUTS Section

A quote from Eugene De Mazenod

'Four years passed by in this way: the affection of everyone in this very worthy family which had adopted me grew in proportion to the attachment I experienced myself in its regard...

How could I fail to make progress in such a good school? The family in whose bosom I lived was outstandingly Christian, and Don Bartolo, who was chiefly responsible for me, was really canonizable as a saint...'

(Diary of the Exile in Italy, EO XVI)

SESSION 15

PILGRIMAGES & SHRINES HELP BRING MEANING TO OUR LIVES

Suggested timings for a 60 minute session

Welcome and Introduce the theme	3 mins
Opening Prayer	2 mins
Input 1 – Dialogue questions and responses on Pilgrimages and Shrines	15 mins
Input 2 - Dialogue questions and responses on Oblate pilgrimage shrines	17 mins
Input 3 - Dialogue questions and responses on what Marian Shrines mean to OMIs	8 mins
Local Group Announcements	5 mins
Closing Prayer	10 mins

PREPARATION: Resources that you will need

(i) Write up definition of “Pilgrimage” written up on a sheet of paper

WELCOME and introduce the theme of the session (3 mins)

OPENING PRAYER: (2 mins.)

Lord, I have no idea of what's continually happening in this year but I pray that you will guide me, and help me through it. Please help me to look to you always, and may everything that I do bring praise and glory to Your name. I know I can trust that God in His infinite mercy will grant me what I need to strengthen my faith, hope and love and to bring peace and harmony to my life. Amen.

The Partners in Mission Charism Team

INPUT 1 – Dialogue Questions on PILGRIMAGES and SHRINES (15 mins.)

What does being on a Pilgrimage or visiting a Shrine mean to you today?

Facilitator gathers responses from the group

Some definitions of pilgrimage and visiting a shrine

World Youth Day (WYD): “A pilgrimage is a journey a person makes to a sacred place for the purpose of honouring the place. To ask for God’s help and ultimately to come to know God better. “A journey to a shrine or other locations of importance to a person’s belief and faith”.

What’s the difference between a holiday and a pilgrimage?

A pilgrimage is a personal invitation from God to visit a holy place. This does not mean that it cannot be for holiday.

Have you ever been on a pilgrimage and why?

Feedback responses to the group

Pilgrimage places around the world.

Many people from many different religions and spiritualities go to sacred sites and places of pilgrimage...

Where are some of the places of pilgrimage for a Christian person?

Walsingham (England), Lourdes (France), Fatima (Portugal) & Rome (Italy), Guadalupe (Mexico), Velankanni (India), Madha Shrine (Sri Lanka).

What is the key place of pilgrimage a Jewish person would go to?

Jews go to the Wailing Wall (Western Wall), Jerusalem, Israel.

What is the key place of pilgrimage a Hindu person would go to?

Hindus go to the River Ganges in India.

What are the key places of pilgrimage a Muslim person would go to?

Muslims go to Mecca, Saudi Arabia and Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem, Israel

What is the place of pilgrimage a Buddhist person would go to?

Buddhists go to Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India.

What is the place of pilgrimage a Sikh person would go to?

Sikhs go to Amritsar, Punjab, India.

This has been an ancient and sacred religious practise since the beginning of time.

Brainstorm:

Where would be your local pilgrimage place to go to?

Get answers from the group.

INPUT 2: There are many Oblate pilgrimage places in the world. Which ones have you heard of? (17 mins.)

Get responses from the group.

Here are some suggestions.

France

Aix-en-Provence – the birthplace and ministry of first Oblate community formed by Fr. Eugene De Mazenod.

Marseilles (Notre Dame De La Garde & Old Cathedral) – St. Eugene is buried. The huge Notre Dame De La Garde is up on a hill and a very popular tourist destination today.

Lourdes – a place of healing – the people with disabilities are at the centre of the liturgies and especially the eucharistic processions and nightly candle light procession. Also, the special baths for people to immerse themselves in with support from volunteer staff. The Oblates have a strong presence at the Shrine.

Spain: *Pozuelo* (the 22 Oblate and 1 lay man who comprise the Spanish Martyrs from the Oblate family. They were martyred during the civil war in Spain in 1936.

Italy: *Rome* – it holds the keys of St. Peter – Cathedral. The Papacy of Pope Francis. Some of the unique sights include the underground catacombs, it is where the first Christians lived and were

buried. Eugene De Mazenod went to Rome to get permission from Pope Leo to form the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Do you always have to travel to a different place to be a pilgrim?

NO is the answer. There is a growing awareness within religions and spirituality that a person can be a pilgrim in their own kitchen or in their own back garden!

Being a pilgrim is about the person's **inner** journey as it is expressed **outwardly** through their daily words and actions.

If you have been on a pilgrimage, how did it affect you?

Facilitator listens to their responses.

To sum up: If we go on a pilgrimage, but we are not open to being changed, even a little, then, there is little point in going. The question is not what will we do while we are there, but what will we do and how will we live when we get back! Jesus invites us to follow him through our daily lives with these words, '***Take up your cross and follow me... how do I do this each and every day of my life?***'

INPUT 3:What did the MARIAN SHRINES mean to the Oblates worldwide?

(8 mins.)

Marian Shrines have always been close to Saint Eugene's heart because they provide the congregation with an exceptional opportunity to fulfil its Mission within the church. Indirectly, these shrines are centres of apostolic influence (Evangelisation).

The aim of the shrine was the same as that of the parish missions: to bring the most abandoned to conversion and to a life of fullness in God.

"Because the temples dedicated to her are for us here below an image of her heavenly residence... shrines are privileged places where her motherly mercy towards people is experienced."

(Circular letter of De Mazenod to Rectors of Marseille, 21st Sept. 1843)

LOCAL GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 mins.)

CLOSING PRAYER – (10 mins)

A candle is lit and placed in the centre of the room.

Together we pray:

Living and life-giving God, You call us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus your Son, who says to each of us: 'Come, follow me'. As we prepare to set out on our pilgrimage of life each day we ask you Lord Jesus to guide, lead and protect us. Continue to be our constant companion on our journey. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Holy Mary, Mother of believers **pray for us.**

Saint Eugene De Mazenod **pray for us**

SESSION 15 –

PILGRIMAGES & SHRINES HELP BRING MEANING TO OUR LIVES

HANDOUT Section

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, I have no idea of what's continually happening in this year but I pray that you will guide me, and help me through it. Please help me to look to you always, and may everything that I do bring praise and glory to Your name. I know I can trust that God in His infinite mercy will grant me what I need to strengthen my faith, hope and love and to bring peace and harmony to my life. Amen.

The Partners in Mission Charism Team

CLOSING PRAYER:

A candle is lit and placed in the centre of the room.

Together we pray:

Living and life-giving God, You call us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus your Son, who says to each of us: 'Come, follow me'. As we prepare to set out on our pilgrimage of life each day we ask you Lord Jesus to guide, lead and protect us. Continue to be our constant companion on our journey. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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