

Letter of the Superior General to the Communities of Rome and Aix-en-Provence

After the joyful bicentennial celebrations of our pontifical approval, the Superior General is writing to the Oblates living at Via Aurelia 290 and to the Mother House community in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Father General offers his gratitude for everyone's participation, service, and fraternity that made these days feel like a real gift. He hopes that the experience renewed our joy in being Oblates, strengthened our unity as a family, and deepened our communion with the Church and our missionary vocation. Looking ahead, he invites each Oblate to respond with renewed generosity and fidelity to our charism. The full letter appears below.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Rome, 24 February, 2026

TO ALL OBLATES LIVING AT VIA AURELIA 290 AND IN THE MOTHER HOUSE COMMUNITY IN AIX EN PROVENCE

Dear brothers:

Thank you very much. After all we have experienced during the celebrations for the bicentennial of our pontifical approval, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you. Indeed, all of us who live in the General House and in the Mother House in Aix have contributed to these celebrations, from welcoming and accompanying our guests to participating in and preparing the events. Some have generously given their time and enthusiasm to organize the events well. We have all participated and helped to the best of our ability. What we have experienced in Rome has also encouraged other Oblates in other parts of the world to celebrate the bicentennial. Many messages expressing this sentiment have come from all our Units. They are an expression of our unity as a family.

I believe that we have all experienced the joy of being Oblates and have taken advantage of these moments to renew ourselves in our Oblate vocation. This was the goal of these celebrations, which on the one hand culminate and on the other hand launch other initiatives that will take place throughout this year with the same goal of renewing ourselves in the charism. It has also been an opportunity to renew our communion with the Church, with the privilege of meeting and greeting Pope Leo XIV personally. For many, as they have told me, it has been like a spiritual retreat. For all, it has been a source of joy that helps us to live our oblation more generously. Surely each of us will take time to reread and meditate on all that has happened and all the messages we have received. It was a time of grace that impels us to be holy missionaries of the poor in apostolic communities.

An invitation. I take this opportunity to invite you, dear brothers, to generosity. As you know, at the 2025 Intercapitular Session, the Major Superiors of the Congregation, together with my General Council, discerned the calls of the Spirit to live our charism today. One of the proposals we are working on is to have a year of animation on the vow of poverty. We will do this for the entire Congregation in 2027, God willing. But now I want to appeal to the personal generosity of each one of us. I would like to invite everyone to voluntarily put into practice one of the proposals of the Intercapitular: to reduce our expenses, perhaps by up to 10% of what was spent the previous year.

This appeal is not only for those of us who work in the general administration and who have the responsibility of managing the budget allocated for our service with the above-mentioned perspective. It is for everyone.

Living in the General House and in our house in Aix, we have a responsibility to think

globally, and we know that every small euro saved in our expenses is a benefit for our whole family because it lightens the burden on all the Units and makes it easier for our solidarity funds to distribute more resources for formation and mission. As I say, this is a voluntary, personal appeal, in which each one is called to follow a path of *e r* discernment. May this journey be made in dialogue with the Lord, guided by the Gospel, and evaluating our life of poverty by meditating on our CC and RR, especially those that tell us what we must avoid and what we must favor in order to live the evangelical poverty to which Christ has called us (cf. CC and RR 19-23).

In making this appeal, I am moved by the conviction that small, repeated gestures can create great results. In fact, it is a call to enter into the Gospel logic in which the poor widow who gives a small coin to the temple treasury has given more than all the others because of the way she did it, giving everything from her

heart and out of necessity, the logic of the small grain that bears much fruit or the small mustard seed that produces a huge bush in which the birds come to shelter. The logic of doing these things in secret because only the Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Once again, thank you very much for all that you do each day to live your oblation and support the Oblate mission in solidarity with the entire Congregation and our charismatic family. Thank you also for the small or large efforts that you will make, that we will make, to be able to live the Gospel with joy through a simple life that is a witness to following Christ and helps us to be in more intimate communion with Him and with the poor.

Your brother, pilgrim of hope in communion.

Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI Superior General

OMIWORLD

FROM THE REGIONS

AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

Bicentennial in Idiofa, Congo DR: “Do Not Abandon Us”

In the parish square of Saint Charles Lwanga, the air felt thick with more than just the Congo heat. It was February 8, and the people of Idiofa gathered to celebrate two centuries of the Oblate Rule.

You Are Our Fathers

The Bishop of Idiofa looked back to 1931, the year the Missionary Oblates arrived to take over the work the Jesuits had started in Kwango a decade earlier. This long history was clearly on Bishop Joseph Moko’s mind when he called the Oblates “our fathers” and offered the vulnerable plea of a child to a parent. “Do not abandon us,” he said. To answer that cry, the Bishop urged the Oblates to stay true to the

Constitutions and Rules that have guided them since 1826. That was the year Pope Leo XII first recognized the vision of their founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod. By following this path today, the Oblates keep that original spirit alive in the heart of the Congolese countryside.

Looking toward the future, the Bishop of Idiofa has invited the Oblates to take an active role in establishing new faith communities. He has already entrusted the growth of the eastern diocese to Father Joseph Ntumba, a former provincial superior. This new mission serves as a living tribute to the bicentennial of the Oblate Constitutions. The celebration is a prayer for the Oblates to find new energy in their love for the poor, a commitment that remains vital for the diocese and the entire country.

A New Chapter for the Oblates

Fr. Constant Kienge-Kienge, the Provincial Superior of Congo, says that the bicentennial celebration of the Constitutions and Rules offers the Oblates a unique opportunity to renew their charism and deepen their commitment to their Rule of Life and Oblate identity. In his view, the order will never be the same after this bicentennial.

He expressed his gratitude to the two attending bishops, noting that the Oblates are particularly indebted to them because both are members of the Society of Saint-Sulpice. Since St. Eugene de Mazenod was trained by the Sulpicians, it was through them that he was nourished by the very spirituality that Oblates live by today. Naturally, this spirituality is woven into the Constitutions and Rules developed by the young French priest.

Father Kienge-Kienge also recalled the Founder's insistence that his "sons" be "men of the Church"—which is to say, men at the service of the bishops. In response to requests from the Bishops of Idiofa and Kikwit, the

Provincial Superior reassured them that the Oblates have no intention of leaving these two dioceses. However, he expressed a hope that the bishops would grant the Oblates "perpetual parishes" at St. Charles Lwanga in Idiofa and Our Lady of the Rosary in Kikwit. These would be in addition to the Parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Ifwanzondo, which houses the Oblate novitiate and serves as their "spiritual birthplace" within the Diocese of Idiofa and the DRC.

Sharing the Oblate Charism with the Laity

The Provincial Superior thanked the priests and religious brothers and sisters for their collaboration while also highlighting the growing role of the laity who partner with the Oblates. These lay associates share in the congregation's charism and contribute to the mission of evangelizing the poor. Lay members of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate—both men and women from across the DRC and Angola—joined in the bicentennial celebrations in Idiofa.

Jean-Baptiste MALENGE, OMI

ASIA AND OCEANIA

Rekindling the Flame: Colombo Province Celebrates 200 Years of the Rule

On 17 February 2026, the Colombo Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate gathered at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Maradana, Sri Lanka, to celebrate 200 years since the papal approbation of the Constitutions and Rules.

A Jubilee Eucharist in Maradana, Sri Lanka

The Colombo Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate celebrated the Bicentennial Anniversary of Papal Approbation of the Constitutions and Rules at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Maradana, Sri Lanka. A renewed reading of the Founder's Preface set the tone for the celebration. The community

prayed with the Jubilee theme, "Rekindling the Flame: 200 Years of Living the Rule, Walking with the Poor." The theme held a sense of remembrance and renewal, and it gave the assembly a clear focus throughout the liturgy.

Rekindling the Flame recalled the fire of the Holy Spirit that inflamed the heart of St. Eugene de Mazenod, which still inspires the Congregation today. Living the Rule honored two centuries of fidelity to the Constitutions and Rules, received not as a legal text but as a lived path to holiness, apostolic community, evangelical poverty, and daring mission. Walking with the Poor reaffirmed the Oblate charism of closeness, solidarity, and evangelization among those most abandoned, not as a project, but as their identity.

The Jubilee Flame, Renewed Promises, and a Mission Entrusted

A central moment of the celebration came with the blessing of the Jubilee Flame, which stood as a sign of the Spirit's fire, the Founder's zeal, and fidelity to the Rule across two centuries. After the homily, the Oblates renewed their vows, and a scholastic brother held the principal candle to represent the continuity of vocation across generations. The community then placed that candle near the Jubilee Flame as a visible reminder that every vocation receives its light from the same Spirit. Immediately afterward, Lay Associates and members of MAMI renewed their commitments, each holding a candle and placing it around the central flame as a sign of unity in charism and shared missionary responsibility.

At the end of the celebration, the provincial, Fr. Roshan SILVA said, "The Jubilee is not a

memory; it is a mission." He told the Oblate family to be more faithful to the Constitutions and Rules and to spend more time with the poor. As a concrete expression of this renewed missionary commitment, Samata Sarana, part of Help for All, was officially entrusted to the Oblates of the Colombo Province as a missionary outreach. Help for All was founded in 1988 by Rev. Sr. Bernie SILVA, SCJM. In a solemn exchange, the Director symbolically handed over the ministry, and the Provincial accepted it as a Jubilee commitment to the poor.

The celebration ended with the installation of the Jubilee Flame in a permanent place of honor, followed by a consecration to Mary Immaculate and a final sending, "Go in peace, carrying the flame of the Gospel, to serve the poor and walk in the spirit of the Rule."

Shanil JAYAWARDENA, OMI

EUROPE

COMI Congress: Renewing the Gift of Mission

From 13 to 15 February, the COMI Secular Institute gathered in Rome to reflect on its missionary vocation, 25 years after the pontifical approval of its Constitutions.

Called to Rekindle the Mission

From 13 to 15 February, the annual formation congress of the COMI Secular Institute took place in Rome. The theme, "Called to Renew in Ourselves the Fire of the Missionary Vocation" (Leo XIV), guided the days of prayer, study, and fraternity.

The Congress was open to the entire Oblate Family. Among those present were Katharina Ramrath, Superior General of the Oblatas, Fr. Javier MONTERO INFANTES, Provincial of the Mediterranean Province OMI, and lay collaborators who share in the charism. Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI, Superior Gen-

eral, also participated in the gathering and presided at the Mass on 14 February.

Mission in the Life of the Church

Two speakers helped deepen reflection on the contemporary meaning of mission. Sr. Tiziana Merletti, FSP, Secretary of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, addressed the theme from the perspective of the Church's magisterium. Fr. Giulio Albanese, a Comboni missionary and Director of the Mission Office of the Diocese of Rome, spoke from a pastoral perspective, highlighting the urgency and relevance of missionary commitment today.

"It has been an extraordinary enrichment," said the President of COMI. "We are grateful to the Lord for this opportunity to reflect and to renew our missionary vocation, especially as we mark 25 years since the pontifical approval of our Constitutions."

These days together in Rome strengthened them as a community. In communion with the Oblate Family and the wider Church, the members of COMI return to their places of service encouraged, grateful, and ready to continue the work entrusted to them.

Ileana Chinnici, COMI

From Rome to the Ends of the Earth

Last week, the General House in Rome was the center of activities celebrating the 200th anniversary of the papal approbation of the Constitutions and Rules. For many of us on the General Council, however, our minds were already turning toward the rest of the Congregation, even as our hearts and bodies remained in Rome. As soon as the final planned activity ends, we leave to visit various units of the Congregation.

This time, my trip takes me to Cedara, South Africa, for the 2026 Assembly of the General Mission Committee, held from 23 to 27 February 2026. This year's assembly will reflect on "Higher Education as an Oblate Mission." The General Mission Committee has invited nineteen other Oblates from the Inter-Provincial Conference to participate, in addition to the six members.

During the assembly, we will discuss essays and presentations on the theme prepared by about twenty Oblates from around the world. These contributions describe the different ways Oblates have been, and continue to be, involved in higher education. Some write as graduate students, others as administrators and professors in institutes of higher learning, and some represent Oblate institutions dedicated to academic formation. Among the essays is one describing the Oblate contribution to the establishment of Missiology as an academic discipline and another examining the rise and fall of three Oblate institutes of missiology. The essays are rich in information and experience. We aim to publish these essays in the future to disseminate them to a broader audience.

In the end, the purpose of the assembly is to help us better understand our mission today so that we may recommit ourselves to the service of the poor as we begin the next century of our history.

Raymond MWANGALA, OMI General Assistant

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