EUGENE DE MAZENOD 101

"Leave Nothing Undared with St. Eugene de Mazenod"

Daring New Ways to Reach People's Hearts

Presentation 10: Ministries of the First Missionaries

PRAYER USED BY ST. EUGENE BEFORE MEDITATION:

O Mary Immaculate, faithful adorer of the Father, Mother most admirable of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, inspire within me the same sentiments that were yours while pondering the revealed mysteries which you treasured in your heart. Grant that I may ever live in union with your Son, my Saviour, together with all who, by meditation, give honor to the most Holy Trinity. Amen.

1. **"The Church has in our days been cruelly ravaged."**

What are we learning during this COVID-19 crisis about the role of the Church and ourselves? Our church activities aren't fully resuming "business as usual" as in the past. Too much has changed and is changing of our experience of prayer and worship, faith-community, contact with God...

=> What is the current situation teaching us? How can we share a closeness to God and closeness to the people?

2. **"Our mission puts us on constant call to respond to the most urgent needs of the Church through various forms of witness and ministry, but especially through proclaiming the Word of God which finds its fulfilment in the celebration of the sacraments and in service to others."** OMI Constitutions and Rules, Constitution 7

=> In the days without church attendance, what did I learn about God and what made me grow in my relationship to God through the Word, online celebration of Mass, and service to others? How am I maintaining this growth process?

3. **"To love the Church is to love Jesus Christ, and vice versa"** (St Eugene)

Pope Francis invites us to see this relationship through the image the Church as a field hospital:

"This is the mission of the Church: the Church heals, it cures. Sometimes, I speak of the Church as if it were a field hospital. It's true: there are many, many wounded! So many people need their wounds healed! This is the mission of the Church: to heal the wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all, God is the Father, God is affectionate, God always waits for us." (Homily at Santa Marta, February 5, 2015)

=> Each of us has a role to play. Personally, and as part of the community I belong to. How can we grow in closeness and in solidarity, especially with those who suffer emotional, social, economic distress?

4/ **An invitation to read the "Preface**"

This is one of the fundamental documents of the Mazenodian charism and spirituality. I invite you to read it prayerfully. (You can find the text below after the Concluding prayer)

Concluding Prayer

God has created me to do Him some definite service.
He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.
I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.
He has not created me for nothing. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments.
Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.
He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me.
Still, He knows what He is about.

Saint John Henry Newman "The Mission of my life"

“The Preface”

The Church, that glorious inheritance purchased by Christ the Saviour at the cost of his own blood, has in our days been cruelly ravaged. The beloved spouse of God's only begotten Son is torn with anguish as she mourns the shameful defection of the children she herself bore. Christians, but apostates, and utterly mindless of God's blessings, they provoke divine justice by their crimes. And did we not know that the sacred deposit of faith is to be preserved intact to the end of time, we would hardly be able to recognize the religion of Christ from the few remaining traces of its past glory that lie scattered about. Such is the state of things brought about by the malice and corruption of present-day Christians that it can be truly said that the greater number of them are worse off now than was the gentile world before its idols were destroyed by the Cross.

Faced with such a deplorable situation, the Church earnestly appeals to the ministers whom she herself enrolled in the cause of her divine Spouse, to do all in their power, by word and example, to rekindle the flame of faith that has all but died in the hearts of so many of her children. Alas, few heed their Mother's urgent plea. Indeed, many even aggravate things by their own disgraceful conduct and, instead of trying to lead people back to the ways of justice, they themselves must often be reminded of their own duties.

The sight of these evils has so touched the hearts of certain priests, zealous for the glory of God, men with an ardent love for the Church, that they are willing to give their lives, if need be, for the salvation of souls.

They are convinced that if priests could be formed, afire with zeal for men's salvation, priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue – in a word, apostolic men deeply conscious of the need to reform themselves, who would labour with all the resources at their command to convert others – then there would be ample reason to believe that in a short while people who had gone astray might be brought back to their long-unrecognized responsibilities. “Take great care about what you do and what you teach,” was Paul's charge to Timothy, “Always do this, and thus you will save both yourself and those who listen to you” (1 Tim 4: 16).

How, indeed, did our Lord Jesus Christ proceed when he undertook to convert the world? He chose a number of apostles and disciples whom he himself trained in piety, and he filled them with his Spirit. These men he sent forth, once they had been schooled in his teaching, to conquer the world which, before long, was to bow to his holy rule.
And how should men who want to follow in the footsteps of their divine Master Jesus Christ conduct themselves if they, in their turn, are to win back the many souls who have thrown off his yoke? They must strive to be saints. They must walk courageously along the same paths trodden by so many before them: apostolic labourers for the Gospel who, while carrying out the same ministry to which they themselves now feel called, handed on such splendid examples of virtue. They must wholly renounce themselves, striving solely for the glory of God, the good of the Church, and the growth and salvation of souls. They must

constantly renew themselves in the spirit of their vocation, living in a state of habitual self-denial and seeking at all times to reach the very summit of perfection. They must work unremittingly to become humble, meek, obedient, lovers of poverty and penance, mortified, free from inordinate attachment to the world or to family, men filled with zeal, ready to sacrifice goods, talents, ease, self, even their life, for the love of Jesus Christ, the service of the Church, and the sanctification of their brethren. And thus, filled with unbounded confidence in God, they are ready to enter the combat, to fight, even unto death, for the greater glory of his most holy and sublime Name.

How vast the field that lies before them! How worthy and holy the undertaking! The people are caught up in crass ignorance of all that pertains to their salvation. The consequence of their ignorance has been a weakening of the faith and a corruption of morals with all the licence which that inevitably entails. Thus, it is supremely important, it is urgently imperative, that we lead the multitude of lost sheep back to the fold, that we teach these degenerate Christians who Jesus Christ is, that we rescue them from Satan's power and show them the way to eternal life. We must spare no effort to extend the Saviour's empire and to destroy the dominion of hell. We must check the manifold evils of sin and establish the honoured observance of every virtue. We must lead men to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become saints.

Such are the great works of salvation that can crown the efforts of priests whom God has inspired with the desire to form themselves into a Society in order to work more effectively for the salvation of souls and for their own sanctification. To bring all this into being, they must carry out their duty worthily, faithfully fulfilling their splendid vocation.

But it is not enough for them simply to be convinced of the sublime nature of the ministry to which they have been called. The example of the saints and reason itself make it amply clear that the success of such a holy undertaking as well as the maintenance of discipline in any society make certain rules of life absolutely necessary for unity of thought and action among the members. Such unity is a body's strength, keeping up its fervour and insuring that it lasts.

Wherefore, while pledging themselves to all the works of zeal which priestly charity can inspire – above all, to the work of the missions, which is the main reason for their union – these priests, joined together in a society, resolve to obey the following Constitutions and Rules; by living them they hope to obtain all the benefits they need for their own sanctification and for the salvation of souls.