

*De Mazzenod Family Australia
Lay Association Guidelines*



**De Mazzenod
Family**

Welcome

This booklet is your guide to association with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Australian Province. This guide is published for the growing and diverse community of those who associate with the Charism of St Eugene de Mazenod and/or the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. For those who seek to share the charism, live the spirituality and collaborate in ministry.

“It is not enough to do things for a day, you have to keep it up, it is only by perseverance that one succeeds. And to ensure fidelity to one’s resolution, I know no better method than making out a program for oneself in writing and one makes it an iron law to reread it every week, at first, and later on every month...”

St Eugene de Mazenod to his sister Eugenie,
July 12th, 1809

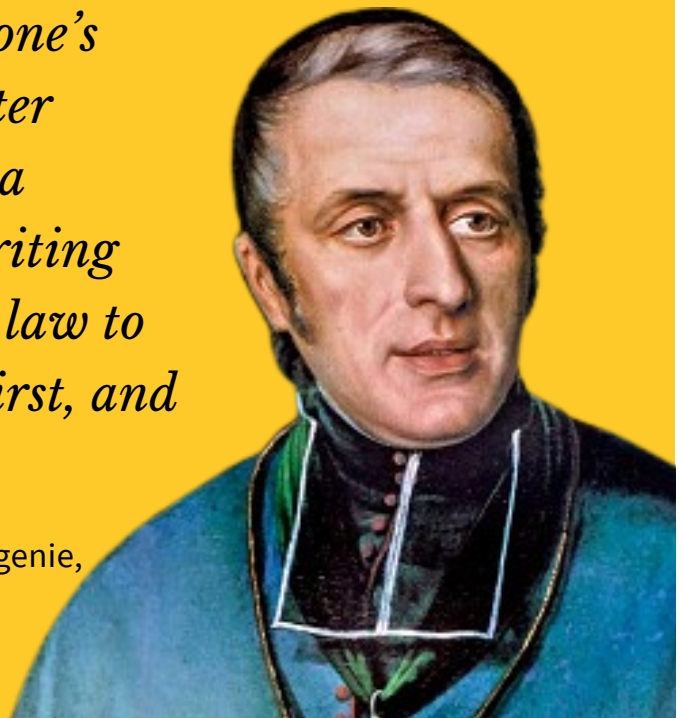


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Introduction

Inspired by the charism of the Holy Spirit given to St Eugene de Mazenod, many have chosen to walk in the footsteps of the Apostles. While the various groups and levels differ in their mission, their belonging to the De Mazenod Family celebrates the unity shared in the common mission to evangelise the poor and most abandoned.

The De Mazenod Family Office and National Committee seeks to support this unity by providing a space for deeper relationship and spiritual growth for mission.

In Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People, he reminds us that "around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a "charismatic family", which includes numbers of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality." (cfr. Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People, III, 1)

Since the canonisation of St Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, many people are seeking to know more about St Eugene and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and share in the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod. The Oblates have acknowledged this in their Constitutions and Rules:

"The charism of St Eugene de Mazenod is a gift of the Spirit to the Church, and it radiates throughout the world. Lay people recognise that they are called to share in the charism according to their state of life, and to live it in ways that vary according to milieu and cultures. They share in the charism in the spirit of communion and reciprocity amongst themselves and with the Oblates." (Rule 37a)

Introduction

The 1998 Chapter introduced the new Constitutions and Rules and two rules in particular concern lay people. Rule 37a officially recognises that lay people share in the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod “in a spirit of communion and reciprocity amongst themselves and with the Oblates”. Rule 37a specifies that lay people by sharing in the Oblate charism, “gather in associations” and the Provinces and Delegations “foster the development of such associations”. There were two meetings of Lay Associates where Lay people were invited, with ordained Oblates to develop the Associate programme. The first was in Aix-en-Provence in 1996 and the other in Rome in 2007.

At the 1996 meeting, the “Identity of Lay Associates” was discussed, and it reflected how the Oblate Charism could be lived by lay people. Two points developed from that meeting:

1. Lay Associates would move from dependence on the Oblates to collaboration and partnership with them.
2. Lay Associates would eventually progress from being co-operators, to being disciples who are involved in a deeper spiritual relationship.

Fr. William Steckling OMI – who was Superior General at the time this occurred at the chapter in 1998, identified four aspects, which he saw as important for Lay Associates inspired by St. Eugene.

1. A clear identity inspired by St Eugene that includes a formation curriculum.
2. A spiritual life rooted in Jesus Christ and the Church, nourished on scripture and the sacraments.
3. A community built on love, endowed with the spirit of the Oblate family but also formally structured for a common good.
4. A mission that is good news for the poor which occurs in the context of an Oblate partnership.

Vision & Mission

The De Mazenod Family Vision and Mission document is at the core of all we do. It inspires us to continue to grow in the Charism of St Eugene.

VISION

Together, as members of the De Mazenod Family, we seek to enrich our faith journey through the charism of St Eugene De Mazenod, in partnership with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in the Australian Province.

MISSION

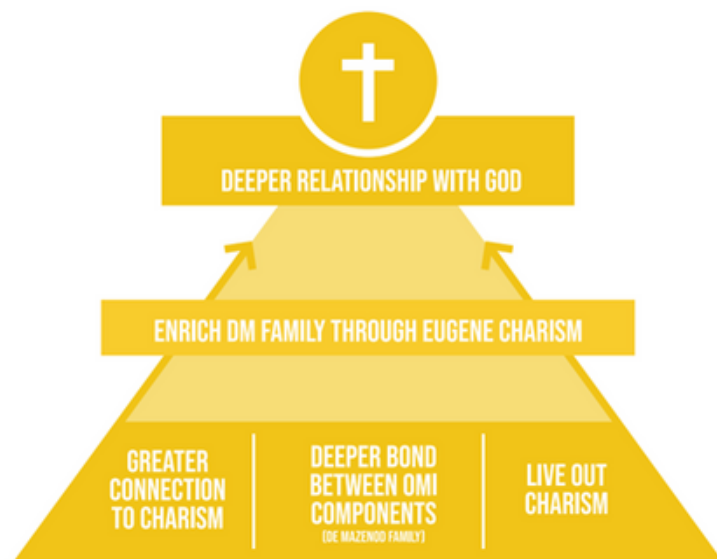
The mission of the De Mazenod Family is:

- To build a community centred on Jesus Christ, with Mary Immaculate as our guide;
- To grow as a united family, who identify with the charism, alongside the Oblates, supporting and nurturing each other on our spiritual journeys;
- To form ourselves in the knowledge and understanding of the charism of St Eugene De Mazenod;
- To celebrate the ways in which we readily embody the charism of St Eugene De Mazenod.
- To reach out in solidarity and friendship to the abandoned and neglected in our local communities and beyond.

Vision & Mission

Through our Vision and Mission, you are INVITED to:

- Be a part of St Eugene's "most united family", finding your place within it, and enriching this family with your presence;
- Seek a deep friendship with Jesus through the example of St Eugene De Mazenod, who saw him as a friend, and Saviour;
- Share in the Cross of Jesus as we embrace the trials and struggles of life, together as a community;
- Be nourished by God's word through the Church and the Sacraments, as well as exploring your own journey of faith;
- Dare to identify with the suffering of the most abandoned, and offer the love of God to those bereft of it;
- Radically take up St Eugene De Mazenod's challenge "to see the world through the eyes of the crucified Christ";
- Make a commitment to living the charism of St Eugene De Mazenod.



Exploring the Vision and Mission

Upon reading the Vision and Mission it can sometimes be hard to see how we can take those words and action them within our lives.

Below are the mission statements revised as personal intentions. Additional information has been included to allow a deeper reflection on how we can live out the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod in our day to day lives.

The Mission of the De Mazenod Family personified:

I seek to build a community centred on Jesus Christ, with Mary Immaculate as our guide.

- A personal relationship with Christ is essential for those connecting to De Mazenod Family Australia. Through reflecting on the Word of God; regular participation in celebrating the Eucharist, the Sacraments and Eucharistic adoration, we seek to imitate the pattern of Christ's life.

I seek to continue to grow as a united family with other members who identify with the charism, alongside the vowed Oblates, supporting and nurturing each other on our spiritual journeys.

- We are all connected to a wider family, the De Mazenod Family, with whom we share many of the same ideals and beliefs. It is vital that we show this same support for other members as we walk this journey, deepening our relationship with Christ and sharing in the Charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.

Exploring the Vision and Mission

I seek to form myself in the knowledge and understanding of the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.

- The charism of St Eugene de Mazenod is at the heart of what binds us all together as a wider De Mazenod Family. Continuing to expand on this knowledge of the charism provides opportunities for both personal and collective growth. The De Mazenod Family Team provide several resources and programs to allow you to fulfill this.

I seek to celebrate the ways in which we readily embody the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.

- St Eugene was ultimately aware of the presence of God in all of his activities; he recognised that God worked through his life through people and events. In the same way, we will become aware of the presence of God through living the charism of St Eugene in their family, work, and community responsibilities.

I seek to reach out in solidarity and friendship to the abandoned and neglected in our local communities and beyond.

- St Eugene preached that no matter how poor or needy people might be, they were all “children of God.” We too strive to ensure that the dignity of each person through prayer and either service to the community or by supporting care projects financially.

St Eugene de Mazenod's Moments of Grace

St Eugene de Mazenod experienced a number of moments of Grace, God's gratuitous gift, and recognised them as moments which shaped his life. These particular moments stand out as they shaped his life and ultimately the life of the Congregation.

- The Good Friday event - before the cross
- Before his own humanity - while he was deathly ill
- Through Mary - with the Oblate Madonna statue

In this spirit you are invited to recognise and reflect on moments of grace working in your life. You are invited to consider your current reality and formally participate in the charism, through different commitments and through ways of living out the charism.



Opportunities for Lay Participation in the De Mazenod Family Australia

The following section outlines the four opportunities to connect to the Lay Association of the De Mazenod Family.

Lay participants in the De Mazenod Family;

- Member
- Associate
- Lay Oblate
- Honorary Oblate

Member

The first Moment of Grace – Good Friday Before the Cross

When Eugene returned to France from exile in Italy, he attempted to live life to the fullest to make up for lost time. He had decided that marrying a young rich heiress to secure a prestigious position in society and access the pleasure of a good life was the direction he wanted to take. After living a partying life for some years, Eugene was beginning to find the superficial friendships and easy pleasures of high society living was leaving him feeling empty and wanting something more.

It was around this time that St Eugene had what is often referred to as his first conversion, or first moment of grace – A moment before the Cross on Good Friday in 1807. Eugene didn't share this moment until many years later. As far as we know, the first mention of this experience is in his notes from a retreat in December 1814.

“I looked for happiness outside of God and for too long with resulting unhappiness. How often in my past life had my wounded, tormented heart taken wings for God from whom it had turned away! Can I forget the bitter tears that the sight of the cross brought streaming from my eyes one Good Friday? Indeed, they welled up from the heart, there was no checking them, they were too abundant for me to be able to hide them from those who like myself were assisting at that moving ceremony. I was in a state of mortal sin [p. 6] and it was precisely this that made me grieve. I could then, and also on some other instance, perceive the difference. Never was my soul more satisfied, never did it feel such happiness; for in the midst of this flood of tears, despite my grief, or rather through my grief, my soul took wings for its last end, towards God its only good whose loss it felt so keenly.”

It was this moment before the cross that led him to the path of joining the seminary to become a priest.

Member

Vocation

When Eugene returned to Aix-en-Provence after ordination, he didn't take up a normal parish appointment, but he chose to take care of those he recognised as spiritually in need. Eugene and his men preached in the local language, travelling from village to village, instructing, preaching and teaching at the level of the people. No one was excluded. All who wanted to be a part of the community of faith was welcomed.

Being connected to local communities was important for St Eugene from the beginning of his ministry and it remains an integral aspect of the charism that the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate continue to live out today.

De Mazenod Family Members are lay people of God who live their vocation with a special bond to the Charism of St Eugene de Mazenod and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This is open to anyone connected in any way with an Oblate School, Parish or Ministry, including parishioners, teachers, families connected to our schools, volunteers, etc. De Mazenod Family Members are invited to build community among themselves with Oblates of Mary Immaculate by living out the vision and mission of the De Mazenod Family. De Mazenod Family Members are invited to attend the events and programs that are available to them from the De Mazenod Family Office. There is no formal commitment.

Spirituality

'For as one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another'.

(Romans 12:4-5)

De Mazenod Family Members are welcomed to participate in prayer and liturgy through their individual connections to the ministries of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Through this participation, individuals are formed in the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.

Member

Community

De Mazenod Family Members are known by their connection to the communities and ministries that they participate in and are known by others in the De Mazenod Family.

De Mazenod Family Members are invited to participate in their local community to the best of their ability.

Mission

“*He has sent me to evangelise the poor*” is the motto that Eugene gave to his congregation in 1816. De Mazenod Family Members live out their mission through their presence and participation in local ministries.

Associate

The Second Moment of Grace – Typhoid and the Call To Form A Community

In 1814, Napoleon had sent thousands of Austrian prisoners of war to southern France. Unfortunately, there was a Typhoid Epidemic, and the diocesan chaplain caring for prisoners of war caught the sickness and he died. It was then that St Eugene stepped in and offered his own services to the diocese to care for those prisoners of war. During this pastoral ministry, St Eugene also contracted typhoid, and was so ill that on March 14 1814, he received the last rights. His group of young people, the “solidarity of young Christians”, gathered together each evening in the church of the Magdalene, to pray the Rosary before the statue of Our Lady of Grace. By the beginning of May, St Eugene was on the road to recovery.

It was at this time that Eugene de Mazenod realised that he couldn't do it alone, and set about contacting people to begin the initial group of men as he worked to found the order.

Associate

Vocation

Eugene de Mazenod began his ministry by reaching out to the poor, the workers, the youth, the sick, the country villagers, the servants, and the needy prisoners of Aix. He was overwhelmed by the demands of the ministry, and he often carried it out in the face of opposition from the local clergy.

Soon Eugene realised he needed to pursue an alternate course, so he gathered a group of priests to work with him to awaken “a faith that had all but died in the hearts of so many”. Eugene invited his companions “to live together as brothers” and “to imitate the virtues and examples of our Saviour Jesus Christ, through the preaching of the Word of God to the poor”. We too can take on this message as Associates of the De Mazenod Family. By working together as a community, we can be servants to those who are most in need in our local communities, striving to live out the gospel values as Jesus and Eugene did.

Spirituality

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”. (Thes 5:16-18)

At the heart of the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod is deep, personal conversion – an encounter with the love of God. For St Eugene, prayer in private or with community was the crucible in which his conversion re-occurred on a daily basis.

De Mazenod Family Associates connect to a life of prayer through the De Mazenod Family. This will look different for everyone. There is a resource and prayer guide available with additional resources. In addition to this it is expected that De Mazenod Family Associates will attend intentional formation for a period of 6-12 months prior to making their first commitment.

An Associate will make his/her intentions to become an Associate known publicly through a commitment to formation and preparation period, after which they will make a formal commitment to the De Mazenod Family Australia.

Associate

Community

De Mazenod Family Associates are able to identify their own commitment to the Charism of St Eugene de Mazenod. In addition, this intentional commitment to the De Mazenod Family connects them to other members of the De Mazenod Family across all levels of the Lay Association.

Mission

De Mazenod Family Associates embrace the poor and most abandoned; to let them know that they are not alone, to show them that they are loved, and to help them affirm their dignity as children of God. De Mazenod Family Associates dare to seek out the poor and those who are abandoned by family, society, or the church. While all De Mazenod Family Associates are expected to perform some personal service, they are also encouraged to adopt charitable causes as a community.

Associate

Commitment Statement

Impassioned for Christ, the Church and Mission, I, _____
hereby desire to live out the mission of the De Mazenod Family as a
De Mazenod Family Associate for one year.

Through regular prayer, service to God's poor, a simple lifestyle and a
community spirit of openness to others;

- I will continue to build a community centred on Jesus Christ, with Mary Immaculate as our guide.
- I will continue to grow as a united family with other members who identify with the charism, alongside the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, supporting and nurturing each other on our spiritual journeys.
- I will continue to form myself in the knowledge and understanding of the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.
- I will continue to celebrate the ways in which we readily embody the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.
- I will continue to reach out in solidarity and friendship to the abandoned and neglected in our local communities and beyond.
- I will take time to spiritually renew by attending De Mazenod Family event

Signed

Date

Lay Oblate

The Third Moment of Grace - The Smile of the Oblate Madonna

In 1818, not long after St Eugene's ordination, he founded the Association for Christian Youth, and it was clear from the very beginning that the association had a particular devotion to Mary. It was important that the young people saw Mary the Mother of Jesus as theirs as well. Throughout St Eugene's life he experienced various outstanding graces, and one of these occurred on August 15, 1822, not long before the Papal approval of the Oblate congregation. During the official placement of the statue of Mary Immaculate known as the Oblate Madonna (which now resides at the General House in Rome) it is said that the statue "smiled upon him".

Although St Eugene had always regarded Mary as his Mother, it was in this moment that St Eugene found a deeper understanding of what it meant to have Mary as his Mother and to 'place all his hopes in her'. This experience gave him hope that through Our Lady's intercession, the congregation was on the right path. He saw his congregation in a new light – as beautiful and "of service to the Church". He was able to acknowledge the struggles his young congregation was facing and was aware of the battles ahead. In this moment, the smile bestowed upon him by the Blessed Virgin empowered him to find the strength to endure the hardships the future would bring.

Lay Oblate

Vocation

The preface that Eugene wrote as a preamble to the Rules and Constitutions truly invites a zealous response. In it we can feel his sense of urgency and his great zeal to carry out his mission; a mission that would need “priests afire with zeal for men’s salvation, priests who would labour with all the resources at their command to convert others.” In that first group of followers and indeed for all his Oblates, Eugene was asking for the ultimate. “They must strive to be saints;” they must “walk courageously... wholly renounce themselves... striving solely for the glory of God... seeking at all times to reach the very summit of perfection.” Eugene commented to one of his Oblates, **“I have no use for smouldering wicks in this society. I want you to burn, to give light or get out.”** While these are particularly strong words, they express the deep desire in the heart of Eugene de Mazenod.

De Mazenod Family Lay Oblates are lay men and women who live their vocation with a special bond with the Charism of St Eugene de Mazenod and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The journey of a Lay Oblate is a spiritual one, sharing in Christ’s mission by living in the midst of the world and addressing problems and concerns with the message of the Good News.

De Mazenod Family Lay Oblates are called to build community among themselves and vowed Oblates. Lay Oblates will include time for prayer, faith sharing, input for growth in spirituality and the charism, and hospitality. Missionary Oblates share their presence with Lay Oblates while encouraging them to share the leadership and animation of the community. De Mazenod Family Lay Oblates strive to live the charism of St Eugene in the various aspects of their daily lives – family, work, school, business, politics, etc.

“... Your destiny is to be apostles, and so tend within your hearts the sacred fire that the Holy Spirit lights there...” - Bishop de Mazenod to Oblates in Ceylon, November 17, 1851

Lay Oblate

Spirituality

'I thank my God whenever I think of you; and every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy.' (Phil 1:3-4)

In the preface to the Rules and Constitutions for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Eugene wrote to his brothers, "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". RR CC preface

In response to a call from Christ, Lay Oblates live their baptism, enlightened as they are by the charism of Eugene de Mazenod. They are animated by the shared spirituality and missionary outlook, a shared family spirit, between themselves and the Oblates.

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

Like the Founder, they love the Church, the Body of Christ, the People of God – sign and instrument of Jesus Christ in today's world and its new calls. They wish to build as Church, to answer the challenges of today's world and to new calls that come to light in our current and modern times.

Lay Oblate

Community

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

Oblates and Lay Oblates acknowledge their need for each other. There is a living relationship of reciprocity in openness, trust, and respect for every person's vocation. Each deepens Eugene de Mazenod's charism according to their own specific vocation and enriches others with their discoveries and experiences. Oblates and Lay Oblates live and complement one another in mutual growth.

Lay Oblates and Oblates come together to renew their lives and their commitments in the world – in the light of the Word of God and of the Founder's charism. However, the identity of Lay Oblates is also realised by associating among themselves. It is expected that Lay Oblates will make a formal commitment to community by signing a pledge of their commitment before both Oblates and the wider community. This pledge can be found on page 21 of this document.

There are different ways of becoming a Lay Oblate, but there will always be an invitation from two members of the community, be they lay or Oblate.

The journey to become a Lay Oblate begins with an invitation to participate in at least one year of formation in the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod. This formation may be a prescribed program or a lived experience as an Associate of the De Mazenod Family with an established Oblate or Lay Oblate as a spiritual companion.

At the completion of their formation, an invited member who wishes to live as a Lay Oblate will make a formal commitment to De Mazenod Family Australia for three years.

Lay Oblate

Mission

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

Lay Oblate

Commitment Statement

Impassioned for Christ, the Church and Mission, I, _____
hereby commit myself to live out the mission of the De Mazenod Family as
a De Mazenod Family Lay Oblate for three years.

Through regular prayer, service to God's poor, a simple lifestyle and a
community spirit of openness to others;

- I will continue to build a community centred on Jesus Christ, with Mary Immaculate as our guide.
- I will continue to grow as a united family with other members who identify with the charism, alongside the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, supporting and nurturing each other on our spiritual journeys.
- I will continue to form myself in the knowledge and understanding of the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.
- I will continue to celebrate the ways in which we readily embody the charism of St Eugene de Mazenod.
- I will continue to reach out in solidarity and friendship to the abandoned and neglected in our local communities and beyond.
- I will commit to working with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, as cooperators in grace, where circumstances allow, to extend the Kingdom of God.
- I will take time to spiritually renew by attending De Mazenod Family events.

Lay Oblate

Commitment Statement

- I will commit to and participate fully in ongoing formation as set out by the De Mazenod Family Office.
- I will wear an outward symbol of my commitment wherever relevant and appropriate.
- I will participate in spiritual companionship for my own faith journey as well as being open to assisting or accompanying others on their faith journey.
- I will seek to reflect on my own spiritual commitment and journey and take time to recommit myself as a Lay Oblate every three years.

I make this commitment under the patronage of St Eugene de Mazenod and Mary Immaculate.

Lay Oblate Signature

Date

Witness Name

Witness Signature

Date

Honorary Oblate

Vocation

The title of Honorary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (HOMI) is the highest mark of esteem the congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate can bestow on a Lay Oblate. The first Honorary Oblates were named by the founder of the congregation himself, St. Eugene de Mazenod, in 1842. An Honorary Oblate receives the profession cross of a deceased Oblate of his or her choosing and a calligraphic certificate noting the honour, and shares in all the spiritual benefits of membership in the Oblate congregation.

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

1. The naming of Honorary Oblate is reserved to the Superior General. He will consider nominations on the recommendation of a Provincial, who must forward a curriculum vitae of the person proposed. Posthumous nominations will not be considered.
2. A person proposed should be distinguished by years of devoted service to the Congregation and its mission in the Church.
3. The life of the person proposed should give evidence of personal identification with the ideals and goals of the Congregation. (Administrative Directory 2013, Chap. III, A, n° 121, p. 33) In the life of our Congregation, it was by these criteria that provincials and major superiors made the request that the title of Honorary Oblate be conferred, especially on lay people, men and women, married couples, but also on religious men and women, diocesan priests or bishops.