

The Oblates

To the Sources of Oblate Spirituality

Rev. Fr. Roger Guéguen Translation: Sister Mary Raphael

This article is intended to be a study of the masters of the spiritual life which have contributed to the formation of the congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and have rendered possible its providential mission, in particular in the northern regions of Boreal America. To search for the spiritual sources of Mgr de Mazenod: That is the object of this article. And, to do this, I will use, as a base for documentation, an article which appeared in 1942 in the *Études Oblates* (Oblate Studies), the quarterly magazine published by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the province of Canada, article entitled *Aux sources de notre spiritualité* (To the Sources of our Spirituality), written by Father Ovilla-A. Meunier, O.M.I., and inserted in the magazine from pages 28 to 41.

It is in his Rule that Mgr de Mazenod outlined the framework of oblate piety, "because it is there", affirms Cardinal Villeneuve, "where we find as it were the physiognomy proper to the oblate, not as apostle or laden with works, but formally as religious." Now, Father de Mazenod has had his favourite authors. It is to be in their interior depths that he withdrew himself to the house of his fathers to write up the code of his Rule. The founder has presented these masters as early as 1815: "We will live", he wrote to Father Tempier ... "under a rule, of which we will take elements from the Statutes of Saint Ignatius, of Saint Charles (for the Oblates), of Saint Phillip Neri, of Saint Vincent de Paul and of the Blessed Liguori."

Saint Alphonsus de Liguori

In order to justify his positions in the opinion of the Cardinals responsible for examining the Rule, Father de Mazenod constantly called upon the Liguorien Code, and from his pen abound declarations like this one: "He (Cardinal Pallotta) was disapproving one other thing that I proved to him to be textually in the rule of Blessed Alphonsus." Besides, in comparing the two codes, it is easy to prove the aforesaid assertion.

The accordance is so close, that it doesn't

explain itself either at random or by recourse to the common sources: it isn't restricted to the general lines, but it manifests itself right up to the title and the division of the chapters, the order of the articles and even the similarity of the texts. Thus, in the second chapter of the second part of the Rule, second chapter which consists of forty-one articles, twenty-seven come from Saint Alphonsus! We primarily find there the layout of our spiritual exercises: two periods of mental prayer (art. 254), the celebration of the holy Mysteries (art. 299), the visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin (art. 257), the recitation of the rosary (art. 258), the chanting of the canonical Hours (art. 144) placed at intervals during the day, enclosed by the vocal prayers of the morning (art. 254), and of the evening (art. 260) and the double examination of conscience (art. 259), and joined together by short but flaming ejaculations (art. 247). And each week, those who were not priests (said the primitive rule), presented themselves at least three times at the holy Table, and two times at the tribunal of penance.

Still more from Saint Alphonsus, he takes articles from the Rule which stipulate other religious practices, as for example, the blessing from the Superior after the evening prayer (art. 260), the chanting in common of the divine Office (art. 145), the chapter of faults (art. 270), the penances and the corporal mortifications (art. 263 and following), the periodic meetings where they discuss the interests of the ministry (art. 282), the theological conferences (art. 283) and the monthly recollection, and lastly, the yearly retreat (art. 261).

From the same source, as well, come the beautiful texts concerning silence (art. 246 and following), the regular surroundings (art. 252), and the recommendations made to the priests about the service at table and the reading in the dining room (art. 294), adding that the Superior himself may give the example (art. 295).

In the past, at the head of the Rule of the

Saint Alphonsus Liguori (September 27, 1696 – August 1, 1787) was a Catholic Bishop, spiritual writer, theologian, and founder of the Redemptorists, an influential religious Congregation. He was canonized in 1839 by Pope Gregory XVI and declared a Doctor of the Church by Blessed Pope Pius IX in 1871.



Redemptorists, one could read the motto of the Oblates: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* ("He has sent me to evangelize the poor"), and on the frontispiece of several tracts of Saint Alphonsus is printed the traditional salutation of the Oblate religious family: *Laudetur Jesus Christus et Maria Immaculata*. Therefore, even in the Oblates' coat of arms, we encounter inspirations coming from that of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Saint Vincent de Paul

To Pope Leo XII, who asked the reasons for certain details of administration, Fr. de Mazenod responded in 1826: "It is like that in the Rule of Saint Vincent de Paul." He had therefore consulted this rule of which he calls upon again, when the commission of cardinals in charge of examining his code engaged him to produce some "historical precedents" capable of motivating his attitude.

Let us mention also the chapter "de relationibus cum proximis" (of our relations with our neighbour) of which Saint Vincent de Paul had provided both the title and the substance, and besides a dozen articles, of which the scattered arrangement cannot conceal the evident origin.

For ten years, the Mission of Aix, thus named in honour of the Founder of "the Congregation of the Mission", was dedicated to Saint Vincent de Paul, great patron of the Missionaries of Provence.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Let us remember that Father de Mazenod, in 1815, proposed to use as well Saint Ignatius. Now, anyone who has read the Rule of the missionaries of Provence cannot help but notice the influence of the Spanish soldier. Saint Ignatius had been consulted and his opinions had been accepted in many circumstances. Five times, the Rule has called upon his indisputable authority: a tribute rendered to him alone!

Thus, in the paragraph "of the management", after having cited Saint Ignatius at length, he makes a point of adding: "These are the actual words of this holy Founder, commented by Rodriguez, of which we adopt the spirit and the terms in our Institute."

A secondary, but real influence which ap-

pears clearly, concerning the vows of poverty and obedience, provides the Founder with strong considerations which prelude one or another chapter, considerations where intervene, in turn, the great doctors of the Church and in particular Saint Thomas of Aquinas.

Other influences

There are other sources to point out, although of lesser importance. Let us cite first of all the influence of Saint Leonard of Port-Maurice on the "Regulations of the Missions", incorporated in the second chapter of the Rule (First Part). We also point out Mr. Olier and the French School, which in like manner provided no less than three forms of pious exercises of Sulpician origin: the prayer in the morning, the spiritual communion "O Jesu vivens in Maria" which closes the meditation, and the Marian consecration "O Domina mea" which crowns the particular examination. These are the formal Sulpician contributions to the formation of Oblate piety.

Regarding the evening prayer, in accordance with the custom of Saint Sulpice, Fr. de Mazenod wanted to add a prayer for the intentions of the Superior. "It is the custom of Saint Sulpice," we read in the letter that stipulates it, "and I have more need of it than the Superiors of Saint Sulpice who live in retirement from active life."

In stipulating the particular examination to his disciples, Fr. de Mazenod eliminated, on the one hand, Mr. Tronson (spiritual author of the French school) and the reading of his examinations, and added, on the other hand, litanies that have the "flavour" of Liguorian spirituality. First of all, it was Saint Alphonsus of Liguori who infused the flavour of the frequent and regional litanies: Litanies proper to the Congregation, after the particular examination; Specific Litanies for each house, after the rosary; local Litanies during the missions; Litanies of the Blessed Virgin and Litanies of the Saints for all occasions; Litanies of the Immaculate Conception, of Saint Joseph, etc.

Liguorian flavour, also, in the choice of invocations. To the Fathers in charge of making the definitive wording, the Founder wrote, "I entreat you to change the conclusion of our Litanies: in place of saying 'Jesu Sacerdos', it must read 'Christe Salvator'". It is the aspect from which we must contemplate our divine Master: Saint Alphonsus of



Vincent de Paul (24 April 1581 – 27 September 1660) was a Catholic priest dedicated to serving the poor, and a Catholic saint. He was canonized in 1737.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, (1491 – July 31, 1556) was a Spanish knight from a Basque noble family, hermit, priest since 1537, and theologian, who founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and became its first Superior General.



Liguori had placed his Congregation under the protection of the Saviour.”

Conclusion

Therefore, as we are able to notice from the reading of this article, Eugene de Mazenod did not take the attitude of an advocate of one school, on the contrary! History seems to have placed him deliberately at the crossroads of several great spiritual movements. Finally, what place will he occupy in the world of spirituality? Will future generations hail him as the leader who borrows from his predecessors what doesn't be-

long to him? Or will they simply affiliate him to one of the great spiritual families of whom we have just recalled the influence? To study the Founder from the cradle, to lift the veil that covers the innermost work of his soul, to witness the re-awakening of his psychology, to observe the assimilation or the elimination of outlying elements, in a word, to follow the evolution of his mentality until the day of the bursting of the envelope in which the education had been reserved, reveals a mighty personality. That is an indispensable, preliminary task! Then, and only then, the synthesis will be possible and the affiliation, if it will take place, will be legitimate.

Coast to Coast

News and photos from the canadian district activities !!!



The Priests' meeting at St. Thomas Aquinas seminary in Winona

By Rev. Fr. Dominic Boulet

In Canada, there are some things that we are so used to seeing that it is part of our life, like snow in winter and geese coming back in the spring. Similarly, what is the typical activity of SSPX priests during the month of February? It is the priests' meeting, of course! Once again, I was able to attend it: let me give you a report on that special event.

Yes, indeed, this past priests' meeting was quite eventful for yours truly. Let me pass on the hassle of international air travel, something that seems to be increasingly challenging. In our crazy times, we are told that man is "free" to do whatever he wants, and that it is ok to kill a baby in the womb of his mother or to get rid of an elderly person, as long as it is done "out of compassion"

and "safely". But when an honest citizen wants to board the plane and cross the border, he has the impression of being summoned by officers to prove that he is not a terrorist. Anyway, after going through that hassle, I was quite relieved upon arriving at the seminary of Winona, just on time for a conference of Fr. Yves Leroux.



By the way, you may wonder how St. Thomas Aquinas seminary is able to accommodate extra guests for a whole week, knowing that during normal times, the house is already filled to capacity. It is true that the North American seminary of the Society of St. Pius X, unlike those of the Novus Ordo, is bursting at the seams. So, in order to accommodate the visiting priests, the majority of seminarians have