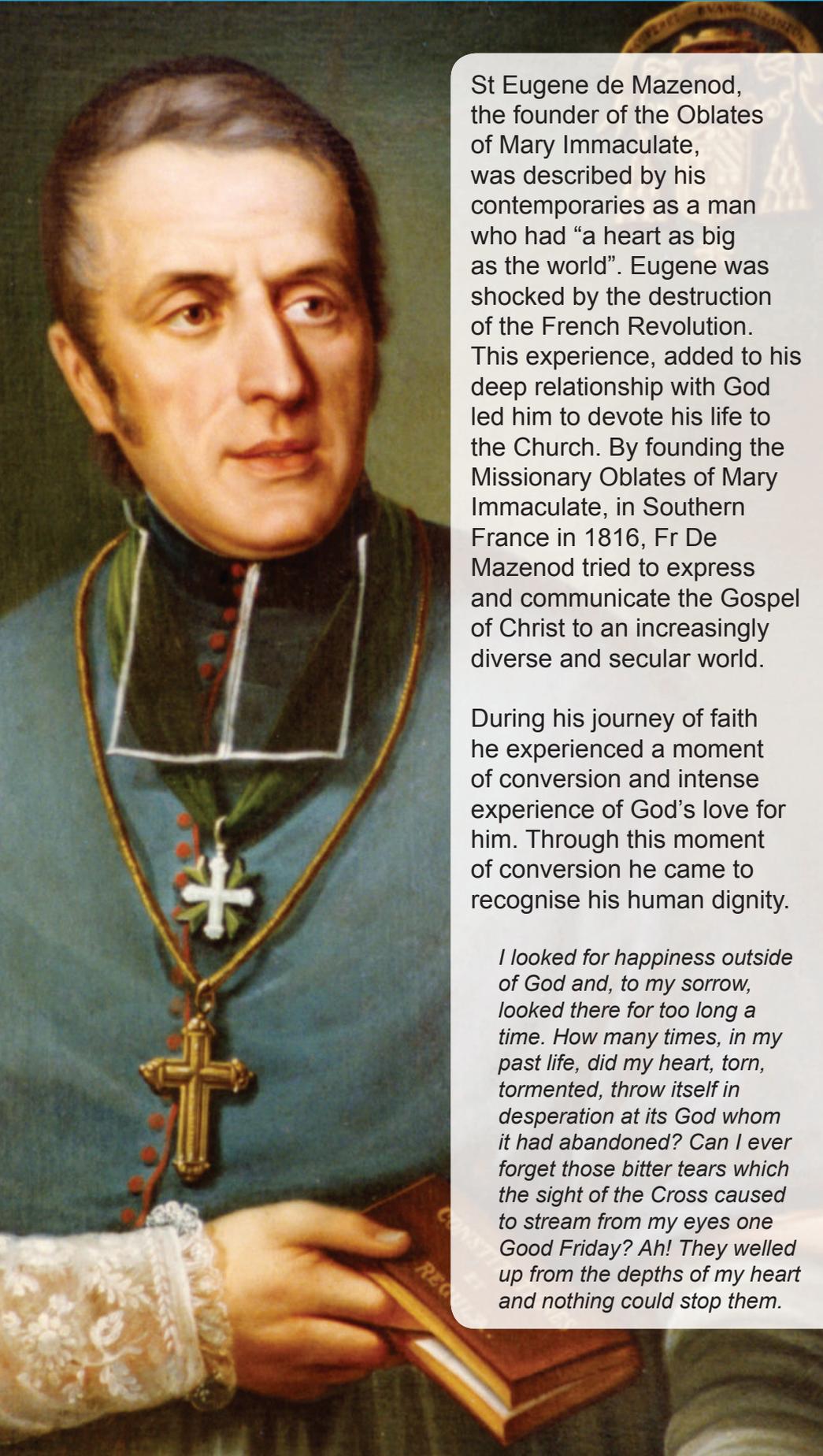




Beyond Mission



St Eugene de Mazenod, the founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was described by his contemporaries as a man who had “a heart as big as the world”. Eugene was shocked by the destruction of the French Revolution. This experience, added to his deep relationship with God led him to devote his life to the Church. By founding the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in Southern France in 1816, Fr De Mazenod tried to express and communicate the Gospel of Christ to an increasingly diverse and secular world.

During his journey of faith he experienced a moment of conversion and intense experience of God’s love for him. Through this moment of conversion he came to recognise his human dignity.

I looked for happiness outside of God and, to my sorrow, looked there for too long a time. How many times, in my past life, did my heart, torn, tormented, throw itself in desperation at its God whom it had abandoned? Can I ever forget those bitter tears which the sight of the Cross caused to stream from my eyes one Good Friday? Ah! They welled up from the depths of my heart and nothing could stop them.

They were too abundant to hide from the people who, like myself, were attending that moving service. I was in mortal sin, and it was this that caused my sorrow. It was a moment singularly different from what I had experienced in certain other instances. Never was my soul more relieved, and never did it feel happier. And it was simply because, during that torrent of tears, despite my grief, or better, by reason of it, my soul leapt toward its final end, toward God, its only good, whose loss it felt so keenly. Why say more? Could I ever do justice describing what I felt at that moment? Just thinking about it fills my heart with sweet consolation.

Thus, I looked for happiness outside of God, and outside of him found only affliction and misfortune. But happily – happily a thousand times over – that good Father, despite my unworthiness, showered me with the riches of his mercy. The least I can do now is make up for lost time and redouble my love for him. Let all my actions, thoughts, etc., be directed toward that end. What more glorious occupation than, in all and for all, to act only for God, to love him above all, to love him all the more because I have come to love him so late. Ah! The happiness of heaven begins here below.... Let us choose now!

Eugene de Mazenod – Good Friday Experience (1807)

CROSS

What is the difference between a cross and a crucifix?

A crucifix is an image of a cross with a body nailed to it. A cross usually means an empty cross. The crucifix emphasises the death and suffering of Jesus, i.e. that he bore our sins, and therefore the need to repent. The empty cross emphasises the finished work of Jesus, i.e. that our sins are fully paid for, that Christ had risen from the dead.



DEFINITION

Secular world.

The word secular means 'not religious'. The secular world is everything in a society that is separated from faith or religion. Although Australian society is very secular, those who practise religion are still free to do so.



DISCUSSION

- 1 Why, do you think Eugene de Mazenod describes them as "bitter tears?"
What does it say about the life he's leaving behind and the life he's about to begin?
- 2 Have you had an experience of struggle and transition, similar to Eugene's?

VIDEO

- 1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gc4C1GNcASM> (Reflection on Conversion).
- 2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGdKdiAQ8yc>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0Om-6rNnHA&feature=relmfu>
(Reflection on Cross).

ACTIVITIES

- 1 Draw and describe the conversion experience that St Eugene describes above.
- 2 Eugene didn't know what lay ahead of him in his life and ministry. In fact, none of us really do. Imagine three possible positive futures for yourself.

LINK TO FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://www.omiworld.org/content.asp?artID=1>
<http://www.eugenedemazenod.net/>