

27th GENERAL CHAPTER

2018

PRESENTATION AND ELECTION OF DELEGATES

BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION
Brother Yannick HOUSSAY, S. G.

March 2017

Circular n° 313

27th GENERAL CHAPTER

2018

Brothers,

The General Chapter of 2018 will be held in Rome, at the Spiritual Retreat Center of Enrico de Osso, managed by the nuns of the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus (Via Val Cannuta, 134, 00166 ROMA) close by our Casa Generalizia.

We chose Ploërmel as the place for our previous General Chapter in 2012. Following the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the death of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, the idea was to be at the Mother House from which so many Brothers left for the mission entrusted to them by their beloved Father. It was a very rich experience that could be renewed in the future.

For the Chapter of 2018, the General Council wished that it take place in Rome. We thought it might be significant to meet in Rome at the dawn of the bicentennial celebrations of our Congregation, to show our willingness to move forward together on new paths, thus opening a new page to the mission, scrutinizing the vast horizons of the world, and being fully embedded in the Church of our time.

In this circular, after presenting the composition of the General Chapter and the process of the election of delegates, I shall briefly introduce the way in which we envisage its preparation. As of now, I invite you to enter this process with a heart wide open to the Breath of God and in total adherence to his ever new call.

COMPOSITION OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Ex-officio members (C 157)

The ex-officio members of the General Chapter are:

- the Superior General and the assistants
- the Major Superiors

The elected members (D 168)

The elected members must be perpetually professed. Their number is equal to at least three halves (3/2) of the ex-officio members.

Members without voting rights (D 168)

The Secretary General, the Treasurer General and the Procurator General participate in the deliberations of the Chapter without voting rights in the general assembly.

The number of members to the Chapter.

The Chapter must have at least 40 members with voting rights (2000 General Chapter decision).

For the General Chapter of 2018, **the quantum is therefore fixed at 21.**

The table on page 7 shows that, accordingly, **the Capitulants with voting rights will number 41.**

**Some specific points,
after consulting the Major Superiors concerned:**

1. The Brothers of the Asian Continent will vote together for the choice of one (1) substitute, even if they will not be constituted as a District until July 2017. The Visitor, who will be appointed next May, will be the delegate of the new District.

2. The Jean de la Mennais Province (Canada, United States, Mexico) will be divided into 2 Sectors: of the 5 delegates to be elected, 1 will be elected in the US Sector and 4 will be elected in the Canada and Mexico Sectors. Of course, the Brothers only vote once, and in the Sector to which they belong.

3. All the Brothers of the Province of Spain-Chile-Bolivia will elect their 3 delegates, but they will be required to choose one of them from the Brothers who are in Chile and Bolivia, and the other two from among those who are in Spain.

4. The Province of Argentina-Uruguay, the District of Polynesia and the Brothers of Asia (Japan, Philippines, Indonesia), who have a number of Brothers below the quantum, will have only one delegate who will be their major Superior.

They will therefore only elect one (1) substitute who would be called to participate in the Chapter in the event that their Superior is prevented from doing so.

Distribution of the Delegates to the General Chapter



PROVINCES and DISTRICTS	NUMBER OF PROFESSED BROTHERS	NUMBER OF DELEGATES	NUMBER	
			EX OFFICIO	TO ELECT
Kenya Tanzania	39	2	1	1
Uganda South-Soudan	159	8	1	7
R. of Congo Rwanda	49	2	1	1
Benin – Côte d’Ivoire Senegal - Togo	46	2	1	1
Argentina Uruguay	17	1	1	0
Canada – USA Mexico	121	6	1	5
Haïti	47	2	1	1
Japan – Philippines Indonesia	25	1	1	0
Spain Chili – Bolivia	79	4	1	3
France – England Italia	170	8	1	7
Polynesia	13	1	1	0
TOTAL	765	37	11	26

To these are added **4** members of the General Council,
and the **3** members of the General Administration without voting rights.

The Chapter comprises 44 members:

15 ex officio Members et 25 elected Members = **41 Members with voting rights**, and 3 Members without voting rights.

STEPS TOWARDS THE 2018 CHAPTER

1^{er} March 2017	Count the number of Brothers of the Congregation to determine the number of delegates per Province or District. According to the Capitular Book, this count is done one year before the opening of the General Chapter.
31st March 2017	The date of the submission of the General Chapter presentation circular.
10th May 2017	Celebration of the beginning of the preparation to the Chapter , on the anniversary of the first meeting of Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes. Theme of the year which will be based on the Treaty of Union signed by our two founders.
June-July 2017	Election of the Capitulants: The General Secretariat will send the ballot papers to the Major Superiors who will organize the elections in their Province or District.
15th July 2017	Deadline for sending to the General Secretariat the minutes of the elections of the delegates to the General Chapter.
August 2017	Sending of the letter of convocation to the General Chapter.
October 2017	Preparation for the Chapter through various contributions requested from the Laity and the Brothers.

**Mach 1 to 25
2018**



27th GENERAL CHAPTER

ELECTION OF DELEGATES.

I ask the Major Superiors and the Community Superiors to carefully read the recommendations below:

1. Some preliminary remarks.

Before discussing the methods of election, allow me to make a few, perhaps not unnecessary, reminders of the meaning for us, Brothers, of choosing delegates to the General Chapter. You know very well that the Capitulants do not come to the Chapter to defend personal interests or those of a group. They come to bring their fraternal contribution to the common search for the will of God for the whole Congregation.

I therefore invite each Brother to enter into a genuine spiritual process of discernment before choosing the delegate(s) to be elected. "*Consultations between Brothers are permitted, but all must refrain from campaigning for or against anyone*" (Capitular Book 12).

I also recall that each Brother must vote only in the Province or District to which he belongs. The Provincial or the Visitor will make sure that this is clear to everyone.

1. Methods of Election

All perpetually and temporary professed Brothers have the right to vote for delegates.

The Secretary General establishes the list of eligible Brothers in each administrative unit together with the number of delegates to vote for.

2. Two Rounds of Voting

We shall adopt the recommendations of the Chapter Book which apply to all the administrative units of the Congregation. I therefore invite the major Superiors to see to their careful implementation so that the election process and hence, the Chapter itself, may run smoothly.

As stated in the Chapter Book, the election consists of two rounds (C.B. n° 15).

In the first round, the Brothers who have obtained at least the absolute majority of valid votes, and up to the number of delegates to be elected, will be declared elected.

In the second round, the relative majority suffices. Those who obtain the most votes after the delegates have been elected are designated as substitutes.

3. Organisation of the First Round of Voting

Voting time (C.B. n° 13)

1. After this circular has been read, and at least three days before voting is held, the Superior of each community gives each Brother of the community the list of eligible Brothers in the Province, District or mission sector.
2. On the appointed day and at the time fixed for the election, the Brothers of the community come together. They invoke the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary and the Founders.
3. After having cast his ballot, each voter places his ballot paper in a white envelope on which nothing has been written.
4. He then places his envelope into an envelope provided by the Superior. All voters append their signature on that common envelope.
5. That envelope is sealed by the Superior of the community in the presence of all the Brothers.
6. The envelope is then placed in another envelope to be sent to the Provincial or the Vice-Provincial.

Counting of Votes

The Provincial or Visitor keeps the envelopes containing the ballots, without opening them, until the appointed time for counting the ballots. He appoints a commission of four Brothers who, under his chairmanship, on the appointed day, designate among themselves two tellers/scrutineers and two secretaries who then proceed to count the votes.

Minutes of the First Round

The Provincial or Visitor writes the minutes of the ballot of the first round (Appendix 1) in triplicate. The members of the commission sign the minutes. Two copies are sent to the Secretary General and the third copy is placed in an envelope sealed in the presence of the members of the commission who append their signature to the envelope. The ballots are burnt without delay in front of witnesses.

5. Organisation of the Second Round of Voting

It is the responsibility of the Provincial or Visitor to prepare the voting list for the second round (Appendix 2). Only the names of the Brothers who have obtained more than 10% of the votes appear on the list and in the order of the number of votes received.

The voting follows the same procedures as for the first round.

Counting of Votes for the Second Round

The counting of votes for the second round follows the procedures adopted for the first round. Likewise for the minutes: the same procedures are adopted as for the first round (Appendix 3).

6. Date for Sending the Minutes

The minutes for the first and the second rounds must be sent to the Secretary General no later than July 15, 2017. The final list of the delegates and of the substitutes after the second round is established in the order of the number of votes obtained.

7. Promulgation

The Superior General makes the results of the voting known to the Congregation by way of a circular letter.

SCRUTINIZE THE HORIZON

A Bit of History.

On June 6, 2019, we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of an important event, namely, the signing of the Treaty of Union between Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes. This signature signified their common decision to found our Congregation. It was a *“monument of the most extreme unreasonableness ... but as the two founders were admirably suited to each other, and they loved each other, it went on marvelously,”* observed Jean-Marie de la Mennais. As for Father Deshayes, *“when he returned to Auray,”* wrote a Brother, *“after the conclusion of this treaty, his soul was so overflowing with joy and consolation that he thought it his duty to inform Brother Jean who was accompanying him: ‘My brother,’ said he, ‘I am content! How happy I am! I had some concerns about the future of your nascent society, but I have just made arrangements with M. de la Mennais: the undertaking will go on, I have complete confidence in it; all my fears have disappeared’ ”.* The foundation of our Institute is the fruit of the profound friendship which bound these two priests and of their perfect unity of vision in the discernment which they carried out.

To Give Thanks and Open a New Page.

Today we want to celebrate this founding event to give thanks for the gift God has given us through this foundation and for the 200 years of our "holy history" The Treaty of Union was followed by many other decisions which led the Brothers to the five Continents. In thanking God for all these global itineraries that so many Brothers have traveled, we will seek to follow their example by opening **a new page** of Mennaisian missionary activity, which is so crucial and urgent, in the

field of Christian education of young people and of children. We will do this in collaboration with the Laity of the Mennaisian Family.

A Three-Step Path.

The General Council proposes to you to follow this itinerary in three stages, the first of which will begin in June 2017 and will lead us to the General Chapter. Indeed, if in 1817, the two priests were already engaged in the service of education, it was during this year that they began to meet and to esteem each other to the extent of pooling that which was undoubtedly most dear to them, that is, their commitment to the Christian education of the children of the people.

200 years ago, the urgency for our founders was to entrust the instruction of children to Brothers whose lives were entirely devoted to God and to that mission. They wanted to offer an education based on the Gospel of Christ. To-day, Laypeople and Brothers, together, want this Mennaisian charism, which they love, to be “like a river of living water that springs from the land of history to irrigate it so that the seeds of Good may germinate,” to use the words of Pope Francis.

Preparation for the General Chapter.

During the first year of preparation for the General Chapter, we will be invited to follow in the footsteps of our founders, living the experience of a community rising to scrutinize the horizon and discern the signs the Lord is giving us. We will be a community in the world that seeks to grasp the calls that the Spirit sends us through the cries of this world. Together we will observe, we will listen, we will discern to understand what God expects of us. In this way, we will seek to let the fire of the Spirit burn in us, the Spirit that has aroused in our two founders the desire to found this Mennaisian family. We will do it with humility and vigilance, in a spirit of prayer and of listening that seizes the discrete passages of God, like the clouds that forecast rain. And we shall experience the joy of Zacchaeus, who, having welcomed Jesus

into his house, made a real effort to enter the new life which he had discerned upon meeting him.

We will seek to "scrutinize the horizon", to discern the callings of the Spirit by entering into the intentions of Christ. *"Discernment, says a recent document of the Roman Congregation for Religious Life, looks to the horizons that the Spirit gives to the Church. It interprets the shuddering of the stars in the morning; it lets itself be guided to great things by means of small and fragile signals involving limited resources. We are called to an act of faith and of trust that makes us walk together with the courage to cast the nets upon His word and not because of human motivations alone."*

"It is a matter of knowing how to foresee and create places where the evangelical logic of gift, fraternity, openness to diversity, reciprocal love is lived," Pope Francis told the religious on the occasion of the year of Consecrated Life.

We Will thus Seek to Do God's Work

Mission is a Pentecost in the Holy Spirit. It is not a human undertaking. It is the work of God. He invites us to take part in it by entering into the intentions of his Heart, loving as he does, letting ourselves be touched by him.

In order to do this, we shall enter into the dispositions that were those of Jean-Marie de la Mennais and of Gabriel Deshayes: a great love of God, an intense desire to follow Christ, to resemble him, to share his love with every man, and most of all, the least of them, the will to build together, in unity, the work of God. We will be watchers of the dawn, watchmen waiting for the light.

We Will Enter into God's time.

We are called to be prophets of evangelical vigilance. The Spirit of God will enlighten us because we will be open to the voice of God who speaks, who opens the heart, who accompanies us on the way, and who invites us to walk towards the light. We will welcome God's day and its newness; we will open ourselves to his surprises, without fear or resistance. It is only in our attention to the needs of the world and in our docility to the impulses of the Spirit that the celebration of the Bicentennial will be transformed into a true *Kairos*, a time of God, rich in grace and creative fidelity.

An Experience of Faith and of Fraternal Communion.

The ability to scrutinize the horizon to see the signs of the Spirit with the heart of Christ does not rest in our strengths, nor in great numbers. It is based on faith, fraternal communion, the fire of the love of God that burns within us. It is faith that makes us look beyond the present. It is fraternal communion that opens us up to the calls of the Lord without confusing them with our own desires. It is love that makes us strong and available to launch into the deep, without knowing what tomorrow will bring, but always relying on the Providence of God, always so good and wise.

The Word of God Will Guide Us Through this Experience.

For this, there is an important rule: that of living the Gospel of Jesus. We will therefore seek to listen to the voice of God that daily comes to us through the everyday readings that the Church, like an attentive Mother, offers us. Listening to the Word, renewed every day, transforms us and makes us become attentive and loving disciples of Christ Jesus.

Through a persevering listening to the Word, we will grasp the thoughts of Christ from within in order to make them ours. We will hear, as in the light breeze that touched the ears of Elijah, the appeals he wants to address to us today.

Whoever can enter into the thoughts of Christ, says Pope Francis, is *"one who has met Christ, who has known him, who has felt recognized, respected, loved, forgiven, and this meeting has deeply marked him, filled him with a new joy, a new meaning for his life. And this is perceived, communicated and transmitted to others."*

"The works of God grow only in the shadows. It is in the night that the dew of heaven falls," said Jean-Marie de la Mennais. There must be a great deal of interior silence and patiently attentive listening to discern the signs of the times. To achieve this, we will seek to love inner prayer, personal dialogue with God, gathering in us, in a compassionate heart, the cry of the least and of the weak. We will ask the Lord to help us wait, with a burning heart, for the tiny signs he will give us, like the little cloud that announces the arrival of abundant rains.

Some Basic Attitudes.

1. To contemplate the living Christ Jesus who acts among us and who calls us to follow him. Thank him for all he does for us, and ask him to come to our aid.

Thus, to enter into the feelings of our two founders who had but one desire, to make the Reign of God grow through the education and the instruction which evangelizes children and through them, society. To acquire their spirit of humility and peace, as well as their apostolic zeal in the joy of the Gospel that is lived and announced. Pray that the Spirit will be the light of our understanding and of our heart so that we may walk in the generous gift of ourselves, without seeking our own interests.

To this end, an appeal is addressed to all, Brothers, Laypeople, young and old: let each one take an extra time of prayer every week. Those who can do so will be able to decide upon one hour of worship at a time of the week that suits them. Others may pray for a shorter time each day. (15 or 30 minutes, for example). This time of prayer

could have four dimensions: the worship of our God Providence in Jesus, praise and thanksgiving for the passage of the Lord into our lives, listening to the Word, perhaps the Gospel of the day, and finally, a time of intercession and supplication for the world and those who are close to us.

2. To look at the present, to listen without escaping from or uprooting ourselves; on the contrary, by pushing our roots into the fertile soil of the Congregation's history, which is a gift from God (see Pope Francis). We should also not hesitate to "*rethink the objectives, the structures, the style and the evangelizing methods of our communities*" (EG, 33). This amounts to exercising creative fidelity.

3. To share with others what we feel in the way of callings, of steps to take... and share the fruits of this spiritual approach in order to hear what others have perceived and thus create a common spirit. This is important for the sake of community discernment, and thereby avoid, each on his own, the risk of dispersal and of deception. What we seek is to respond to the calls of the Spirit, not to satisfy ourselves with human projects. He whom we follow is Christ, in the footsteps of our founders.

We will also like to recite this prayer, as the sign of our common and fraternal approach to discernment:

Lord Jesus, 200 years ago,
Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes
saw the distress of children and of young people,
"who were like sheep without a shepherd."

Animated with a great apostolic zeal
and a boundless love for the little ones and the poor,
they have responded to your calls
by lending each other mutual support.

Today, enlighten us and let us hear the cry of those
who are still waiting for pastors with a generous heart.

Eradicate in us all spirit of competition and of rivalry;
give us a heart that listens and shares;
may fraternal love grow in our communities.

Grant us never to yield to discouragement or to fear.
Give us strength, with the conviction
that you always guide and sustain with love
the workers of your kingdom.

At this time of preparation
to the 27th General Chapter of the Institute,
grant to all members of the Mennaisian family
to rely on your mercy, in the unity of the same family,
and the joy of writing a new page for the mission.

May the prayer of Mary
help us to walk together in the paths of peace,
and to announce with joy the Good News to the poor.

God Alone in time!
God Alone in eternity!

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY, Superior General,
Rome, March 15, 2017.

APPENDIX 1
Specimen of minutes for the FIRST ROUND

Election of Delegates to the 2018 General Chapter
Minutes of the FIRST ROUND

Province / District: _____

Place of vote counting: _____

Date: _____

Vote counting Commission:

Br. _____
Chairperson (Major Superior)

Br. _____

Br. _____

Br. _____

Number of voters: _____ Number of delegates to elect: _____

Ballots received: _____

*Blank ballots: _____

*Void ballots: _____

*Valid ballots: _____

Absolute majority: _____
Calculated from valid ballots.

Results of the voting process:

Have been elected delegates to the Chapter after the first round: _____

(Those who have obtain an absolute majority)

Have received more than 10% of votes in the order of the number of votes received:

Name: _____ Number of votes: _____

Name: _____ Number of votes: _____

Name: _____ Number of votes: _____

Etc.

1. If all delegates have been elected after the first round, are substitutes: _____

(Their number is equal to that of the delegates. If all the delegates have not been elected after the first round, the substitutes are designated at the end of the second round.)

2. If all delegates have not been elected after the first round, a second round is organised (see appendix 2)

Signature of the members of the Commission.

***Vocabulary:**

Blank ballot: Nothing has been written on it.

Void ballot: They are more crosses than the number of Brothers to elect or the ballot is illegible.

Valid ballot: The number of chosen delegates is at least equal to the number of delegates to be elected.

APPENDIX 2
Specimen of Ballot for the SECOND ROUND

Election of the Delegates to the 2018 Chapter
SECOND ROUND

The following Brothers have obtained more than 10% of the votes after the first round. Their names appear in the order if the votes obtained.

You choose _____ (*write in the number*) delegates.

You may choose from this list or among the eligible Brothers of the Province (District), who have not been elected after the first round.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

You may choose other Brothers:

- _____
- _____

Place a cross in front of the name(s) you have chosen or in front of the name(s) that you add to the list.

Reminder: If there are more crosses than the number of Brothers to be elected, the ballot is void.

APPENDIX 3
Specimen minutes for the SECOND ROUND

Election of Delegates to the 2012 General Chapter.

Minutes of the SECOND ROUND

Province / District: _____

Place of vote counting: _____

Date: _____

Vote counting commission:

Br. _____,
Chairman (Major Superior)

Br. _____

Br. _____

Br. _____

Br. _____

Number of voters: _____ Number of delegates to elect: _____

Ballots received: _____

Blank ballots: _____

Void ballots: _____

Valid ballots: _____

Result of the voting process:

Have been elected after the first round:

Have been elected delegates after the second round (The relative majority suffices):

Name: _____ Number of votes: _____

Name: _____ Number of votes: _____

Name: _____ Number of votes: _____

Etc.

Have been elected substitutes:

(Are substitutes, equal in number to the number of delegates, the Brothers who come after the elected delegates in the order of the number of votes obtained.)

Signature of the members of the commission: