



LETTER TO THE MENNAlSIAN FAMILY

October
2020

Nº 22



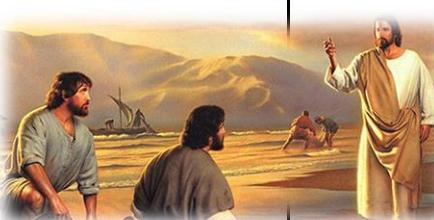
Transmitting the call today!

Dear Lay Mennaisians, Dear Brothers,

"We are convinced that: *the Lord still calls today, in all settings and all walks of life. For the world and the Church: being a Brother is good news; the Mennaisian charism, lived out in the Mennaisian family, is a gift still relevant today.*" (GC 2018, n° 5). This is the vibrant message that the last General Chapter wanted to send to all the Brothers and Lay Mennaisians. How do we understand this call? Is this an answer to those who think that the time for vocations is over in some parts of the world and in the Church? Is this an exhortation to still dare to transmit the call today, in the manner of John the Baptist, Andrew and Philip (Jn 1, 35-51)?

I- The Lord is still calling today.

Today, as in the days of the pioneers, the Lord continues to call young people to be Brothers or Lay Mennaisians in our spiritual Family. His call can be direct, as was the case for Philip: "*Follow me*" (Jn 1:43). But most often it is indirect: the Lord uses relays or intermediaries. It is John the Baptist who invites Andrew and John to follow the Master (Jn 1:36-39). It is Andrew who leads his brother Simon to Jesus (Jn 1, 40-42). It is Philip who suggests that Nathanael go and meet Joseph's son (Jn 1: 44-47).



To respond to the Master's call is to accept to follow him, sometimes at the invitation of another, to know him in depth and to remain with him (Jn 1, 37). It is to have this overwhelming and indelible experience of the loving gaze of the Lord which engraves in memory the exact hour of the meeting, like a loving seduction (Jn 1, 39). It is to find the One who gives meaning to life (Jn 1: 41) and who offers a new identity (Jn 1: 42). It is to welcome the One whose heart thirsts and is waiting (Jn 1: 48).

To be called commits to calling in turn. Thus, any vocation becomes questioning, provocation for others. What if, today, the call of God lacked mediators, relays? What if the Brothers and Laity of the Mennaisian Family were too shy and wanted to put their lamps under the bed?

In the days of young Samuel, "*the word of the Lord was scarce and vision not widespread*" (1 Sam 3: 1). The priest Eli was advancing in years and was almost blind (1 Sam 3:2). And behold, a voice calls Samuel three times. He thinks he hears that of the priest Eli and goes to him.

The fourth time, the older brother understood that this was a call from the Lord and offered a response to the young man: "*Speak, Lord, your Lord hears*" (1 Sam 3:9). The Lord's disconcerting pedagogy: he calls someone who is far from him and for whom he is a real stranger (1 Sam 3: 7). Following the example of the priest Eli, are we ready to help the young people who knock on our doors to discern the voice of the Lord even if we feel that their life is far from the Gospel or from the Christian faith? Do we really believe that the Lord calls whomever He wants, when He wants and how He wants?

The call of God is like the little seed sown by the cultivator (Mk 4, 1-8). Growth and fruits depend on the quality of the soil. But the important thing is to sow on time and out of season. The seed will sprout and bear fruit at the hour of God. I come from a sector of the Congregation which has sown a lot and for which the harvest has had to be waited for a long time. In Haiti, the Brothers began a vocation ministry in the 1940s. At the beginning, the responses were timid and the perseverance rather weak. Some Brothers had come to the conclusion that the Congregation was wasting its time and money in sterile vocations ministry. But others have continued to plant despite the immediate and apparent failure. It was not until sixty years later that other workers began to reap the benefits. Hope makes patient, persevering, and daring. Paul sowed, Apollos watered, but God alone offers fertility, gives growth and ensures the harvest (cf. 1 Cor 3: 6).

This is Jean-Marie de la Mennais's re-reading of the Lord's call to found the Congregation.

"I think of the tiny grain of mustard seed that I planted in the ground forty years ago, not knowing what it would become. But with the protection of divine Providence, and after so many years of toil and trials, it is gratifying today to see your work developing more and more in Brittany. And, after establishing itself in the southern part of France called Midi, it is spreading overseas. On seeing this, I cannot but cry out with the Scriptures: "Yes, there is the finger of God!"¹

Do we dare, Lay Mennaisians and Brothers together, to continue to sow the little seed of the call with hope, patience and courage?

¹ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, Circular Letter to the Brothers, March 19, 1857.



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II- Transmitting the call today

How can the Mennaisian Family today transmit the call to be a brother or a lay Mennaisian? Yesterday the Lord needed John the Baptist, Andrew, Philip and so many others to do it. But today, he asks for our collaboration to:

▪ indicate: John the Baptist

shows Jesus to two of his disciples and invites them to follow him (Jn 1: 36-37). In doing so, he passes the call on to them. How could the Mennaisian Family point out Jesus to the young people who seek him today? Pope Francis asks us to join them where they are to share with them the smile and the joy of God. In a sad and discouraged world, we are invited to indicate to young people, like John the Baptist that only Jesus can fill their hearts and make them happy.



❖ How do we, Lay Mennaisians and Brothers, communicate our joy and our happiness in responding daily to our own vocation?

❖ How can we **help** young adults "*discover their own calling by inviting them to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus and offering them commitments of service*" (GC 2018, nº 19b)?

▪ witness: **Andrew and Philip** are happy to announce to Simon and Nathanael that they have met the Lord. Even today, many young people find themselves under the fig tree, in search of meaning in their life and in search (Jn 1, 48), and unwittingly wait for witnesses of Christ.

❖ Will we, Lay Mennaisians and Brothers, have the courage to go out and tell them that we have discovered the One who gives meaning and flavour to life?

❖ What could the Mennaisian Family do to promote the different vocations among young people?

❖ How "*to create opportunities so that our communities can witness in the midst of young adults to our fraternal communion, to the joy of being Mennaisians (Brothers and Laity) and to the passion for Christ who dwells in us, a contagious passion*" (CG 2018, nº 20c)?

▪ invite to come and see: Nathanael is sceptical; **Philip** invites him to come and see because nothing beats the personal approach. Of course, a vocation can be born by hearsay, but it is only consolidated by meeting and listening to the Master. And what do young people want to see? Nothing other than the beauty of serving the Lord, of giving Him all your life simply and joyfully, of living fraternity in all truth, of helping one another and of being close to the poorest.

❖ How could Lay Mennaisians and Brothers lend each other mutual support to help young people discover the beauty of a life consecrated to the service of God and of others?

❖ How could we use summer festivals, pilgrimages, sporting events, social networks, songs and videos to reach out to them and invite them to come and live peak moments with us and reflect on their own vocation?

❖ How can we keep the concern of offering young people "*spiritual experiences that enable them to feel God's freely given love and have a personal encounter with Christ*" (GC 2018, nº 7a)?

❖ How to use "*modern means of communication as indispensable tools for creating and maintaining a community of young people in discernment and accompanying them on their journey*" (CG 2018, nº 6d)?

▪ leading: **Andrew** brings Simon, his own brother, to Jesus (Jn 1: 40.42). What a wonderful pastoral ministry for vocations! Personal contact, proximity and simplicity. Young people call young people. It is this pedagogy that our last General Chapter offers us by encouraging our communities to welcome young people "*for times of sharing, conviviality and prayer, in an atmosphere of warmth and mutual kindness*" (CG 2018, nº 6b).

❖ How can we, Laity and Brothers, get close to young people?

❖ How to accompany them in their thirst to meet Jesus and their "*desire to live as Mennaisians with their own form of consecration*" (GC 2018, nº 7, last paragraph)?

Prayer for vocations



Lord Jesus, we believe that you still call today, in all contexts and across all walks of life. We believe that the Mennaisian charism, lived in the Mennaisian Family, is an always relevant gift. We believe that being a Brother is good news for the world and for the Church. Give us boldness and creativity to dare to go out, look and call disciples. Give our Congregation the vocations it needs to continue its mission in the Church and for the world.

Open our eyes, our ears, our hands and our hearts: may our Mennaisian Family everywhere offer spaces where young people feel the warmth of fraternity and friendship. May they in this way experience your tenderness, closeness, affection and mercy.

God alone in time! God in eternity!

**Brother Hervé Zamor,
Superior General**