



LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

March 2016



The Cause of John Mary de la Mennais

And now, what should we do ?

A disappointment.

Many were deeply disappointed when we learned that the case of healing of the young Enzo, after ardent prayers to Father de la Mennais, did not receive the approval that we expected from the Commission of seven doctors who examined it on the 14th January 2016. We thought, in fact, that everything had been put together for our founding father to be soon beatified. But it has not been so. We know that only two out of the seven doctors of the Commission felt that there was no scientific explanation for the cure of the young Enzo. Five of them needed to have had this opinion for the dossier to progress in view of the beatification of Jean - Marie de la Mennais. It is an abrupt and brutal end to the ongoing process.

However, it should be noted that this is the first case of healing, for us, that has reached this stage at the Congregation for the Cause of Saints in Rome. Brothers Delfin Lopez and Gil Rozas, the two Brother Postulators who successively compiled this dossier realised a huge and wonderful work. We can imagine how difficult it was, especially for them, to receive the report from the Committee of Doctors. But

they accepted it in faith, keeping intact their love and trust in "our father". They deeply wish that this decision will not detract anything from our desire of seeing, one day, Jean - Marie de la Mennais beatified and canonised . Very many thanks to them

A brief history.

It is worth to note a few dates and to remind ourselves that the introduction of the Cause of our founder did not start today:

1899: At Ploërmel, the beginning of the Diocesan Process of beatification and canonisation of Father de La Mennais.

1924: An Apostolic Decree, in Rome, confirms the reputation of holiness of John Mary de la Mennais.

1966: Pope Paul VI confirms by Decree the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, John Mary de la Mennais. This is the most important decision. The Church cannot do more to attest to the sanctity of a person. She asks, then, with confidence and prayer, that God confirms by a miracle the holiness of the one that she believes is an example to be followed by Christians. It is this recognised miracle that would then al-

low him to be proclaimed "Blessed".

The communion of saints.

After the time of disappointment, comes the one of lessons to be learned. We believe that Father de



Bro. James Hayes carries a portrait of John Mary de la Mennais during the celebration marking the 150th anniversary of the death of our founder.

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The baptismal font in the Cathedral of St-Malo, where J.-M. de la Mennais was baptised

La Mennais, as well as Father Deshayes, continues today to care for his "little Brothers" who now have another face in the bosom of the great Mennaisian Family that stretches to the five continents.

"I will spend my heaven doing good on earth" said St. Teresa of the Child Jesus. "Do not cry, I'll be more useful to you after my death and I will help you more effectively than during my life," said St. Dominic to his Brothers (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 956). Do we think that our founders did not have the same desire?

Today we are united to them, and they are united to us in the love of God and all people. So says the Vatican Council: "The union of those still on the way with their brethren who have fallen asleep in the peace of Christ does not

know the least intermittence; on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by the exchange of spiritual goods. Being in fact more closely connected with Christ, the inhabitants of heaven help strengthen the Church more firmly in holiness.

to read John Mary de la Mennais, to know and to narrate him; perceive what was the heart of his spiritual intuition; penetrate his heart and his mind to try to get into his responses and make them our own.

They continue to intercede for us before the Father ... by the one Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus. So this fraternal concern is the greatest help for our weakness "(LG 49). So we have to be close to our founders since in the Lord, they are close to us.

Narrating the life of our founders.

We do not forget Gabriel Des-

hayes whose cause is now introduced; to him also goes our devotion because we keep him as a father. They were both so united.

But, here, I will especially dwell on Father de La Mennais who was our Superior General for so many years, transmitting to us what he had received by the Holy Spirit.

Our first duty is to grasp the secret of the life of John Mary de la Mennais by reading his writings, entering his life to understand by which inner journey he tried to answer the calls of the Holy Spirit and of the world. The first Brothers have narrated it to us through their writings, their testimony, but especially by their lives. We must continue: to read, to know and to narrate it; perceive what was the heart of his spiritual intuition; penetrate his heart and his mind to try to get into his responses and make them our own. When we will have tried to do it, each for his own account, but also together, with Brothers and Sisters who find in it their proper call, we will feel united in this same charism.

To do so, we have many documents. But we must constantly continue. Indeed, we have the wonderful mission of telling John Mary de la Mennais to the young people, to pass on what we have received, to generate new actors in the service of the charism.

Following Christ in the manner of John Mary de La Mennais.

We will on the other hand feel that narrating "our father", is a way to get closer to him and through him to listen to the Spirit of Jesus speaking to us. Basically we are evangelised by telling the Gospel to the others. Following Christ in the manner of John Mary de La Mennais, means also that we can be guided by him

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There is therefore the need, in a certain manner, to be like him, to follow his pieces of advice, interpret the life of the founder as that of a model that we love and want to resemble. He shows us the way of Christ that we wish to follow with him. For us, something of Christ shows itself, somehow, in the life of our founder.

We seek to enter into his views, considering the times in which we live, of course. We want to share his spirituality, because it is part of the charism that he passed on to us. We have a way of understanding the educational mission that resembles him. For this, we nourish every day with his words

and his pieces of advice. The religious calendar, for those who are lucky to have it, offers an excellent way of doing it. The monthly novena that is proposed is also a way of putting us together to listen to him. But this is not enough. We must get to work and help others to take this same path. In many of our Provinces and Districts, formation programs have been created to support the efforts of Brothers and Laity, but also young people who wish to get into his school.

Seeking the intercession of our founders.

But, having said all that, there is still one thing lacking: the perso-

nal relationship that we must have with John Mary de la Mennais. As a father who loves us and takes care of whatever concerns us, he watches over us. "We believe that the merciful love of God and his saints always listens to our prayers" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 962). Their fraternal concern is our very great refuge.

So we need to revive our faith in this intercession. We no doubt have some examples of favours received through the prayer of our founder. In the past, we received many testimonies. Do we have this same filial devotion? Are we also convinced that he listens to our prayers and takes them to our Father in heaven? If the healing of the little Enzo in 2006, did not seem to be inexplicable to the analysis of doctors, and yet was it not a favour obtained through the intercession of our father?

We must pull ourselves together and more frequently address ourselves to John Mary de la Mennais, talk to him with simplicity, as the Brothers were talking to him when he was in their midst. Let us call upon him to intercede for us both in our everyday activities and in the exercise of our mission. Let us ask for a favour or for a cure.

Pray insistently and frequently with sick people for whom we implore for help. Let us not be contented with the monthly list received with the Novena, which despite everything remains a bit impersonal. Let us also go to meet our loved ones who are sick and propose to pray for them and with them.

Thereby, we will be, today, companions and disciples - the first Brothers would have said "children" - of John Mary de La Mennais.

Bro. Yannick Houssay, s. g.



The Chapel of the Mother House at Ploërmel