

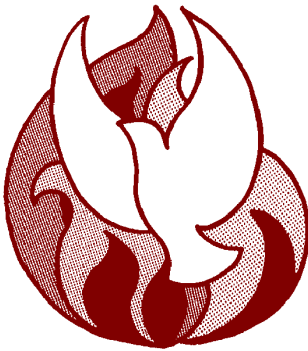
LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

January 2018
The Superior General

A new page

GENERAL CHAPTER - MARCH 2018

A Chapter, why?



In every religious Congregation, a General Chapter is the supreme collegial authority that guarantees the charism received from the founders.

It decides on important orientations concerning the life, animation, mission and organization of the Congregation. Its objective is to seek to be faithful to the signs of the times and the charism of the Institute.

In this sense, it revises the Rule of Life to which the Brothers who enter the Congregation commit themselves. It can adapt it, so that the Brothers can live their mission and vocation in fidelity to the founders, in order to be the seed of peace and the presence of Christ in the heart of the world.

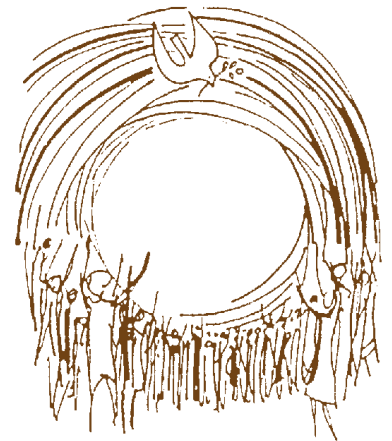
The Chapter elects the Superior General and his Council whose responsibility is to lead, accompany and serve the Institute until the following General Chapter, 6 years later.

Who will participate in the General Chapter?

43 Brothers will participate in the General Chapter. Two-thirds of them are members elected by their fellow Brothers. The other third consists of the Major Superiors (General Council, Provincials and Visitors).

The number of the elected delegates in each Province / District is decided upon according to the number of its Brothers.

For a week, the Chapter will welcome a few Lay people, members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, to reflect with the Brothers on everything related to the life and mission of the Mennaisian



An anniversary?

The next General Chapter of March 2018 will be the 27th in the history of the Institute. It will be held 50 years after the one of 1968, whose mission was to reread and rewrite the Rule of the Brothers after the Second Vatican Council that had just ended. At that time, a period of unparalleled creativity with great happiness for many, and concern for others started in the church.

It was a very important event for all Religious Congregations. For us, Brothers, a lot of work has been done. There had to be a second session in 1970 to complete the drafting of this Rule of Life. This Rule represents, for the Brothers, the expression of the Charism of the Institute, and therefore the way in which they are called to live it in faithfulness to the founders and to the Spirit. It is their own way of following Jesus in the Church.



After 1970 began a time of trying it out. It was not until 1983 that it was approved by the Holy See, we still live it to date.

How shall we prepare ourselves for it?

This General Chapter will take place in the first year of the celebration of the bicentennial of the founding of our Institute. The real moment for its celebration will be in 2019. This year, we are called to discern the calls of the Spirit, the "times", to look at the horizon to grasp what are the new pages that we must open in following the example of our founders. They themselves wrote their own page almost 200 years ago.

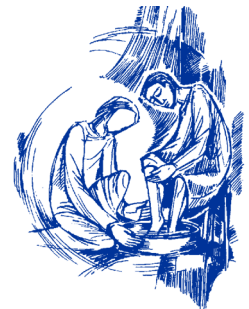
We proposed to the Brothers, Lay people, educators and young people to make a "discernment". We received their contributions before Christmas. We must now read these proposals, be permeated by them, and thus better know what is lived by the Mennaisian Family. We will then be guided by the Holy Spirit who illuminates the path of each one.

The Chapter Capitulants received all these syntheses. They will be able to study them, and continue reflecting upon them with others, Brothers and the Laity.



What will be talked about in the Chapter?

To this question, only the Chapter itself can give an answer. To the assembly of capitulants, the task of defining the priorities for the future will come again.



Here are some possible areas:

The issue of the Brother's vocation. Currently very few vocations are born in the northern hemisphere. This has to be reflected upon!

The field of the initial formation of the Brothers. To form the Brothers for the young people of today and tomorrow is an important challenge that the Chapter must study. Mennaisian Lay people also need initial formation. We must pay close attention to this issue.

The ongoing formation of the Brothers and the Laity: many proposals exist, but urgent needs are felt in certain places.

The issue of the missionary dimension: our ability to go to the poor, to leave our countries to meet other Churches, where the needs are urgent in terms of Christian education.

The types of educational work that we must focus on to meet the educational challenges of our different countries.



The issue of solidarity and financial support necessary for such missionary and educational initiatives: if the poor are sacred to us, as Jean-Marie de la Mennais said, we must find the means to reach them.

The Mennaisian Family and the identity of the Mennaisian Laity. The Laity of the International Commission will be present for a week to reflect on these issues with the Chapter Brother Capitulants.

And now, what can we do?

The Brother Capitulants and the invited Lay people have already had the opportunity to reflect and prepare for this event. They come to the Chapter with, in their hearts and minds, expectations that can sometimes be important. Then they will come to the Chapter with ears to listen, a heart to learn and to fraternize with those who share the same goal but who live in different situations and cultures.



However, many Brothers and Lay people will not have the chance to participate directly in this event.

What can they do to contribute?

I am thinking of three words that can express, a little bit, what can be done: Inquire, Share and Pray.

I therefore encourage you to go to meet the Brothers or Lay people who will participate in the Chapter. Inquire from them, share your dreams and your suggestions. And pray with them so that the Holy Spirit may guide us.

PRAYER - Lord Jesus, 200 years ago, John-Mary de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes saw the distress of children and of young people, « who were like sheep without a shepherd »... Enlighten us and let us hear the cry of those who are still waiting for pastors with a generous heart... Give us strength, with the conviction that you always guide and sustain with love the workers of your kingdom. Grant to all members of the Mennaisian family to rely on your mercy, in the unity of a same family and the joy of writing a new page for the mission. « God alone in time! God alone in eternity ! »