



***Mennaisian
Novena
N°.23***

**.Prayer for the beatification of
Jean-Marie de la Mennais**

**O God our Father, you have given
Jean-Marie de la Mennais,
a generous heart and untiring zeal
to make your Son Jesus Christ and his Gospel
known especially to children and youth.**

**As we venerate him as the Founder
of two religious congregations
devoted to Christian education,
we pray to you that he may soon
be recognized blessed.**

**Help us follow his example
at the service of truth,
and grant us through his intercession,
the favours we are now asking...**

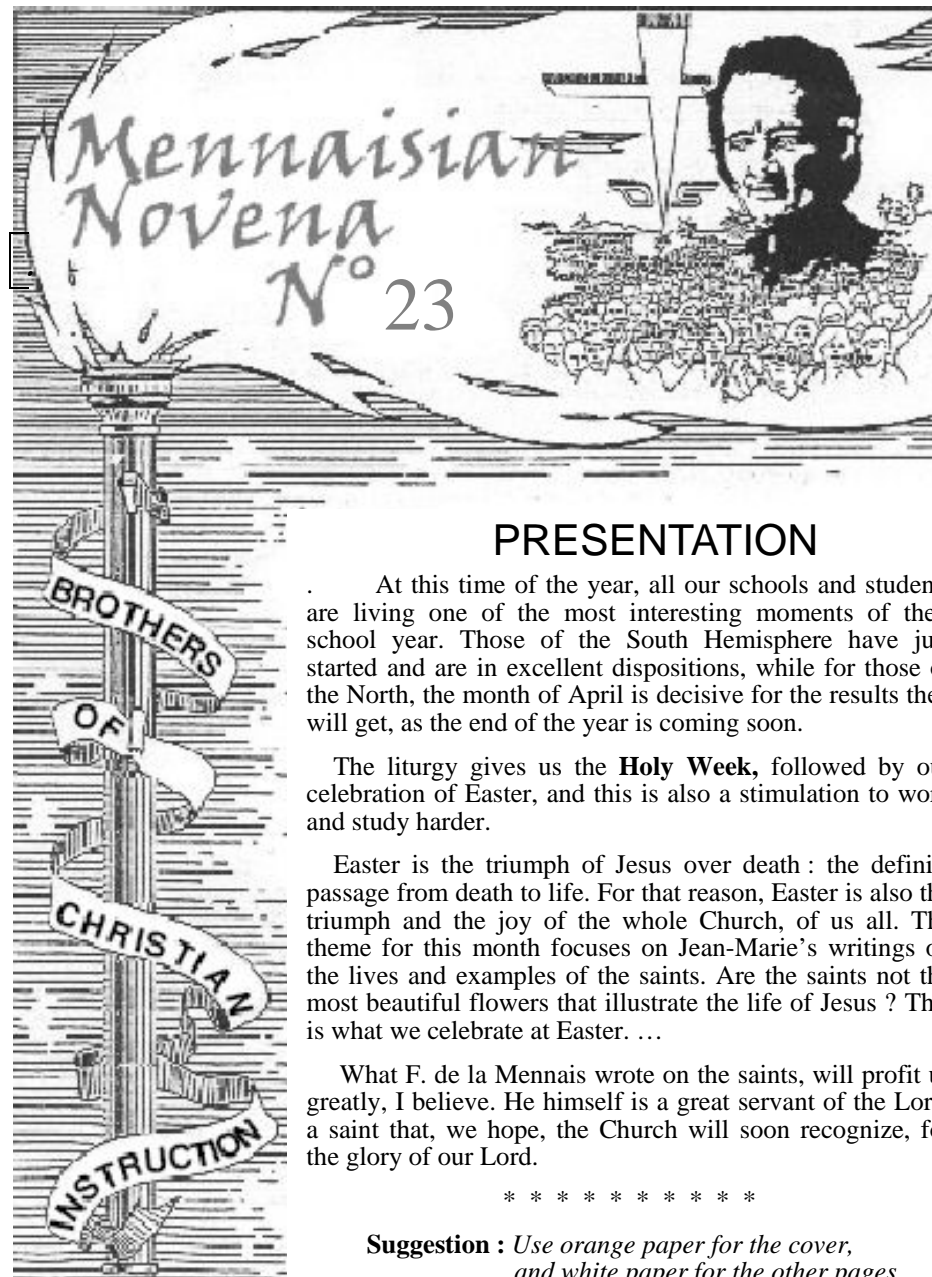
(silent pause)

Through Jesus-Christ our Lord

**O Lord Jesus, glorify your servant,
Venerable Jean-Marie de la Mennais**

"MENNAISIAN NOVENA" N°.23 – ROMA – 1.IV.2009

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PRESENTATION

At this time of the year, all our schools and students are living one of the most interesting moments of their school year. Those of the South Hemisphere have just started and are in excellent dispositions, while for those of the North, the month of April is decisive for the results they will get, as the end of the year is coming soon.

The liturgy gives us the **Holy Week**, followed by our celebration of Easter, and this is also a stimulation to work and study harder.

Easter is the triumph of Jesus over death : the definite passage from death to life. For that reason, Easter is also the triumph and the joy of the whole Church, of us all. The theme for this month focuses on Jean-Marie's writings on the lives and examples of the saints. Are the saints not the most beautiful flowers that illustrate the life of Jesus ? This is what we celebrate at Easter. ...

What F. de la Mennais wrote on the saints, will profit us greatly, I believe. He himself is a great servant of the Lord, a saint that, we hope, the Church will soon recognize, for the glory of our Lord.

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Suggestion : *Use orange paper for the cover,
and white paper for the other pages.*

Rome, April 1, 2009
Br. Delfín López, Postulator

Novena to Jean-Marie : How to do it ?

A remark : It is important to put ourselves in the proper spirit and enter into the suggested theme, as explained on p.1 of this leaflet: the meaning of the theme and how it was reflected in the life, words and actions of Jean-Marie.

This is only a suggestion. There are other ways to make the novena: For example :

Steps :

- a) We start with the sign of the Cross
- b) We mention our prayer intentions (p. 8)
- c) We read the 2 daily quotations of J.M. (p. 4 - 5).
- d) We recite the prayer for his beatification (back cover)
- e) We end with the sign of the Cross.

This method is simple, and can last from 3 minutes to... 15 minutes, if we want !

We can also use profitably the suggested reflection on p. 8, reflecting upon one specific question every day, and then choose one to reflect in group and share with others.

The other texts in the leaflet are put there to help you know better our Founder, the Brothers, the FIC history, etc.

IMPORTANT !

Here is the monthly Novena sent to you.

...Read it ! Pray with it !

Many people are eager to make this novena with you ! ... do not forget it : print it and give copies to others : 1, 5, 20, 50, 100 ?...



Reflecting upon Our 150th Anniversary...

The year 2010 will mark the 150th anniversary of the death of Jean Marie de la Mennais, at Ploërmel, on December 26 1860. He was buried at the Motherhouse. A beautiful bronze statue at the entrance of the community reminds us of it.

Many other places throughout the world have beautiful works of art which remind us of our dear Founder. But some other places do not have anything particular... the coming celebration in 2010 should be the occasion to address this omission.

Here at the General House in Rome, we have since last month a new significant monument at the memory of Jean de la Mennais. It is a statue where we see F. de la Mennais surrounded by :

- **A boy : African**, holding a football in his hand and looking at the Father ;
- **A girl**, having her hands on the little child, with much sympathy
- **A small child**, the most prominent in the group, maybe an Italian boy, pulling on Father's cassock as if he wants to wear it, and proud of having Father's hat on his head. No doubt the artist intended to recall some anecdotes in the life of Jean-Marie. ... Indeed, when Father was visiting the schools, he liked to put his hat on children's head and say, "You, you shall become a priest or a brother." It seemed that his wish was often realized.

This is a very delicate, striking, « active » sculpture, and very sympathetic. It is not very big : only 70 cm high. It was put just at the entrance of the General House. It is the work of an Italian artist, **Cesare Pajela**, former student of our school of Sant Ivo. I would like to add that the promotor of this sculpture has received many ongratulations from the brothers, in particular those of our Superior General, Br. Yannick Houssay.



THE GENERAL CONFERENCE



* **What is it ?** It is the reunion of all Major Superiors of the Congregation, a consultative meeting. Rather than taking decisions, it aims at strengthen the bonds between the various parts of the congregation and reaffirm its unity.

* **Who are the participants ?** The 4 General Council members, plus the Provincials and Vice-Provincials, for a total of 20 people.

* **Place and date ?** They gathered at Kisubi, Uganda, on the African Continent, from March 18

to April 1st. Uganda is a mennaisian Province in full growth : founded in 1926, the Province counts now more than 150 brothers, all Ugandans.

* **Kisubi ?** Kisubi is a small town located near the Capital and other major towns, which is very symbolic for us. Some years ago, the Vatican Newspaper, "l'Osservatore Romano" wrote that "St. Mary's is the best study center at secondary level in all of East Africa." Today the whole campus holds five institutions, including a university, and welcomes more than a thousand students from all over the country. Many of them are boarders.

* **What are the main topics on the agenda ?** The last General Chapter specifies that the General Conference aims at "intensifying the communion around the charism and the identity of the Brothers, in an international context and the diversity within the congregation. "

* **In what spirit do they gather for the Conference ?** To quote Fr. de la Mennais, "with an increased zeal and in a spirit of faith". The major Superiors during the session will endeavour to discern the signs of the Spirit and find ways to respond properly.

* **Who are involved in that ?** First of all, of course, the mennaisian brothers themselves, but also all the people who in one way or another belong to the large Mennaisien Family. To all of them, Br. Yannick Houssay, superior general, has asked to pray for the success of this gathering so important for all. Here is the prayer that was suggested in preparation to the General Conference :

*" Father, our hope is in you. Come to our help to save us.
Tell us how we can today make you known to the youth and adults. Help us to discern properly the signs of the present times.
Teach us the way to become mennaisian brothers and laity, full of hope and radiating with joy.
Mary, through your prayer and assistance, help us to welcome the inner light of the Spirit in our lives. Be our supporter, and teach us at your example to "increase our zeal in a spirit of faith." Amen.*

To pray... with Jean-Marie de la Mennais

For a better service to the Mennasian Community, we have decided to insert our monthly publication in the mennaisian blog. Br. Louis Balanant, former director of our "Chronicles" has informed you of that move in a previous letter, under the title of "To pray nine days with Jean-Marie de la Mennais"... Genius ideal !

I indeed, this is what we do every month : reading his thoughts daily, we put ourselves in direct contact with his vision, and we ask for the graces we need, and we implore the Lord through his intercession.. In fact we are praying with him, with Jean Marie de la Mennais : is it not something marvellous. ?

That reminds me of a book, or rather a small 130-page publication which had about the same title except for the number of days : "To pray 15 days with Jean Marie de la Mennais", written by Br. Yvon Deniaud who is presently missionary to Tahiti (French Polynesia). Br. Yvon is also one of our official translators.

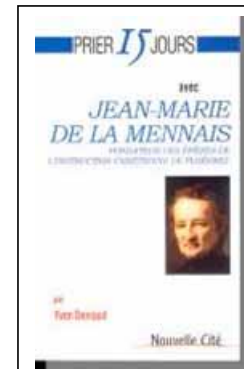
That book expresses clearly his mennaisian sensibility and life ; he wrote the book after having read and digested thousands of pages of the Founder's writings : letters, sermons, etc. In that book we can find the most meaningful themes of Jean-Marie's spirituality, wellplained, and each theme ends with a short prayer. All the work has been done on the basis of Jean-Marie's own words.

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At present, we have only a French version. We hope that once we have overcome some practical difficulties, the book will be published also in English and Spanish

... It is a real pearl... for all mennaisians and even for all Christians. It can become a "prayer book" to sustain our meditation and our prayer to the Lord and to the Blessed Mother. before we retire for the night.

Br. Postulator



To be a “ SAINT” : Utopia ? Ideal?

Who were the saints for

JEAN MARIE DE LA MENNAIS?

One of them: ST VINCENT DE PAUL

ON the occasion of our celebration of Easter, we have chosen for our reflexion during the month of April, the theme of Saints, or rather one of them, **St Vincent de Paul**. Why?

- He was very much admired by our Venerable Founder : Jean-Marie saw in him the realisation of all the ideals that he himself was holding in his heart, that he was pursuing and to which he dedicated his life : the care of the most needy, the young, the small... **out of love for Jesus**.
- *We will read his words with pleasure. Here we will present a text that is inspired by the Gospel's scene of the Last Judgement. At that Judgement, the poor of all kinds are present... those whom St Vincent de Paul helped on earth. They turn towards their benefactor and express their gratitude. .*
- However we must realize that nothing was so easy for St. Vincent : he had to face much rejection, incomprehension, and even calumny. This is indeed the price to pay for holiness.
- In spite of that, says Jean-Marie, **holiness is possible**, is reachable, and with the help of the Lord, it becomes even easy ! Father de la Mennais proposes St Vincent as a model of fidelity amid difficulties.
- There were also many other saints whom Jean-Marie admired much : St Francis of Sales, St Ignatius, St Francis Xavier, St John-Baptist de la Salle and St Teresa of Jesus. And others... They might be the subject of our reflexion at another time.

To conclude, here is a meaningful and demanding thought of Jean-Marie for each one of us, the brothers : **Let us become saints !**

“I can become a saint only as so much as I will imitate Jesus Christ and put into practice the truths he has taught and the virtues of which he was the perfect example.”

* **The music teacher, Silvina Caruso, adds :**

“The case was more and more hopeless. The medical tests were not without serious risks, and the results were negative. We had only hope to sustain us in our prayers..” - The teachers would gather for a short prayer to Jean-Marie as soon as they arrived at school or left in the afternoon. Our prayers were fervent.

* **Enzo's own teacher gives this moving witnessing :**

“...Before supper, we had a time for prayer every day. We prayed to Jean-Marie because of his great love for children, and Enzo is one of his children. Many families joined us in our prayer, initiating a chain of prayer starting at 19hrs, after the prayers the children had done at school during the day. That chain of prayer became more and more popular..

Time passed and Enzo's health did not improve. I was beginning doubting in the power of our prayers. One day I went to the chapel, full of anxiety, and asked F. de la Mennais to give us a sign. I knelt before the altar and prayed : « John-Mary, you who loved children so much, bring healing to your boy Enzo. ’

On Holy Thursday, I got the answer I was hoping for : upon leaving hospital, I met the doctor who told me : “We have done everything we could scientifically speaking. Now it is up to God to save him”, These words stimulated me and I re-started praying the Lord through the intercession of Jean-Marie.

I draw your attention to the doctor's words : « It is up to God now ». The doctor himself had no more hope for Enzo's recovery. He considered that sickness as irreversible. ”

* **View point of the Primary School Director, Mrs. Claudia M. García :**

“ Our whole school community joined together for a daily prayer, to pray the Lord for the recovery of Enzo, through the intercession of F. de la Mennais. So far the medical diagnoses are very negative.

* **The witnessing of Br. Alfredo Lazaroni, then director general of Enzo's school :** *« Many sectors of the school started fervent prayers, at the beginning of classes, or at the time of religious activities... praying for Enzo's healing through the intercession of F. de la Mennais.*

The walls of Enzo's hospital room were all covered with his companions' messages de hope, with prayers, photos, and pictures of F. de la Mennais.

For our school community, this was a clar sign that the Lord would listen to our prayers. What may look impossible may become a reality in our eyes, but for that, we have to wait for the Lord's own time. ”

* **And Enzo's parents ?** – His mother said simply : « Let us pray and hope. All in the family, small and tall, joined in prayer. Enzo woke up on Easter Sunday. Everybody was surprised, even the doctors !



FAVOR ATTRIBUTED TO JEAN-MARIE

The healing of a child ENZO CAROLLO

While completing what has already been said in no. 22 of the Novena, I must add some details on another aspect of the healing, what we can call, the « theological aspect », which is, the extraordinary intervention of the Lord through the intercession of F. de la Mennais, the numerous witnesses who speak with conviction, eloquence and sincerity. This is a true problem to be able to

discern which one to choose.

- **Here are some words from br. Claudio, pastoral director :**

« A student of our institution was suffering from a very serious illness. The doctors admitted being incapable of helping him.

The whole community started praying for Enzo's health. The brothers started a novena to Jean-Marie for his recovery. The students of all levels at school, from Nursery, Primary to Secondary levels, joined the Brothers and the teachers in their prayers. A Mass was celebrated at Enzo's intentions. Enzo's family also was praying with much faith and hope." A teacher Patricia de Ruvo also mentions : "We initiated a chain of prayers to F. de la Mennais, so that he may intercede with the Lord on our behalf."

- **Br. Alfredo Perea, also working in school pastoral work, added :**

"I remember a particular moment of prayer with my group of young boys : we were praying as we do every Friday, and at the end of prayer, I asked the boys to sit on the stairway outside, and I told them about Enzo's situation. I could feel their interest in prayer for Enzo's recovery. We started praying again, at the intention of Enzo, through the intercession of F. de la Mennais.

At another moment, we organized a « living » Way of the Cross, also for Enzo's recovery, through the intercession of F. de la Mennais. "

- * **A religion teacher, María Pía, shares her experience :**

"I belong to the same school community as Br. Alfredo Perea. I remember his insistence at recommending us to ask divine favours through the intercession of F. de la Mennais. Each time we needed something, he would urge us to pray, asking for our student Enzo's recovery."

For our reflexion

...It is suggested that you read the thoughts inspired by F. de la Mennais before answering the following questions.

1. According to Jean-Marie de la Mennais, what are the criteria to discern if a person is really a holy person ?
2. Could we use these same criteria and apply them to F. de la Mennais ? To your opinion, was he also a saint ? and why ?
3. Have you ever met or known a person who was for you a real saint ? Why do you consider that person a saint ?
4. If you share this reflection in a group, I suggest that you focus on Jean-Marie's thoughts from April 20 to 23. What do they tell you ?
5. Quote a sentence or mention an event that shows the identification of St Vincent de Paul with Christ.

RECOMMENDED INTENTIONS

* That our lives be centered on Jesus, and that with the power of the Spirit, we attain that holiness which is expected from each one of us, in our own state of life.

* For those young persons who feel called by God to follow Jesus Christ, as Brothers of Christian Instruction.

* For the sick recommended to our prayers:

- Julián Castro, 4 yrs: congenital illness (Luján de Cuyo-Arg.)
- Mr. Godin, at the request of Br. Albert Côté(Canada)
- Walter Sayavedra, who disappeared 9 years ago (Córdoba-Argentina)
- Teihotu TAMARII, student in Tahiti.
- Daniel Pérez, seriously ill (Buenos Aires- Argentine).
- Dominique BLIN, nephew of Br. Michel (France).
- Mora Bernard, leukemia; pupil of C.C.C. (Buenos Aires)
- Sofía Cuevas: serious pancreatic problems, etc. (V.G.G.- Arg.)
- Michele Forino, with a blood disorder (Castelgandolfo-Italie)
- Natalia Cubillo (Madrid – Spain)
- Agustín Martín (Buenos Aires -. Argentina)

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Add your local intentions.....

JEAN MARIE DE LA MENNAIS
Shows us the examples of the SAINTS
Here are his words.



✘ **April 18**

* The life of St Vincent de Paul is a series of marvels, and we never tire of admiration for all the services that one man could achieve for the good of others, and becoming for the poor, like a second Providence.

. – *Today also we reap the harvest of his works and of his zeal, because we are benefiting from the institutions he has founded : **he passed while doing good.***

✘ **April 19**

* Who indeed performed greater things than St Vincent de Paul ? However the greatest desire of this saint, what was it ? It was simply to live ignored, to die at the foot of a small tree, while teaching to a small child or to a poor person...

- *What a beautiful example for us, because it tells us to remain cautious about what we might have achieved so far, and beware of our imagination and of our dreams, and to judge everything in the light of our faith.*

✘ **April 20**

* Let us reflect, brothers, upon another example, that of St. Vincent de Paul. Who are you ? asks again the Lord ? – A voice replies : I am an orphan and he has welcomed me.

- *Another voice says : I was alone, with no one to help or defend me, and he became my help and protector. I was a poor widow, rejected by the world, and he consoled, helped and protected me.*

✘ **April 21**

* Another voice cried : I was burdened by age, miseries, infirmities, and he came to me like an angel from heaven to visit me.

- *He has clothed me, warmed my painful limbs, and I could rest with less pain than before.*

✘ **April 22**

* *Then from everywhere, we could hear a concert of voices rising up : we were hungry and he gave us something to eat, thirsty and he gave us something to drink.*

- *He was our consoler, our benefactor, our father. O Lord, be also his !*

✘ **April 23**

* Yes, I shall be his father, said the Lord, and he shall be my child, eternally my child, because I am the one who welcomed him, saved him, visited, protected and nourished him.

- ***Come to me, beloved of my Father, come and take possession of the Kingdom which has been prepared for you since the beginning of the world.***

✘ **April 24**

* How difficult it is to do good without provoking malice, especially in these days when hatred, jealousy, and partisanship confuse everything, criticize everyone, and turn to evil anything good that is done outside themselves.

- *If ever your talents and successes put you above the ordinary, you must then expect malicious attacks.*

✘ **April 25**

* **But it is mostly to the most virtuous and generous hearts** that the envious, like some insects attacking only the most beautiful flowers, will direct in shadow their most lethal blows.

- *This is what happened to St Francis of Sales, St Vincent de Paul and the virtuous Boudon. **Persecution is the lot of the greatest souls.***

✘ **April 26**

* Never believe that God is asking from you something beyond your capacities. A crowd of witnesses would rise against you...

- *And they would tell you that the graces and examples of Jesus Christ are powerful enough to sustain us beyond the sufferings of our present life. "It is when I am weak that I am strong and full of joy", said St Paul.*