

# 3 - PRESENT AMONG THE YOUTH IN THE MANNER OF JESUS



*My dear children whom Jesus our Saviour loved so much that He embraced and blessed them? Come to us, stay with us, we will be the guardian angels of your innocence. (S, VII p. 2271)*

## **OUR MISSION : BEING AMONG THEM.**

We recognise the need to renew, in **creative fidelity** to the Charism of the congregation, our forms of presence among young people, so that we might better respond to their needs **in the manner of Jesus:**

- he welcomes children unconditionally (cf. Lk 18:15-17)
- he seeks out those in most need, healing the broken and bringing outcasts back into communion (cf. Mt 18:12-14)
- he listens to the stories of his disciples (cf. Lk 24:13-35)
- he teaches using parables relevant to the culture of his time (cf. Lk 10:25-37)
- he takes the initiative in calling others to join him in his ministry (cf. Mk 1:16-20 and Jn 1:38-39)
- he affirms them in love, challenges them to go beyond their comfort zones and sends them out on mission (cf. Mk 10:20-21, Jn 4:3-42).

Underpinning these attitudes of Jesus is the double commandment of love, love of God and love of neighbour, which is at the heart of our lives as Brothers: **"I in them and you in me - that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me"** (Jn 17: 20-23).

Within the Mennaisian Family, as baptised members of the Church, we form a **"community of "the called" whose task it is to call others"**<sup>1</sup>. Our communion through, with and in Christ provides the source and dynamism of our mission to bring him to others, young people especially.

May this communion be a prophetic sign of the Kingdom, showing that it is possible to live in true fraternity as we journey towards full communion in God.

## **CHALLENGES AND ACTION PLAN:**

### **BEING SENT TO BRING JESUS TO YOUNG PEOPLE ...**

#### **We recognise:**

- 11** a) *the need to listen as communities and individuals to **the voices of the youth**, in the light of the Gospel and our Founder, guided by the Spirit, to discern how to reach out to young people in response to their deepest needs.*

Use this process of discernment to give our personal and community projects fresh vitality and meaning, renewing our commitment to be Christ among them.

- b) *that the Brothers - as individuals and as communities - **need to be a welcoming, healing presence among young people**, wherever they are, just as they are, marked by their own culture.*

Open our hearts and our communities to young people as much as possible, in loving welcome, thus becoming more accessible and available.

<sup>1</sup> The mission statement of the National Office for Vocation in England and Wales, taking its inspiration from the 1997 Church document entitled 'New Vocations for a New Europe, (In Verbo Tuo).

c) *the need to provide a **visible witness** to the fraternal love that unites us as Brothers.*

Transform our communities into places of fraternal love and warmth as beacons of communion, so that we might be truly present to each other as a prophetic sign of the Kingdom

Find practical ways of bearing witness to this communion in our educational centres and beyond, showing to others that it is possible to live in true fraternity.

d) *that in certain parts of the world **outward signs of belonging** have become important for many young people.*

Request that the General Council chooses a symbol that signifies our identity and can be integrated into logos, web site designs, clothing, etc... and also a fresh, new logo that would be common to the whole Mennaisian family.

Reflect more deeply on the Gospel witness we give – as individuals and communities - to our identity as Brothers.

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a) *the need for Brothers and Lay colleagues **to develop deeper insight into the culture of today's youth**, enabling us to find fresh ways to minister to them, both in our schools and elsewhere, so that the message we wish to share becomes more understandable and appealing.*

See youth culture "as Christ sees (it), with unconditional, non-judgmental love" (D. 129), finding in it what is positive and relating to young people through common areas of interest.

b) *that young people throughout the world inhabit the "digital continent"<sup>2</sup> to an ever greater extent.*

Educate young people to use modern forms of communication in a positive, respectful way that builds up community, whilst recognising that face-to-face human relations should be the priority (cf. D. 72, 121).

Develop the use of digital communication as a means of reaching out to young people in ways that challenge, stimulate and evangelize them.

## ...WALKING WITH THEM ...

### We recognise

*that we, as Brothers and communities in the Mennaisian family, are called to walk with young people on a shared journey of growth, revealing Christ to each other and empowering each other to become agents of our own destiny.*

Create spaces for dialogue in our communities and with the youth where we can share our stories, values and experiences in an atmosphere of trust, respect and compassion, finding the presence of Christ in each other's lives and drawing us into deeper communion.

Provide young people with opportunities for spiritual growth that enable them to discover their true identity in the image of Christ and find meaning in their lives.

Collaborate with young people and lay colleagues in finding new ways of presenting the Gospel message using music, video, social media, drama, etc..., empowering young people to create their own parables for today.

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*the challenge posed by the increasing number of **Brothers without direct apostolic contact with young people** because of their age, health or administrative responsibilities.*

Assist and encourage all the Brothers, irrespective of their age or professional context, to find appropriate ways of being present to young people and thus participate in the mission of their own community and the Congregation, in a spirit of love and communion (cf. D. 4).

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI called priests, religious and young people to evangelize the "digital continent" (43rd World Communications Day - May 24, 2009).

**15** *the need to develop communion between young people throughout the Mennaisian family, **breaking down the barriers of race and culture and furthering solidarity.***

Create a worldwide Mennaisian youth association to unite the different groups and movements already in existence and thus enrich our global communion within the Mennaisian family.

Encourage young people of all ages to participate in fund-raising, solidarity projects, educational volunteer work, etc., at home and abroad, giving them the opportunity to minister to those in most need.

**16** *that we must minister effectively to the needs of the most challenging young people in terms of disruptive and aggressive behaviour, physical handicap, emotional and psychological needs, etc.; those young people who risk becoming "outcasts" from our traditional educational programmes, **the "lost sheep" of the Gospel** (Mt 18:12-14).*

Develop in our educational communities a policy of inclusion that enables the growth and development of each young person, in particular those with special educational needs.

**17** *that "**God wants every child to be happy and to smile**, and (that) his favour rests upon them, 'for to such belongs the kingdom of God' (Mk 10:14)"<sup>3</sup>.*

Urge the whole Mennaisian family to "deplore and forcefully denounce the intolerable treatment to which so many children are subjected"<sup>4</sup> throughout the world, to provide the necessary structures in defense of their basic rights and/or to make use of existing ones.

Ask the General Council to ensure that the guidelines relating to child safeguarding provided by local dioceses and local or national civil authorities are followed. In situations where such guidelines are absent it is up to the sector to formulate their own policy document.

Encourage each Brother to maintain healthy, prudent relationships at all times, whilst still offering to others "the resources of his unfettered heart" (D. 39).

## ... CALLING AND SENDING THEM.

### We recognise

**18** *that **pastoral youth ministry is, in essence, vocational** and that God needs us, "the called", to communicate his call to others.*

Renew our efforts in creating a vocation culture<sup>5</sup> where each person recognises their own specific calling from God.

Empower suitable Brothers and Lay people with the necessary skills to engage in the personal spiritual accompaniment of young people, helping each youth to discern their own calling.

Take practical action through catechesis, "vocation days", student retreats, etc. to help young people and lay colleagues understand what is meant by the words 'vocation' and 'calling'.

Encourage all Brothers and communities to participate in vocations ministry, through prayer and any other ways that are appropriate to their situation, offering direct support to those who are given an apostolate in this area.

<sup>3</sup> 'Africae Munus', no. 67, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> The 2006 Chapter document provides us with a template for vocations ministry which is still relevant today; for example, by encouraging Provinces to "create a vocation culture" (p. 24) and to "develop with creativity and audacity whatever will allow the young to experience our lifestyle in all its dimensions" (p. 25), daring "to leave the beaten path" (p.24).

**19** *that many young adults (c. 18-30 years) have an unanswered yearning to belong, desire to grow in their faith and seek opportunities to help those in need.*

Create new communities wherever possible for Brothers and young adults to live together and share a common project, offering new forms of commitment, and seek other forms of direct ministry to this age group.

**20** *the need to bring new dynamism and vitality to our Mennaisian vocations ministry, and that the majority of the young people who are considering the religious life or Lay associate status as a way of responding to God's call are in the 18-30 age bracket.*

Ensure that each sector of the congregation has a Brother, Lay person or team of people in charge of vocations work, provide them with appropriate formation and encourage them to seek opportunities to collaborate with vocations directors from dioceses and/or other congregations.

Dare to challenge both young people and older lay adults to consider a specific vocation to the Brotherhood, or to the vocation of Lay associate in the Mennaisian family.

Bear witness to young people - as individual Brothers and as communities - that religious life as a Mennaisian Brother is a path to joy and fulfillment and gives our lives meaning.

**21** *that as Brothers and Lay Mennaisians we have been sent to bring Christ to young people and must in turn send them out to evangelize.*

Empower young people with the skills and training required for leadership in our schools and youth movements, so as to promote evangelization of young people, by young people.

Invite more young adults interested in developing media and communication skills in the service of the New Evangelization to take up training placements with local or international media corporations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Building on the work begun by the Commission for Information and Communication.