

TOWARDS THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2012

PRESENTATION
and
ELECTION
of DELEGATES



BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION
Bro Yannick HOUSSAY, S.G.
March 2011 Circular n°305



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Brothers,

The 2012 General Chapter will be held at the Mother House in Ploërmel (France) from March 1st to March 25th, 2012.

The choice of Ploërmel intends to demonstrate our desire to go back to the source of our Charism, to immerse ourselves into its living waters and to find therein a new thrust for our mission which consists in evangelising through education.

There, also, will the celebrations of the death of John Mary de la Mennais reach their high point. This Chapter in Ploërmel will remind us of those years when our Brothers, gathered around John Mary de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, loved to come together for a renewal of their vital energies.

At a time when we need to celebrate our communion at the service of evangelising children and young people, should not Ploërmel indeed be our appointed meeting place? Having gathered around our Founders, we shall be united and we shall be strong. Thanks to the Spirit of God, we shall again find the star that will guide our way of life through fidelity to our vocation.

In Ploërmel, where our Founders invite us, we shall experience the strong bonds that unite us together in Christ. Through their intercession, this Chapter will be a time of rebirth, a new sending out to the children of the whole world who “ask for the bread of instruction”.

The circular letter which you receive today invites you to set off towards that eventful occasion which will broaden our hearts to the dimensions of the Congregation as a whole. After I have presented the composition of the General Chapter and the

process for electing the delegates, I shall say a few words about how we foresee its preparation.

As of now, I invite you to enter into this process with a heart that is open to the creative force of the Spirit and with a renewed faith in His living and transforming presence at the heart of our consecration.

- I -

COMPOSITION OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Ex-officio members (C 165)

The ex-officio members of the General Chapter are:

- the Superior General and the assistants
- the Superior General during the six years following the end of his generalate
- the Provincials

The elected members (D 172)

The elected members must be perpetually professed. Their number is equal to at least three halves ($3/2$) of the ex-officio members.

Members without voting rights (D 172)

The Secretary General, the Treasurer General and the Procurator General participate in the deliberations of the Chapter without voting rights in the general assembly.

The number of members to the Chapter

The Chapter must have at least 40 members with voting rights (2000 General Chapter decision). These 40 members include the four (4) members of the General Council and the

former Superior General. At least 35 members thereafter have to be shared among the administrative units. In that case, the **capitular quantum**, that is the number of Brothers which determines the number of delegates per administrative unit, is obtained by dividing the total number of Brothers by 35. **The quantum is therefore fixed at 25.**

To determine the number of delegates from each Province and Vice-Province, the number of Brothers is divided by the quantum, using the whole number nearest the remainder of the division.

A few specific cases

The two Provinces of the USA and of Argentina-Uruguay have no delegate to elect. They must, however, elect a substitute who would go to the Chapter if, for reasons of the greatest importance, the Provincial as ex-officio member, could not attend.

Furthermore, the 2006 Chapter stipulates that “for autonomous administrative units the size of which is below the quantum, the Superior General and his Council will advise of the steps to be taken after consultation with major Superiors”. The General Council, after consultation with major Superiors, has decided as follows:

- Out of the three elected delegates from the Province of Spain, one (1) is reserved for the communities of Chile-Bolivia.
- The Brothers of Indonesia will elect one Brother among themselves as delegate to the Chapter. He will not have voting rights.
- The Brother responsible for the On-going Formation Team will participate in the Chapter without voting rights.

The following table shows the distribution of the participants to the Chapter.

PROVINCES AND VICE-PROVINCES	NUMBER OF BROTHERS	NUMBER OF DELEGATES	MEMBERS	
			EX-OFFICIO	TO ELECT
Argentina-Uruguay	19	1	1	0
Canada	143	6	1	5
Japan-Philippines	13	1	0	1
Central Africa	38	2	0	2
Spain	96	4	1	3
United States	23	1	1	0
France-Engl.-Ital.	228	9	1	8
West Africa	41	2	0	2
Tahiti	19	1	0	1
Haïti	47	2	1	1
Uganda	143	6	1	5
Kenya-Tanzania	39	2	1	1
Indonesia	5	1	0	1
TOTAL	854	38	8	30

Without voting rights.

To these are added the four (4) members of the General Council, the former Superior General as well as, without voting rights, the Treasurer General, the Secretary General, the Brother responsible for the On-going Formation Team.

It follows that the Chapter comprises **46 members**, of whom **42 with voting rights**.

- II -

STEPS TOWARDS THE 2012 CHAPTER

1 st March 2011	Establishing the number of Brothers in the Congregation, one year before the opening of the Chapter as indicated in the Chapter Book.
31 st March 2011	Deadline for sending, by Internet, the circular letter launching the election process to the Chapter. The circular letter is sent by mail on that same date.
17 April 2011	17 April 2011 Palm Sunday – Celebrating the start of the preparation to the Chapter and launching the election of the delegates to the Chapter. 1st Step in the Preparation to the Chapter for Communities and Lay Mennaisians.
1er juin 2011	Deadline for sending to the Secretary General the minutes of the election of delegates to the General Chapter.
August 2011	Personal convocation of each participant to the Chapter.
October 2011	2nd Step in the Preparation to the Chapter

1st – 25th March 2012 in PLOËRMEL
26th GENERAL CHAPTER

ELECTION OF DELEGATES

1. A Few Preliminary Remarks

The Chapter Book stipulates that consultations among Brothers are allowed but that all should abstain from campaigning for or against anyone (C.B. n° 12). This is an important recommendation: participants in the Chapter do not attend the Chapter to defend the interests of a Province or of a group of persons, but to participate in the deliberations of the Chapter. Each participant, in fact, participates in the name of all the Brothers of the Congregation and not only on behalf of his Province or Vice-Province.

One is reminded as well that each Brother casts his vote in only one administrative unit. Here are a few examples:

- Brothers who belong to a Vice-Province vote for the delegate(s) of the Vice-Province, not for the delegate(s) of the Province.
- Likewise, if a Brother from a Province resides in a community of another Province, he votes for the delegate(s) of the Province to which he belongs, not for those of the other Province.
- Lastly, if a mission sector of a Province has a number of Brothers greater than half the Chapter quantum, the mission sector is entitled to one of the Province's delegates. In such a case, the Brothers of that sector are the only ones to vote for the delegate. On the other hand, they do not participate in the choice of the other delegates of the Province. (D 174)

2. Methods of Election

All perpetually professed Brothers have the right to vote for delegates. Likewise, in keeping with practice in various Provinces, **all Brothers with temporary vows** have the right to vote for delegates (Cf D 175).

The Secretary General establishes the list of eligible Brothers in each administrative unit together with the number of delegates to vote for.

3. Two Rounds of Voting

We shall adopt the recommendations of the Chapter Book which apply to all the administrative units of the Congregation. I therefore invite the major Superiors to see to their careful implementation so that the election process and hence, the Chapter itself, may run smoothly.

As stated in the Chapter Book, the election consists of two rounds (C.B. n° 15). The Brothers who have obtained at least the absolute majority of valid votes, and up to the number of delegates to be elected, will be declared elected after the first round. In the second round, the relative majority suffices. Those who obtain the most votes after the delegates have been elected are designated as substitutes.

4. Organisation of the First Round of Voting

Voting time (C.B. n° 13)

- After this circular has been read, and at least three days before voting is held, the Superior of each community gives each Brother of the community the list of eligible Brothers in the Province, Vice-Province or mission sector.
- On the appointed day and at the time fixed for the election, the Brothers of the community come together.

They invoke the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary and the Founders.

- After having cast his ballot, each voter places his ballot paper in a white envelope on which nothing has been written.
- He then places his envelope into an envelope provided by the Superior. All voters append their signature on that common envelope.
- That envelope is sealed by the Superior of the community in the presence of all the Brothers.
- The envelope is then placed in another envelope to be sent to the Provincial or the Vice-Provincial.

Counting of Votes

The Provincial or Vice-Provincial keeps the envelopes containing the ballots, without opening them, until the appointed time for counting the ballots. He appoints a commission of four Brothers who, under his chairmanship, on the appointed day, designate among themselves two tellers / scrutineers and two secretaries who then proceed to count the votes.

Minutes of the First Round

The Provincial or Vice-Provincial writes the minutes of the ballot of the first round in triplicate. The members of the commission sign the minutes. Two copies are sent to the Secretary General and the third copy is placed in an envelope sealed in the presence of the members of the commission who append their signature to the envelope. The ballots are burnt without delay in front of witnesses.

5. Organisation of the Second Round of Voting

It is the responsibility of the Provincial or Vice-Provincial to prepare the voting list for the second round. Only the names of the Brothers who have obtained more than 10% of the votes

appear on the list and in the order of the number of votes received.

The voting follows the same procedures as for the first round.

Counting of Votes for the Second Round

The counting of votes for the second round follows the procedures adopted for the first round. Likewise for the minutes: the same procedures are adopted as for the first round.

6. Date for Sending the Minutes

The minutes for the first and the second rounds must be sent to the Secretary General no later than June 1, 2011. The final list of the delegates and of the substitutes after the second round is established in the order of the number of votes obtained.

7. Promulgation

The Superior General makes the results of the voting known to the Congregation by way of a circular letter.

PREPARATION OF THE CHAPTER

1. A Preparatory Commission

A preparatory Commission to the 2012 Chapter, comprising the members of the General Council together with Brothers Guillermo Davila, Michel Gougeon and Robert Smyth, has already met once in Ploërmel on November 29 and 30, 2010.

The Commission has already initiated a first preparatory step by proposing a process of discernment to the major Superiors and their Council.

Proposals for each community and for Lay Mennaisians will follow.

2. A First Step with Major Superiors and their Council

The preparatory Commission to the Chapter has asked major Superiors to carry out a revision of life or **discernment** in keeping with the proposed theme: “**Education and Evangelising Today – Sainthood through Making Saints.**”

The Commission has asked the Superiors to give an account of achievements in the Province in line with evangelising through education, but also to indicate the resistances that forestall the expected outcomes. The Superiors were also asked to underscore the callings that have challenged them over the past years and to indicate the orientations and decisions that they have taken or that they ought to take to meet these challenges. Last, they were invited to try to summon up a symbolic Bible passage or an icon from

the Old or the New Testament and which **illustrates** and **sheds light** on the state of their Province / Vice-Province.

3. Brothers and Lay Mennaisians are Invited to Participate in this Preparation

I do not wish to go into the details of the second preparatory stage since the Commission will put out the necessary guidelines. I simply wish to expound the reasons which have led to the choice of the theme.

It is obvious that this theme is nothing new since it stands at the very heart of the charism of our Institute. When they founded the Congregation, both John Mary de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes most ardent wish was to provide children and young people an education which would help them better know and love Jesus Christ.

We wish, therefore, to place ourselves under the influence of the Spirit within who is sending us forth so that countless children and young people can build their lives on Christ, the new Man.

It seemed to us that this theme deserves special consideration after the repeated calls of John Paul II and of Benedict XVI. Is there a better road to growth and unity than the one that leads us through self-giving to those who, like blind Bartimaeus by the wayside near Jericho, call to us, asking us to allow them to gaze upon He who is the Way, the Truth and the Life?

“Our responsibility is not limited to suggesting shared values to the world,” Benedict XVI writes in his last apostolic letter *Verbum Domini*; “rather, we need to arrive at an explicit proclamation of the word of God. Only in this way will we be faithful to Christ's mandate.” Quoting Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, he adds: “The Good News proclaimed by the witness

of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization unless the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are proclaimed.”

In the light of the urgency for a new missionary consciousness that involves all the members of God’s people, the Pope has convened a Synod for “the New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith”. This Synod will be held in October 2012, a few months following our General Chapter. The ‘Lineamenta’ of that Synod have been presented on March 4th, 2011 and proposed to all Christians for their consideration. The preparation of our Chapter will therefore coincide with the whole Church’s time of reflection on the Lineamenta. The journey of the Congregation will be the same as that proposed by the Pope to the whole Church.

During the coming months, let us recall what John Mary de la Mennais unceasingly reminded his Brothers: *“I am pleased to hear that the number of children has increased since the opening of classes; I am hopeful, from what you are telling me about the love children bear you, that they will benefit from your lessons, the main purpose of which must be the teaching of religion and, consequently, the study of catechism. Such is the essence and the principal object of your wonderful and holy Mission. From your father with heartfelt loving care,”* wrote Father de la Mennais to Brother Éméric, missionary at Fort-Royal (Martinique) in 1845.

Of course, in our Founders’ days, the circumstances in which the Brothers carried out their mission were quite different from ours. Likewise, it is obvious that the questions that arise today in the fields of education and of evangelisation vary considerably from one country to another and even from one school to another.

Some Brothers may say to themselves: “Yes, but we are too old to be bothered with these questions. What can we do for the youth, save pray for them?” Others think that that question should be taken up with great precaution since the young people in our schools are not all believers, or they belong to a variety of religions. Yet again, in certain countries, laws do not allow for the teaching of religion in school, and this should be taken into account.

It is this very diversity which prompts us to look for ways, in a spirit of communion, to meet this important challenge of the new evangelisation. This is why we wished for the 2012 General Chapter to take it up. Of course, we intend to ponder over this issue with Lay Mennaisians. Delegates will join us for a number of days so that we may together discern the best ways for our charism to meet the expected outcomes.

Obviously, we shall not reproduce our Founders’ ways of doing. However, the same Spirit, who is a missionary Spirit, dwells in us. “The universal mission is everybody’s concern. The Gospel does not belong exclusively to those who have received it. It is a gift to be shared, a good news that must be spread, a gift and a mission entrusted to all the baptised,” said Benedict XVI in his message for the World Mission Day on October 23, 2011.

Today, in the Church, we are missionaries at the heart of our educational mission. United in Christ by the same charism, baptised in the blood of Christ and sent forth to spread the Good News to the ends of the world, we, Brothers and Lay People must answer the Church’s repeated call to the new evangelisation. It is our duty to encourage each other to be “missionaries” for the abundant “harvest” that needs workers in each of our countries and in each of our cultures.

It is our hope that the Chapter will give us the opportunity, better still the grace, to be “regenerated by the power of the Spirit” with the whole Church so that we may go to the youth and the children with renewed ardour, restored by the thrust of the origins. The Spirit will rekindle in us the apostolic zeal which burnt in the hearts of the apostles on the day of Pentecost so that we may show the same resilience to the voice of the Spirit and the same courage to meet the missionary challenges.

In the Church, as Brothers, we have been mandated to evangelise young people through educating the whole person. Only the person who has had a profound, personal and vital experience of the love of Christ and of his salvation, and who has had a true encounter with the risen Christ, can feel the urgency of that call: “For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!” wrote John Paul II (*Redemptoris missio*, 2).

We will also have to concede that genuine evangelisation through education must ensure the inculturation of the Gospel Message, the explicit proclamation of the Word of God made flesh and a lively charity in favour of the poor. For, in the mind of John Mary de la Mennais, it is not a matter of superficial evangelisation but of inner renewal, of conversion of the heart which leads to a deep transformation of the whole being, a healing of the person wounded by sin.

4. Laypeople intited to the Chapter

After having shared with the major Superiors during the 2011 March session, the General Council has decided to invite Laypeople from the Mennaisian Family to participate in the Chapter for a few days. They will not intervene as members of the Chapter as such, but since they share the mission of education and

of evangelisation with the Brothers, they will discern with them the calls of the Spirit. It is thereby our wish to take an additional step in constituting the Mennaisian Family, sign of communion, boldly looking ahead to the future in the implementation of a New Evangelisation for our time. The indications defining the actual form of participation by Laypeople will be given by the General Council at a later date.

5. What personal dispositions are needed to enter into this preparation?

We shall seek guidance from the proposals emanating from the Preparatory Commission to the Chapter. With confidence and with a view to achieving communion, we shall make our personal contributions to the edification of the community which we make up. Each one, to the extent of his / her generosity, will find the means to form one body with the Congregation on this way of life and of peace:

- Personal conversion which allows the gaze of the living Christ to convert our inner outlook on things.
- Praying to the Holy Spirit so that he may change our heart, enlighten our mind and energize our will.
- Personal and community discerning of the Word of God.
- Commitment, in community, to the mission of education and of evangelisation in accordance with the inspiration of the Spirit and the strength He provides.
- Discerning the new ways which the Spirit may inspire us in keeping with the charism and as we listen to our Brothers through whom God speaks to us.
- Reading everything that may inform our mind and heart in Church.

Let us ask our Lord and the Virgin Mary, special patroness of the Institute, to bless the 2012 General Chapter toward which we are setting off together. We also pray to our Founders, John Mary de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, so that through their intercession, the Chapter may renew our commitment to joyfully take Christ to the youth.

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY,
Superior General
Rome, March 15, 2011

