

***Meunnaisian
Novena
Nº. 39***



PRESENTATION

* Historically the month of March was a very important month for the mennaisian congregation. For many decades, it has been the month chosen to hold the General Chapter, with all the events that it entails : election of the Superior General and of his Council, planning for the future with precise lines of actions, etc.

* It will also be the case this year 2012, if God permits. This is why in our novena booklet, this event will hold a very important place.

* But I also have other important topics to mention, in particular, the publication of a new biography of our Venerable Father de la Mennais, in a very atypical form.

* I would also like to introduce to you another Brother renowned by his holiness, **Bro. Gerardo Aizpuru**, who lived in the middle of the past century. And he remains in our memories with an aura of veneration.

* Finally a short word to point out the importance of the theme of reflection that was chose for this month, the powerful example of **collaboration and mutual love** between our two Founders, **Jean-Marie de la Mennais** and **Gabriel Deshayes**. Quite an example, that should be imitated by us all, their sons, an example recognized by the whole Church.

* * * * *

May they intercede for us !

Rome, March 1, 2012

Bro. Delfin López, Postulator

Prayer for the beatification of John Mary de la Mennais

O God our Father, you have given
John -Mary de la Mennais,
a generous heart and untiring zeal
to make your Son Jesus Christ
known and loved especially by the 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 as 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°. 39-ROME – 1.III.2012

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Monday – dawn), his growth and maturation, until the end and the plenitude of his second birth in Heaven (Sunday - twilight).

The rising of the sun opens the presentation of what is about to happen during the day, and twilight is the time for the readers to reread the events of the day.

It is put in Jean-Marie's own words, because the author wanted to put himself in the place of Jean-Marie, in his life, in his feelings...

The rest of the book is history, documents, information. Same thing regarding the places mentioned in the book : I tried to paint the places as we can see them today but at the same time evoking what they had been, because these places, like St. Malo, La Chesnaie, the Missionaries' Cross, more than simple geographical locations, are spiritual places for all of us, places marked by Jean-Marie's radical experiences, and therefore keystones for all Mennaisians.

** What do you expect from the book ?*

That it becomes a tool of the Spirit, that through his Action, we may follow Jesus in a more Mennaisian way. In some places already, they are using the book for the mennaisian formation of the teachers, with very simple guides.

** Any anecdote you would like to share ?*

Yes, a surprising and joyful one : I have a friend, very close friend though he is an unbeliever, who know nothing about Jean- Marie. Every day, as he was reading one chapter of the book, he would call me and tell me what had impressed him most.

* Personally, without telling it to him, I was surprised by what had impressed him most in the story, because that was exactly what had impressed me most also, what I had put most emphasis on, with the historical data I was writing from. When he finished reading the whole book, he called me again to tell me all the passages that had struck him most, in particular, the scene where the La Mennais brothers, Jean-Marie and Féli, could not meet and say goodbye to each other at the end of life. And he added that he would read the book again, to taste it even more.



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 p5- 6 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. 7)
- c) We read the 2 daily thoughts of Jean-Marie (p. 8 - 9).
- d) We recite the prayer for his beatification, p. 15
- e) We end with the sign of the Cross.

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

We can also use profitably the suggested reflection on p. 14, reflecting upon one specific question every day, and then choose one to reflect in group and to share with others.

The rest of this leaflet is to deepen your knowledge of Jean-Marie and of the Congregation.

IMPORTANT !

When you receive this Review the General Chapter of the Brothers will be in full swing. And as we begin the (18th -26th / March) Novena, the Superior General and the members of his Council would be elected. Let us Pray!

TO NOTE !

Next month, April, we shall publish the **Bulletin N^o. 23**, and not the Review. It will be sent to you only by electronic mail (e-mail).



For your reflection...

To be Brother, today ?

Since the times of the Founder, the Superiors General communicate with the Brothers through "Circular Letters". Those of Bernard Gaudeul were exceptional. His first Circular was entitled : **"The Joy to be a Brother"**. That was written from the depth of his being. Today that Letter is always relevant ...

... Where is that Joy of being a brother coming from ? – It comes from what we are and what we do. We do not have the same kind of Joy as the priests in their ministerial function for example, nor any hierarchical claims, nor the Joy of the Lay people in their labours and their families. Our joy is different...

With the Scriptures, we say: **"I know well in whom I put my trust." In whom it is? – Of course, in the Lord Jesus!** As for James and John, Peter and Andrew, Jesus passed beside us. looked at us and called us, and we answered him: **'Yes!'** And we followed him with Joy. And like Philip and Bartholomew, we go throughout the world proclaiming: **" We found the Messiah, Jesus de Nazareth!"**

And, as the disciples formed a community, the 'community of the Apostles', so are we also walking together with Jesus in community, to announce his Gospel. Our Rule of Life says that **"The Brother is a man whom the person of Jesus has seduced and who, publicly declares himself for Him, eager to follow him"**.

To whom do we proclaim the Gospel ? – Our preferential option is for the children and the young people, the ones preferred by the Lord. Would it be today in the world, a more beautiful, a more urgent mission ? No, for sure ! The Brother will also have, as his Master, his own share of the Calvary in his fidelity to Jesus and in his apostolate... But, like Paul, while living in intimacy with Jesus, the brother will say: "My joy overflows in the middle of my tribulations", assured of the assistance and the promise of Christ: **" I will be with you every day until the end of the world"**.

... Throughout his life, the Brother endorses the words of Jean-Marie of Mennais his Founder :

"I have offered everything with joy, and my only desire is to contribute to the glory of God... with all my capacities".

... Because Jesus himself is our joy!

* *How did you achieve it ?*

I tried throughout this whole process to be faithful to the objectives I had in mind for my readers, to describe clearly the social, ecclesiastical and historical context of that period, in order to make the readers see the originality of the Founder's answers to the challenges of his times.

Much reading to do on my part ! There exist so much material (biographies, Mennaisian Studies with many historical details) and I had to plunge into that period of history and places where the Founder lived.

And I had to « recreate » within myself what Jean-Marie had felt, had lived. After that task of reflection and the use of my imagination, I wanted to give an adequate structure and literary style.

* *What did you feel when you were writing it ?*

I would tell you what two readers of the first « draft » of my book told me : One said : « I found many historical data I did not even know, but I was even more touched by the story itself. » And the other wrote to me : « I hope that book will help me follow Jesus with the firm fidelity and simplicity Jean-Marie had following Jesus. »

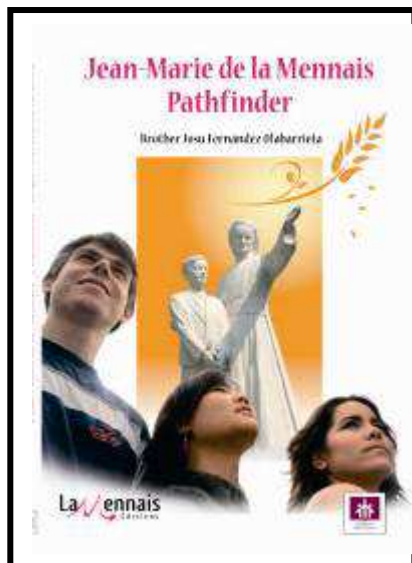
* *Why the subtitle "Sentinel of the Future"?*

I wanted to express the main unchangeable lines in the life of Jean-Marie, lines that are relevant today to those touched by the mennaisian charism : to keep our eyes open and to let ourselves be touched by the needs of people : to bring answers, to bring life, more life, life to all those in need of the bread of instruction and the bread of faith...

* *And why the seven days?*

For many reasons. For once it can be a simple literary style (quite an old style because it was used in Genesis for the story of creation in seven days). Also it responds well to what life really is, something that develops gradually, by degree, growing and maturing. The life of Jean-Marie had his first lines at birth





Jean-Marie de la Mennais Sentinel of the future

Here is a new publication on the Founder of the Mennaisian Brothers. It came out in January 2012, in three languages: Spanish, French and English, and 3.000 copies for its first edition.

We asked the author, Bro. Josu Fernández Olabarrieta, some questions on this subject. After reading his answers, - that I will show you now-, and having read the book, I would like to

invite you also to read it. I do not know what should be admired most: the depth of research, the power of imagination; the richness of literary style or the subtle vision of the life of the Founder and the interpretation of God's passage of God in his life ...

Here are the questions and answers.

How was the book born ? I received the mandate from the Superior General and his Council, to be in charge for the "Mennaisian Studies". But before new issues of these "Studies", and because of the 150th anniversary of his death, I was asked to write a new history of Jean-Marie de la Mennais.

What was your purpose in writing this book ? With the agreement of the Superior General and his Council, I wanted to present figure of Jean-Marie nearer us, for a public already knowledgeable with mennaisian publications, and for young people too. Then I thought of using an absolutely different style: pure history, but with a different literary treatment, so that it brings Jean-Marie closer, it "catches" us.

And it is what I tried: that the figure of Jean-Marie become closer to us, while discovering, throughout the circumstances of the life, the interior dynamics of his person and existence

Jean M.de la Meannis and Gabriel Deshayes

Two men, A single mission

In the history of our religious family, we keep the memory of the solid union and complete mutual understanding of our two founders as a very precious legacy.

Their words as well as their achievements show that clearly. One started at St. Brieuc a small group of young teachers, without knowing clearly what that group would become; the other had already a clear and tested idea on that, envisioning already the formation of a religious Institute. Then the Lord opened new ways in his Church for one of them, whereas the other dedicated his whole life to our Congregation. But we still consider both of them as our founders.

Nothing can illustrate it better maybe that the last encounter they had in August 1841, before the departure of F. Deshayes for St. Laurent.

"The last trip of M.Deshayes to Ploërmel remains one of the most memorable dates in the history of the Congregation. It was at the end of the Brothers' annual retreat. Before the closure, it was the custom for the brothers to walk in procession to the cemetery to visit their dear Brothers' tombs. The Superior addressed the brothers and talked about the departed brothers who had fulfilled their mission and were buried there. His faithful associate also was present, following the procession with a heavy gait, the eyes fixed on the small crosses above the tombs.

Remembering all the joys of their common efforts during this first quarter of century, and foreseeing the dark years that were to come, M.de la Mennais talked to the Brothers about the meaning of death.



And his sermon at the cemetery was a series of advices inspired by the feeling of his shortly coming death :

« My children, he said, how many already the tombs are! Before long maybe another one will be added, my own. I want to be buried among you, so that you will be able to come and pray over the tomb of your old Father ».

Then turning to M. Deshayes who was sitting on a granit stone nearby, he added : *« My venerable and holy friend, we will soon reach, both of us, the end of our life ; before long, we will have disappeared from among these children ; but even from the tomb, we will still be able to guide them. And after some time, they too will come and join us : let us give them 'rendez-vous' in heaven. ! »*

Moved to tears when hearing these words,, M. Deshayes said a few words on death and eternity, adding that he would take some measure to make sure that death would not separate him totally from his friend Jean-Marie.

Three months later, he passed away at Saint-Laurent-sur Sèvres. A few days before he died, he had called one of his priests, M.Guyomart, his first assistant, and confided to him one of his dearest wishes:

« After my death, I want to have the thumb of my right hand cut – the thumb with which I signed the Rule of the Brothers of Ploërmel, and to send it to M. de la Mennais, to make sure that part of my ashes will remain one day with his. »

This proof of friendship was faithfully observed. When the relic of the old man arrived at Ploërmel, M.de la Mennais put it in the chapel, behind the main altar, and decided that at the next retreat, after the Mass for the Deceased, the relic would be carried solemnly to the cemetery and put in the coffin where he himself would lay one day.

Though foreseen, this death surprised the Superior of Ploërmel. After regretting his old friend, he used that event, as he often did, to prompt the brothers to more work and sacrifice, in view of the eternal reunion.

(From « Laveille”, and manuscripts in Rome)

Together in Chapter

From March 1 to 15, 2012

What should we expect from the Chapter?

The delegates to the Chapter have asked all the brothers and mennaisian lay members to share their expectations of the Chapter : what decisions, what new orientations must we take to give a new dynamism to our Charism and answer to the needs of young people and of the Church in our world today ?

Here are some orientations that were suggested by the Brothers:

- ***The theme itself of the Chapter: Education, a way to evangelization***

Our world today needs a new evangelization, by means of modern ways of communication and contacts. We the Brothers must assure that our institutions are places of evangelization, places where young people can meet the Lord. It is our first mission, as Jean-Marie envisioned it.

- ***Presence to the youth, particularly to the poorest.***

In poor countries as well as in rich ones, young people know many kinds of poverty. Our institutions of education must welcome and take care of them, and answer to their needs. *“The poor are sacred for us”*, said Jean-Marie.

- ***Quality of community life***

To build communities that are fraternal and well inserted in their place of life, through their witnessing of life and social commitment.

- ***A solid initial and ongoing formation***

Our young men in formation need the best possible formation – spiritual and professional. And throughout life, the brothers too feel the need to keep on their formation so as to be able to face new realities today. We have to support the work already done by the International Team of Ongoing Formation.

- ***A larger openness to internationality***

Our Congregation is an international congregation and yet sometimes we tend to forget it. On the contrary, we have to develop more relations and learn to help one another over the whole world.

- ***New workers in the Vineyard of the Kingdom***

A new zeal for the pastoral work of vocations. Our congregation is decreasing in number now, even if our vocation is more than ever necessary and relevant today. We must dare calling, challenging young people and adults to follow Christ as Mennasian Brothers.

A collaborator Brother

Our Holy Brothers ?

Brother Gerardo Aizpuru



Renown wrapped in modesty

Several biographies have been published on Br. Gerardo. The first was entitled

« *As the swallows* ».

Indeed he did as do the swallows,

* *He emigrated to Africa for his military service ;*

* He traveled throughout the world without touching it !

* *His life was like a chirping of bird;*

* And he flew to Heaven, like the swallows....

He was born on September 10, 1923, at Azpeitia (Guipúzcoa-Spain). His sister said about him that he was « *a child just like the others* », yes, but already serious for his age and excellent pupil. He liked sports also, particularly the Basque pelota and racing. But when there was some little work to be done, he was the first to volunteer to help ...

He attended the Brothers' school at Villafranca de Ordicia. He enjoyed going to school, it seems. Then in the company of the school headmaster and Bro. Alvaro, the recruiter, he left for the House of formation at Nanclares de la Oca. **His decision was firm and well-thought, even if for the family it was quite a sacrifice :** he was born exactly in the same village as St. Ignatius, founder of the Jesuits.

He followed the formation program for four years, as it was the custom then, with much dedication and profit. He succeeded well in his studies. When he was once congratulated for his success, he replied :

« *Sah! The important thing is to be baptized.* »

(Continued)

RECOMMENDED INTENTIONS

That at the example of Jesus, and listening to Jean-Marie's Words, we may imite him in his life of humility

* For the young people who feel called to follow Jesus as Mennaisian Brother.

* For the sick people asking for our prayers :

- * Fernando Nogales : malignant tumor.- San Borja (Bolivia).
- * Mr. Godin, requested by Br. Albert Côté (Canada).
- * Natalie Cubillo, with cancer (Madrid - Spain).
- Patrick Lebeau, tumour in the esophagus (France).
- * Olivier Meunier (12 y. old): spinal amyotrophy (Canada).
- José A. García Martínez, multiple sclerosis- Bilbao (Spain) .
- * Guadalupe Morales, congenital arthrogripale infection - Luján de Cuyo (Argentina)
- Bro. Louis Le Guichet, spinal problems - Nantes (France)
- * Clara García Roig, a special intention.- Buenos Aires (Argentina)
- Br. Pierre Tousignant, a serious cancer - Canada.
- * Mercedes A. Alvarez, advanced cancer.- Luján de Cuyo - Mendoza (A)
- Jeannine Robert, sister of Br. Jean Malo: deforming arthritis- France.
- * Lesage Dessalines, in a coma, nephew of Bro. Lamy D. (Haiti)
- Giorgio Mucci: cerebral thrombosis - Roma (Italy)
- * Michael, child of 5 y. old, sick at Santa Fe (Argentina).
- Rafael Gómez: 10 y. old, lymphatic cancer
- * Julián Castro, child with spinal problems, Luján de Cuyo (Argentina)
- Khalid Sid Imorou: brain tumor.- Parakou- Benin (Africa).
- * Romina Camprostrini, lung problems - Villa Gdor.Gálvez (Argentina).
- Pía Martina, child near death - Villa Gdor Gávez (Argentina).
- * Br. Andrés Pérez, complex cancer (Bolivia)
- Grace Nabagala, breast cancer, Masaka (Uganda).
- * Scholastica Bonabaana, heart problems - Fort-Portal (Uganda)
- Br. Benedicto de Francisco: stomach cancer - Bilbao (Spain)
- John Paul LUWAGA: for success in his studies.- Uganda
- * Stephen Louis KABITO, deaf and mute child.- Uganda
- * Shelbie Civil: 16 ans, malignant tumour.- La Vallée (Haïti).
- David Hillbom,- progressive ALS, Regina, Sask. (Canada)

***... And the intentions placed on the tomb of the Father at Ploërmel... and those particular to each location.**

Jean-M. de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes
...One Heart and one Soul
Their words



✘ 18 –III

“ In the name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we, Jean Marie Robert de la Mennais, vicar general of St Brieuc, and Gabriel Deshayes vicar general of the diocese of Vannes and Priest of Auray, animated by the desire to give to the children of the people, especially for those of the campaigns of Brittany, seriously pious teachers ... »

✘ 19 –IIIX

« “Mr. Deshayes, former priest of Auray, and myself, have thought that if it were almost impossible, as thought M. de la Salle, to ask his congregation to take charge of schools in the countryside and small cities, the same goal could be achieved by forming another congregation especially to provide primary education teachers to the communes which are too small or not rich enough to support a school with three brothers.

✘ 20 –III

* When Father Deshayes and I made your Rule... we asked ourselves: how will a poor Brother, isolated in the depths of the countryside, deprived of the usual relations with his Superiors, and seeing other Brothers only from time to time sustain himself? And we answered: he will come to the retreat... Thus we considered the retreat as the principle of life and of salvation for the entire Congregation and for each member in particular.

✘ 21 –III

* We the undersigned, Gabriel Deshayes and Jean Marie de la Mennais, founders and superiors general of the Brothers of Christian Instruction, ... foreseeing our coming death at some time, and desirous to assure the continuity of the Congregation that we have governed together so far, we have taken the following decisions that will constitute the foundation of the future government. »

✘ Le 22 –III

* « Pray for our venerable and so good F. Deshayes : we are about to lose him : he received the last sacraments on the 26th of this month.”
 “Poor children, you had two fathers; one has been taken away from your love; console the remaining one by your docility and perseverance; and make greater in heaven, if it may be, the joy of the one you just lost, by acquiring all the virtues of which he was your model in your midst.”

✘ Le 23 – III

* Dear brothers! I announce to you with deep and well-felt pain the death of our dear F. Deshayes. Though we have all assurance that he already enjoys in heaven the reward which he deserves by his so many good works, you will make for him the prayers and the communions prescribed in the article 30 of Chapter V of the Rule.

✘ 24 - III

* “ Our dear Father indeed did not forget what he had promised you all at the time of the last retreat: “A few days before his death, -M. Guyomard wrote to me-, he called me and said: ‘When I am no longer among you, I want to have cut the thumb of my right hand with which I signed the Rule of the Brothers of Ploërmel, and that you send it to Mr. de la Mennais, so that a part of my ashes well rest one day with his. »

✘ Le 25 –III

* In the evening of this day, Mr. Deshayes went up the pulpit and said to the brothers: “After having been during this life so closely united with your good Father, and shared with him during twenty-three years the direction of your Institute, I do not want death to separate us...”

✘ 26 - III

* « My venerable and holy friend, we will soon reach, both of us, the end of our life ; before long, we will have disappeared from among these children ; but even from the tomb, we will still be able to guide them. And after some time, they too will come and join us : let us give them ‘rendez-vous’ in heaven ! »