

4 - "THE POOR ARE SACRED TO US"



*"Happy the poor of heart." (Mt 5,3)
"Sell everything, give it to the poor, and then follow me." (Mc 10,21)
"Give them yourselves something to eat." (Mc 6,37)
"He has looked upon the lowliness of his servant." (Lc 1,48)*

OUR MISSION

"Religious poverty takes its origin in the fundamental attitude of Jesus, who "of divine condition... emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are". Similarly, the Brother, in all humility, commits himself to follow Christ more closely in his poverty. (D 42)

"Christ applied to himself the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... he has sent to me to carry the Good News to the poor" (Lk 4, 18) (C 48). "The Congregation takes part in this mission of Christ who was consecrated and sent to carry the Good News to the poor. The mission is at the heart of our dedication." (GC 2006 – p.16 - 1st conviction)

"Member of a congregation that his Founders founded for "the instruction and the Christian education of the children of the people", the Brother knows that one of the best means of fighting poverty is to fulfill well his specific mission". (D 50-51-52)

"The poor, in varied states of affliction, are the oppressed, those on the margins of society, the elderly, the sick, the young, any and all who are considered and treated as the least". (NC 82)

"For the consecrated life, the service of the poor is an act of evangelization and, at the same time, it seals the fidelity to the Gospel and invites to permanent conversion". (NC 82)

"The Provinces endeavour to meet the new needs of the children and the poorest young people, through formal and non-formal education". (GC 2006 - orientation 1 f)

Pius IX, on February 1, 1851: "Your remarkable charity towards the poor children... and the burning zeal which animates you for their Christian education ... cannot but receive from Us and from this Apostolic See, the most abundant praises".

CHALLENGES

To recognize and accept fragility, poverty, weakness either personal, community or congregation as a gift, a grace for a more evangelical life. This is a call for the future of our Congregation, and an opportunity for the evangelization of young people, a conversion that requires us to overcome our fears.

The poor are among us, close to us (in our educational communities, schools, centers...) The new poverty of the young people (moral, emotional, spiritual, material...) is challenges to us, especially at this time of crisis. We must dare to risk this evangelical commitment, which pushes us to recreate, to renew the way we live the mission, by announcing the Good News to the poor.

To involve ourselves, in each province of the congregation and in the Mennaisian Family, in initiatives that will bring us closer the poor, to greater solidarity and justice, "so that men may have Life, and life in abundance". (Jn 10, 10).

ACTION PLAN

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FOR THE BROTHER:

Every Brother is invited to contemplate Jesus Christ in every poor (cf. Mt 25, 35-46), and first of all, in the children and young people. Through this interior experience "he will become like" the merciful Jesus whom he has met¹. Thus, being evangelized, he will become evangelizer.

To live that experience, the Brother needs to be accompanied during his initial and ongoing formation.

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FOR THE COMMUNITY:

All the communities, not only those in mission areas, are called to a real communion with the poor (D. 48). Thus, the Brothers will discern together how to adopt a lifestyle that is as modest as possible (D. 44, D. 99) and "to provide appropriate and timely assistance to the poor in its neighbourhood." (D. 52)

The personal call to serve the poor will be welcomed and discerned by the proper authority, and will be integrated into the community project. (cf. D. 68)

The Brothers involved in work that brings them close to the poor are encouraged to continue and to live it as an experience of God.

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FOR THE PROVINCE and THE VICE-PROVINCE:

The animation of the Province and the Vice-province will help the Brothers to live the frailty, poverty and weakness of the Congregation like a gift to enable us to build the future.

In each Province or Vice-province, the institutions or educational centers will put into their educational project and teaching programs, the "culture of justice and solidarity" attention to all kinds of poverty (in welcoming, listening and proposed solutions).

Experiments lived in "relationship" with the poor will be organized in or outside our institutions, both for young people and their educators: they will understand, through an appropriate accompaniment, that life is a gift of God, and how to live it as a gift. (GC 2006).

The Provinces and the Vice-provinces are invited to set up an institution or center of formal or informal education especially for the education and the improvement of the poorest (D 105b) or to continue them where they already exist.

If a province cannot set up such an institution, it will do its best to support the project of another province.

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FOR THE GENERAL COUNCIL:

The Superior General and his Council will help the provinces of the Congregation to live this attention to the poor. Suggested ways: yearly theme, ongoing education, sessions of Major Superiors, ...

They will support the setting-up of a "Secretariat for the missions" by the nomination of a Brother or Lay person. This Secretariat will financially support the projects of evangelization and solidarity towards the poor, as well as the training of the Mennaisian Family to live together in solidarity.

The means of communication in the Congregation (La Mennais Magazine, web site) will regularly keep us informed on the various activities in favour of the poor that are currently ongoing or with shortly be initiated by the congregation.

¹ This « contemplative living" will incite him to live, not as a « wise man" but by letting himself be surprised, not by being powerful but by remaining feeble and docile, not as a master but as a disciple, not as a planner of various means but by being in an attitude of exploring them, not as a voluntarist but as a volunteer, not only generously but also and above all, gratuitously.