



**Mennaisian
Novena
N^o. 41**



PRESENTATION

* Our readers will receive this issue of the Novena at the time of summer vacations in the North Hemisphere, but in full school year in the South where winter vacations are getting closer.

* The month of June is cold or warm, according to the continents. But one thing in common is, for us Catholics, it is the month of the Sacred Heart. This is why the theme of this novena, a very interesting theme is : « To follow Jesus with Jean-Marie de la Mennais. »

* You will find also the moving and even tragic testimony of a Muslim teacher of Cairo (Egypt) who, like many others, has encountered Jesus on her road of life... and she followed Him.

* You will also find two other testimonies : the end of our story on the life of a « saint FIC », br. **Gerardo Aizpuru**, and then, the figure of a great FIC missionary to Japan, Br. **Gustave (Isidore) Vachon**.

* Finally a nice touch : letters sent by 15 pupils of our school at Aguilar de Campóo (Spain).

Happy Vacations !

Rome, June 1, 2012
 Br. Delfín 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

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Novena to Jean-Marie : how to do it?

I had the opportunity to preside in 1974 at the first profession of our first Japanese brother, bro Philippe Ozawa, always among us.

J-P. : You had plenty of work to do: what did you do after all these ceremonies ?

Br. I. : It is very simple: from 1970 to 2005, I was residing in Tokyo and teaching Latin until the age of 92. I taught Cicero, Titus Livy, Pliny the young, etc. My young students liked it very much.

J-P. : Is it true that you were awarded a medal by the Emperor of Japan?

Br. I. : Yes but we have to remain humble, as any good FIC. It is a decoration difficult to bear, as Fr. de la Mennais himself said. The Emperor has promoted hundreds of people and I am honoured to be one of them who received the « Kun yonto zui hôshô », **the fourth degree of the Order of the Sacred Treasure**. This decoration was to reward me for all my years of work in education in Japan. But what makes me even happier, it is to consider all these years I spent in religious life, at the service of young people and teachers from all nations, faiths, colours. Nothing can beat such an experience of life ! I did everything for God Alone, for his greatest glory and for the people's human and spiritual growth.

J-P. : Br. Isidore passed away on Easter day... He can now sing many alleluias for all eternity together with the youth of the whole world ! Br. Isidore, we thank you for your beautiful life, for your enthusiasm, your attention to the persons, for your encouragements to persevere in our objectives, for your appropriate advices, for your model role as teacher and educator. Those who knew you wanted to become your friend. You were for them a model of charity, through your goodness, your tenderness, just like a true missionary Fr. de la Mennais hoped for, a real corsair of God in Japan. Thank you and Sayonara.



Br. Jean-Pierre Houle, Tokyo
May 25, 2012

*Baptism of five members of the
family of a student in Japan.*

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.**

Our cover pages

Our tradition cover page was designed by a great Mennaisian brother,

Br. Ovide Fortier.

As delegate to the Postulation, he has contributed much to the Cause of Jean-Marie and God has blessed him with a remarkable healing.
Thank you, Br Ovide!

Notice

To the readers of our Novena leaflet, for the coming months :

- * In **July** we will publish this leaflet, with the Novena
- * In **August**: No publication. For the Novena, feel free to use previous issues of the Novena .
- * In **Septembre** : We shall resume the publication of the Novena.



**For your reflection ...
And who is really Jesus for
you ?**

Born in a Christian family, a few days after our birth, maybe we never cared to ask ourselves "for a reason for our hope" (1 Pt 3,15). That reason for our hope is

Jesus, God made man !

But it is was the case for an Egyptian teacher, director of a large school in Cairo, **Mrs Nahed Mahmoud Metwalli** : fervent Muslim, until the day she **encountered Christ**. And she did not keep that experience for herself: she has shared it to her Muslim brothers and sisters in a beautiful testimony :

** Oh my Muslim brothers and sisters, it is because of my joy and happiness, of the life I am living in union with Christ, of that peace that entered my heart that I wish that everybody could also taste and experience the beauty of such a life with our Lord Jesus.*

* Open your hearts to Christ's message. I pray to you : in the name of God whom we all adore, open the Bible, read it, taste it. It is the law of love and peace which has nothing to do with hatred, war, tribute to pay. Christ has brought man's morality to its summit. He has asked all human beings to love and forgive one another. « *When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.* » (Mt 5, 39)

** Christ Jesus never married. He dedicated himself to his mission. He died on the Cross, he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Mohammed was married to several women after the death of his first wife, Khadija.*

* Christ Jesus offered his life for our sins and has washed them away, then he ascended into heaven, whereas Mohammed died of poison.

** I beg you, in the name of God whom we all adore, to open the Bible, to read it, to taste it, and to compare the commandment to kill and fight with the commandment to love and forgive, a beautiful life with Jesus. Our Lord is able to lead us to his true Eternal Light.*

I worry about you, my Muslim brothers and sisters, because I love you and I myself has lived as a Muslim for more than 34 years.

May the Lord bring you his Light and reveal his Truth to you, to make you understand Truth, to discover that Christ is our Saviour, the Son of the Living God... He is the Origin and the End, the light of the world, the unique road that leads to God. Amen.

than that, I needed some spiritual touch... My studies in literature helped me most

J-P. : How did the idea of being a missionary to Japan come to your mind ?

Br. I. : I was encouraging the scholastics to have higher aspirations : « Go forward, go to the open sea! » and to the missions of the congregation. It is through the calling of others that the Lord has called me to Asia, to Japa

where we had just opened a new mission in 1951. I heard the Lord call me through the intermediary of my superiors of that time, bro. Tassé and bro. Brissette.

J-P. : And you arrived in Japan...

Br. I. : Yes, on May 18, 1953, at the age of 40. I was ready for any task. I was sent to our Yokohama community. It was just after WWII (1939-1945), the Korean War was still going on, and life in Japan was miserable and poor. Rice was rationed. We often had to eat black potatoes that we were receiving from American soldiers willing to help us. And until late at night I had to study my Japanese characters, at the light of a candle. Work was tough but the Lord was with us. I had the joy of preparing to baptism in our chapel of Yokohama, Mr and Mrs Yoshizaki and their two daughters. This Mr. Yoshizaki remained in charge of our maintenance at St. Mary's for almost 50 years.

J-P. : What positions did you hold in Japan ?

Br. I. : I was superior of the Yokohama community and Director of the first St. Mary's College. I helped in the foundation of our orphanage « Boys' Town » at Minami-Rinkan, for war orphans. This particular undertaking was as a shower of grace upon the brothers in Japan. Among these graces, we can mention the foundation of our Kindergarten « Sayuri » with Mrs Fumiko Seki, next to our great high school Seiko Gakuin of Yokohama. Between 1955 and 1962, I was headmaster of our first St. Mary's International School at Sengakuji, Tokyo. From 1962 to 1968, I went back to Seiko Gakuin of Yokohama to teach English, ethics and religion. Except for English, all classes, including the prayers, were in Japanese.

In 1969, I was appointed **Vice-Provincial of the Mission of Japan, and chairman « Rijicho » of the Board of Trustees of our four institutions in Japan**. That task forced me to be vigilant over my 30 brothers' spiritual life and entailed that I animate the annual retreats either at Tokyo or at the lakeside of Inawashiro, as well as the mission recollections on Easter and End of the Year.



Brother Isidore Vachon

"A Missionary committed body and soul !"

On April 8, 2012, Br. Isidore Vachon passed away at La Prairie (Canada) at the age of 99. He had spent 52 years in Japan, been the founder of St. Mary's International School of Tokyo, and held many other important positions. All those

who knew him will never forget his great intelligence, his large heart, and the beautiful image of a true brother of Christian Instruction that he has left there, through his life and his work. Br. Jean-Pierre Houle made it a point to write an article in the form of an interview. Br. Jean-Pierre himself is asking the questions. He has lived with Br. Isidore for twelve years, enough to know, appreciate and love him. Here are parts of his article.

J-Pierre :Br. Isidore, let us talk about your first years.

Br. Isidore : I was born at St. Casimir, a small village in the county of Portneuf, Québec (Canada). I received the name of Gustave at baptism, on March 29, 1913. My family was not so big but big enough to keep my parents busy! You surely know my brother Bernard, also a FIC like me. The countryside environment helped us to admire the beauty of creation and also the beauty of being at the service of our divine Creator.

J-P. How did you receive the Lord's call ?

Br. I. I heard the Lord's call in the family prayers, morning and evening, and in the celebrations at the local church of St. Casimir. I was looking for the Source of Living Water... and one day, as I was walking along the river, I got to the St. Lawrence River, I turned left, and kept on walking as far as the Motherhouse of La Prairie, the Source of my religious life. For sure, my parents have always supported my intention of becoming a brother of Christian Instruction, when I told them of my decision.

J-P. When did you become a FIC ?

Br. I.: I entered the Novitiate of La Prairie on August 14, 1928, and took my final vows in 1934. I taught a little in Montreal, then in the central part of Québec, the Mauricie. During summers we were completing our studies and as I was rather successful, I was allowed to take my M.A. at Laval University of Québec. Afterwards, I was sent to the Scholasticate at the Motherhouse of Pointe-du-Lac, as director. I had a little psychology learned in the books and novels, but more

To follow Jesus Christ with Jean-Marie de la Mennais

We all know about the anecdote of Jean-Marie de la Mennais meeting with the Minister of Public Instruction, Mr. Salvandy : « **My schools, he said, have been founded to make Jesus Christ known and loved** ». This anecdote was handed down to us through br. Philéas, his road companion. Jean-Marie reported it to a priest, friend of his, just after the incident, with great emotion... But it was not the only time : he reported it many times over, in various occasions. He also mentioned it in his letters to the brothers.



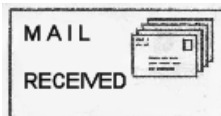
Surely it was an inspired and prophetic intuition which summarizes well our charism : Jesus Christ must be at the center of the apostolic work and life of each Mennaisian, brother or laity. That was true to him, and he said to the brothers : « Jesus Christ is our master and our model. » To realize such high objective, a brother must beforehand enter into intimacy with the Lord. Here are Jean-Mary's advices on that topic :

« With concern let us profit from all the so precious and varied help the Lord is providing us with, to make progress in our knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. »

Jesus nourished the enthusiasm of Jean-Marie in childhood; once an adult, Jean-Marie chose him; in his years of maturity, he continued to believe that committing his whole life to him was worthwhile... He chose him, and never changed his mind, never looked back on that decision.

For our reflection...

- 1.- Who is Jesus Christ for me ? A mere museum piece that I admire or a person to whom I have committed myself ?
- 2.- Priest, Brother, Laity : what does it mean to model my life on the one of Jesus Christ according to my own vocation ?
- 3.- Am I striving to identify myself with Jesus ? To imitate him ?
- 4.- What should be changed in me so that I become like another Christ ?



The pupils of San Gregorio (Aguilar de Campo-Spain) sent us letters to speak to us about Jean-Marie.

What a great joy for the Postulator to receive these letters from 15 pupils of Aguilar, between 8 and 9 of age, in Primary School. No doubt they were helped by

their teacher Dom Carlos! And Br. Ivo Lopez Arenas, superior of the community, served also as their intermediary to send them. Upon the Postulator's request, they have also sent us their picture, which we are happy to publish here. The starting point can be found in the « Letter to Mennaisian Children » that we have published in no. 38 of the Novena, asking them to accompany us in our work (of the postulation) in these difficult and complex times.

The children's letters are of various length and all carry their personal mark of love for Father de la Mennais. They express the same feelings. We are happy here to publish some parts, hoping that they will nourish our mennaisian hope. Here are samples of the most significant letters, written in an excellent penmanship and without spelling mistakes.

- * *I would like to thank you for the letter you have sent us.*
- * *In this letter, I want to bring my support to see Fr. Jean-Mary declared a saint.*
- * *I pray Jesus every evening, that he may fulfill our desire.*
- * *I am giving you a big kiss.*

With these words, we also find meaningful drawings : hearts, sky full of stars, picture of Jean-Marie, the dove of peace, a butterfly, God the Father, etc. Dear Mennaisian readers, do you not agree that this is so beautiful, especially coming from children?

Thank you, dear pupils of Aguilar. From heaven, Jean-Marie is sending everyone of you a big kiss.

Rome, June 5, 2012
Br. Delfin López, Postulator



La Mennais : an educator for a new Christian society.

In our last issue of the Novena, no. 40, we introduced to you Br. Dino de Carolis' new book on Father de la Mennais. Here I would like to publish a comment and an appreciation written by Patricio Ricci on the theme and content of the book.

“Jean-Marie has revolutionized the education approach of his time, approach that was based on notionism, and on the contrary, has opted for an experience that is communicated through friendship and personal relationship. The regular visits to the schools in so many villages of France show his love and deep friendship for all the brothers, show also the serious preparation he was personally submitting them to. To understand that Jesus is not something abstract but that his presence in history is real, we need to find him in holy persons living the « already and not yet » among us, persons who express a discreet love, amidst their daily occupations. This is what Jean-Marie with his brothers of Christian Instruction, has communicated to the poorest, particularly to children, in small villages as well as in the many missions that his charism has engendered. And he did it through the transmission of knowledge that Jesus is present among us, that he has changed man's history. When he died, Fr. de la Mennais had founded dozens of schools in France and in the world : these schools were like providence for the people.”

Pictures prepared by Br. Dino for the yearly « GREAT NOVENA ».



Jean-Marie
Founder of
two
Congregations.

Br. Hyacinthe
Catechist of the
Slaves in West
Indies.



Our "holy" brothers ?

Brother Gerardo Aizpuru

*"A pure and happy life,
Like the doves.... »*

We often hear it and are convinced of it : « We need models, we have to promote true models, whereas so many false models are proposed to us all around. » Br. Gerardo was one of these true models, because he was a holy person, though in humility and simplicity. Many people who have known him can witness to that :

- Here is the testimony of Ceuta's military chaplain, where our brother was a soldier : « He is a saint, and I always considered him as such. I admired the virtues I was finding in him, practiced in a so natural and simple way that I was delighted with that. »
- The testimony of his former Master of Novitiate, br. Juan Haran : « May he continue to protect us from heaven, as he was among us a so perfect model of a religious. »
- The testimony of one of his teachers : « Upon hearing of his death, I did not pray for him, rather I recommended myself to him. »



*** In 2003 we celebrated the 100th of the Spanish Province. Some 298 brothers have died during these 100 years.**

On that occasion, there was a great exposition, and its most significant part was the design of flowers with the name of each brother. No doubt, **Br. Gerardo Aizpuru's** flower was one of the most beautiful. Br. Delfin Lopez.

- * That listening to Jesus's words, we take Mary as our Mother in heaven
- * **For the young people who feel called by the Lord to follow Jesus as Mennaisian Brothers.**

For the sick persons asking for our prayers.

- * *Fernando Nogales* : malignant tumor.- *San Borja (Bolivia)*.
- * Mr. Godin, upon request 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)* .
- Bro. Louis Le Guichet, spinal problems - *Nantes (France)*
- Br. Pierre Tousignant, a serious cancer - *Canada*.
- Jeannine Robert, sister of Br. Jean Malo: deforming arthritis- *France*.
- * Julián Castro, child with spinal problems, Luján de Cuyo (Argentina)
- Khalid Sid Imorou: brain tumor.- *Parakou- Benin (Africa)*.
- * Romina Campostrini, lung problems - *Villa Gdor. Gálvez (Argentina)*.
- Pía Martina, child near death - *Villa Gdor Gálvez (Argentina)*
- Grace Nabagala, breast cancer, Masaka (Uganda).
- * *Scholastica Bonabaana, heart problems - Fort-Portal (Uganda)*
-

***... And the intentions placed on the tomb of the Father at Ploërmel... in particular :**

- For the healing of Philippe, who is without work since December 29, 2011.
- For my grand-son Noë, that hem ay receive baptism.
- For Guy's radical conversion
- For Matthieu and Nadège who are preparing their wedding
- For a seriously handicapped person.

And for all the intentions particular to your own place.

Jesus, our Master and our Model

Words of

JEAN-MARIE de la MENNAIS



✠ June 18

* Jesus Christ was given to us as king, as master and as model. He is our leader, we are his members, and consequently we must enter into his designs, work at his mission, realize his divine mysteries and continue his life on earth.

- In one word : to be consummated in unity with him, as he himself is one with his Father. (S VIII – 2437)

✠ June 19

* Jesus Christ told us : Yes, my son, one day will come, if you remain faithful, when you will know as you are known. Now, even if I am present to you as truly as in the heavens, you can discover me only through faith, and my presence is felt to you only through the unction I pour invisibly upon your soul.

- You cannot otherwise enjoy my presence on earth : but when God, who is Spirit, will have transformed you into his own image, then you will rise up more and more in light, until the source of all beauty, of all light, of all good.

✠ June 20

* This is the admirable design of the Holy Trinity, in our baptismal consecration. And now, I am asking you, in what way is our life here on earth similar to the one of Jesus Christ who has become our brother ?

- What respect do you show for his exhortations ? What efforts are you making to imitate his examples ? Finally, what spirit is animating you, God's spirit of the spirit of the world? Ask yourselves : are you really Christians ? (Sermon 380)

✠ June 21 .

* All Christians have received that same vocation, and nobody can enter into God's bosom until he has become true to the image of his beloved Son.

- It is in his Son, as he tells us himself, that he has put all his complacency, and raised his miserable creatures to him. He has to find in them the traits, and, if I may say so, the figure, the living impression of the One he has engendered before all ages. (Profession of a Religious, S VII, 2172)

✠ June 22

* Our Lord Jesus Christ has been accused unjustly but he did not protest. If we are his true disciples, we must also imitate his divine examples. I myself try to do it the most I can, because I also have to bear sufferings, and for these, I bless the Lord.

- We must also accept to bear our cross, through which we have been saved. Thus we must fulfil in us what is lacking in the passion of Jesus Christ as St. Paul says (Cf. Col 1:24). (Lettre 2652. To Br. Tourtier 1839)

✠ June 23

* Be careful to love only the Cross but not in a purely theoretical way. It would be an easy illusion indeed.

- When we look at a crucifix, our faith and our piety increase, our hearts are moved, and even sometimes my tears are pouring down abundantly.

✠ June 24

* When it pleases the Lord to put us to the test, meaning, to give us a part of his own Cross to bear, our nature is afraid, our courage weakens, and our best intentions disappear.

- On the contrary, it is then that we should rejoice, because through that, Jesus wants us to become similar to his own image.

✠ June 25

* Yes, I hope that we will become even more true Christians, whose words will be chaste, whose conversations will be with heaven, as the Apostle said, whose entire life will be at the image of Christ, a copy of Jesus' own life.

- Remain steadfast in doing good, firm in your decisions, and thus we will no longer have reason to complain about your infidelity. (Sermon 085)

✠ June 26

* Oh my Lord, your love and tenderness was revealed to our world, so that, taught by you and renouncing to all impiety and earthly desires, we may live in this world in piety, justice and temperance.

- As you have become like us in appearance, may be also become like you in our hearts and souls. (Sermon VII – 503 – 2192)