

5- TO FORM AND TO BE FORMED FOR THE MISSION OF EVANGELIZATION



The beauty, the soundness and the fecundity of the Congregation depends largely on the selection and the formation of its members. (C 50)

OUR MISSION

Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus

"When God says he wants our sanctification, it is as if he said that he would like to find in us the perfection of his Son. He wants us to be, in some way, as much as human weakness can permit, clothed with Jesus Christ, [...] and that we be His living image!" (JMLM, Retreat of the Congregation of Saint-Méen).

Christ is at the heart of all formation and he is the model we have to look up to as disciples. Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35), we are invited to set off on the journey and to allow Jesus to accompany us as he does these two disciples. He travels with them. He establishes a conversation and enters into a dialogue with them. He seeks to understand their distress and, with them, to make sense of it. He instructs, educates and evangelizes them as he goes over their life experience in the light of the Word of God. He freely allows the Spirit to pursue his work and to reveal who he is to them.

In the end, the encounter with Christ transforms the disciples who, confirmed by the community, become evangelizers.

The main pillars of our training

- *"The main purpose of any formation process is the promotion of the **Brother's growth in union with and in the likeness of Christ**, in keeping with the **Mennaisian Charism** within the framework of a **process of all-round personal development**."* (Ratio 4)
- *Formation, **as a journey through life**, is a dynamic and progressive process which leads to unity of life in response to one's calling.* (cf. Ratio 1)
- *Formation is **at the heart of the vocational experience** and is therefore a path to the full maturation of the person in a process of progressive configuration. This growth takes place in the educational mission and **in the community** in accordance with the Mennaisian Charism.* (cf. Ratio 1)
- *The process of evangelization takes place within the context of **interpersonal relationships** (with oneself, others, God), making formation an interdependent course of action with others (Brothers and Lay Mennaisians).* (cf. Ratio 3)

This personal and community formation takes place within the framework of a commitment to the poor and the disadvantaged of this world and, faithful to our tradition, participates in its missionary spirit. It relies on the word of God as life-giving source, on the teachings of the Church, in keeping with the Mennaisian Charism (spirituality, pedagogy, history), bearing in mind the culture, the expectations, the needs of local settings as well as those who benefit from the mission.

This formation at all levels (initial and on-going) is thought out and lived within the Mennaisian Family. The joint formation (Laypersons and Brothers) contributes to the strengthening and the growth of our Family.

OUR CHALLENGES and ACTION PLAN

Many texts have been developed within the Congregation that spell out the framework, guidelines and formation contents, especially the Ratio Institutionis. We must now ensure that these documents are better understood and implemented across the Mennaisian Family. To this end, the General Chapter chooses to underscore three interweaving challenges that determine courses of action in the areas of initial training, continuing education and the Mennaisian formation of Brothers / Lay people.

CHALLENGE 1

To allow each Brother and each Lay Mennaisian to be master of their own history and formation. (Ratio 4, 7)

26

Initial Formation

1. For the formation to effectively prepare Brothers for their mission of evangelization, it needs to be holistic, comprising the human, Christian and Mennaisian dimensions.
The General Council oversees the implementation of the Ratio in all sectors of the Congregation and promotes the creation of a Ratio Studiorum, particularly as regards the Mennaisian dimension (history of the Congregation, pedagogy and spirituality).
2. It is necessary to take into account the plurality of the individual background of young people entering formation.
Those responsible for formation in the Institute make sure that they constantly update their knowledge of young people (needs, social evolution...) and that they ascertain they know the people entrusted to them as well as their culture. They strive to build individual training programmes for them.

27

On-going Formation

1. It is necessary to promote a culture of permanent formation.
Using the yearly animation theme, communities set up a continuing education training programme (part of the community project) within which each Brother can incorporate his own project.
Since the formation of local superiors is a crucial issue for lifelong learning, the Provinces and Vice-Provinces should give it special care.
2. Brothers must learn to adapt to different stages of their lives and to grow in maturity.
At all ages, they are encouraged to incorporate Lectio vitae (revision of life) in their personal and community spiritual life.
International formation sessions for various stages of religious life must be maintained, developed and evaluated.

28

Joint Brother / Lay Formation

1. Formation must contribute to develop more clearly the identity of the Brother and of the Layperson within the Mennaisian Family.
Provinces and Vice-Provinces survey the specific training needs in their sector and propose joint training sessions for Brothers and Laypersons, particularly in the theology of the religious life and of the laity.
2. The Mennaisian identity needs to be better understood, structured and strengthened.
The General Council organizes international formation sessions for the Mennaisian Family.

CHALLENGE 2

**To inculturate and adapt the formation to the mission of evangelization.
To promote progress toward unity of life and strengthen commitment.**

29

Initial Formation

1. A Brother of Christian Instruction is a religious educator; his formation must prepare him to this way of life.
Persons in charge of formation set up apostolic work experiences early in the initial formation stages so as to help Brothers clearly associate the theology of apostolic religious life with the practice of a Mennaisian spirituality and lifestyle (Ratio 28 § 3).
2. Community and apostolic first placement is vital for the perseverance of young Brothers and decisive where their willingness to commit to a mission of evangelization is concerned.
Provinces and Vice-Provinces decide, depending on what is possible, to set up communities dedicated to the mission of integrating young Brothers and to offer local superiors formation adapted to that end.
3. The missionary spirit, namely this willingness to enter into dialogue the way Jesus did with one and all, informs the whole process of formation from the very start.
Those responsible for initial formation, in keeping with the spirit of Redemptoris Missio, promote the sustained dialogue between faith and culture. (RM 52)
The General Chapter encourages the General Council to maintain and develop international houses of formation.

30

On-going Formation

1. A Brother cannot take on a mission of evangelization without particular attention being given to his own spiritual growth.
Brothers seek within local Church opportunities for spiritual guidance / direction.
Provinces and Vice-Provinces may prepare Brothers to that particular service.
2. Promoting human and professional growth is necessary to meet the emerging needs of educational environments.
In close consultation with their major superior, Brothers look for forms of training that foster inculturation of formation and a response adapted to the mission.

31

Joint Formation of Brothers / Laypersons

1. The formation handbook of the Mennaisian Family (text of reference of 2009) needs to be adapted to each Province and Vice-Province.
Provinces and Vice-Provinces are invited to develop a framework of reference adapted to their situation and to set up a local team of Brothers and Lay trainers.
2. Brothers and Laypeople are called to come together for common training modules in all sectors of the Congregation.
The General Council organises training sessions on the Mennaisian Charism which bring together Brothers and Laypeople. The latter will become resource persons in the various sectors of the Congregation.

CHALLENGE 3

To train those in charge of formation to ensure evangelization through the continued transmission of the Mennaisian Charism.

32

Initial Formation

1. All initial formation mechanisms must be thought out in a coherent manner,
It is desirable that within each formation community, those in charge of formation constitute a training team.
The major Superiors shall promote meetings of trainers of various stages of formation.
2. Spiritual accompaniment of Brothers at the initial stage of formation cannot do without psychological accompaniment.
Provinces and Vice-Provinces offer persons in charge of formation training in counselling for improved personal guidance / accompaniment.

33

On-Going Formation

1. On-going formation requires having recourse to wide-ranging competencies.
The General Council sets up an international team for lifelong learning. Provinces and Vice-Provinces take initiatives at their own areas by having recourse to consultants and experts as deemed necessary.
2. The training of persons in charge of formation needs to be sustained and energized.
*The General Chapter invites the General Council to centralise the collection and the pooling of existing tools of on-going formation.
The website, the La Mennais Magazine, the La Mennais Studies are called upon to become resources for training.*

34

Joint Formation of Brothers and Laypersons

1. It is necessary to prepare Laypersons to become trainers for Brothers and Laypeople.
The major superiors, together with persons in charge of formation, identify the Laypersons most likely to participate in a training-for-trainers course of formation.
2. The Congregation should be able to offer a time and place of training for persons key Mennaisian Family in order to maintain a common vision of the Charism and to reinforce the sense of belonging to the Mennaisian Family.
*The General Chapter encourages the General Council to constitute a Layperson/Brother international commission for formation in the Mennaisian Family.
The General Chapter encourages the General Council, in connection with the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Province, to further enhance the symbolic character of the Ploërmel Mother-house so that it becomes a place of reference for everything related to formation.*

**To be formed means allowing oneself to be evangelized.
To form means to evangelize.**