

ECHOES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL



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The General Council held their ordinary session at the Generalate in Rome from 15 to 27 February.

Throughout the session, Haiti was at the centre of the prayer of the Council, most especially for our Brothers Joseph Bergot and Dominic Baron. Right from the beginning of the catastrophe the solidarity of the Congregation and of the Mennaisian network manifested itself considerably; the challenge will be to pursue it up beyond these first months.

Brother Superior General addressed a letter to the entire Mennaisian Family inviting each one to pray and to mobilise themselves to help our Brothers in Haiti to face all the challenges of reopening the schools and the reconstruction. By mid March, Brother Superior General and Brother Treasurer General will go to the site to meet the Brothers and to evaluate the situation in view of the future.

This issue of the Echoes brings to the entire Congregation the information and the decisions that follow :

1. The animation of the Congregation :

1.1. Visiting the Provinces and Vice-Provinces :

During the last months the members of the General Council made visits and animations in the Provinces and Vice-provinces of the Congregation : Argentina, Chile, Congo, France, Indonesia, Uganda, Polynesia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda. Once again, this survey enables the Council to take into account the diversity of situations in the Congregation :

- All the entities, new or old, are faced with many challenges touching the life of Communities : formation of communities, choice of local superiors, animation and the ongoing formation of the Brothers.
- The organisation of the initial formation necessitates an important investment in Formators as well as in finances. It requires a common reflection in view of offering to the young a quality formation.
- The vocations ministry remains a major preoccupation in all the sectors. Some initiatives are in progress in several Provinces, notably in South America and in Asia. In Haiti and in Africa, the Provinces and Vice-Provinces continue, each year, to welcome some youths.

- Little by little, following the publication of the text of reference on the Mennaisian Family, the formation structures and plans are getting underway. This also still requires to be deepened and developed in liaison with the General Council.

1.2. The initial formation :

Some evolutions touch the initial formation in Africa where the majority of the young men in formation are found. The General Council intend to hold a meeting of the major Superiors concerned next October. It will be about reflecting together on the organisation of the different stages of formation, on the choice of Formators and on their formation, in the spirit of the Ratio.

1.3. The ongoing formation :

The meeting of the ongoing formation team was an occasion of taking stock of the different initiatives launched :

- For the annual theme « *Weaving links as Jesus* », the reception seems globally positive, even though, here and there, it has not always been perfectly integrated into the communitarian projects nor has it been sufficiently emphasised.
- The booklet « *Itinerary for the time of Advent* », there where it was received late, it was appreciated by the Brothers as well as the Laity. The second booklet « *Itinerary for the time of Lent* » has been received in the Provinces. These booklets are instruments at the service of the ongoing formation and of the renewal of the Lectio Divina.

The Formation team presented to the General Council the major orientations of the theme for the coming year 2010-2011. This theme is inspired by the 150th anniversary «Let us sow abundantly». It should reach the major Superiors in the month of June 2010 to facilitate its implementation at the beginning of the school year.

The Council reflected with the ongoing Formation team on the role and the work of the International Commission of formation constituted already. They should convene a meeting in the coming months.

1.4. The sessions of July and August 2010:

The session for the preparation for perpetual vows will take place from 12th July to 15th August. It will take place entirely at Ploërmel for 5 weeks and will include a short stay in Paris before dispersal. It will be animated by the 3 Brothers Assistants.

The session for the Brothers aged 35 to 50 years will begin on the 15th July and will close on the 18th August 2010 with a short stay in Paris. It will take place also at the Mother House of Ploërmel and will be essentially animated by the Ongoing Formation Team.

The two sessions will function autonomously, while having some time in common for the Mennaisian pilgrimage or other activities.

1.5. The Mennaisian Family:

In the survey of the Congregation, the Council notes that the framework document of the Mennaisian Family is still, in some sectors, at the first stage of the personal and communitarian study.

In several Provinces and Vice-Provinces some initiatives are underway, with the Laity, for a deepened reflection on the modalities of engagement and the formation to be followed. An inventory of experiences lived could help one or the other to specify concrete itineraries. The General Council will contribute to this work of clarification in the following months.

2. The decisions of Brother Superior General and his Council

2.1 Nominations of major Superiors :

Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has appointed :

- For the Province Saint Louis de Gonzague (Haiti) :

Brother Hervé ZAMOR, Provincial for a mandate of 6 years
Brother Simon ALPHONSE, Assistant Provincial for a mandate of 3 years
- For the Province Saint Jean-Baptiste (England, France and Italy) :

Brother Jean-Paul PEUZE, Provincial for a mandate of 3 years
Brother Hervé ASSE, Assistant Provincial for a mandate of 3 years
Brother Michel GOUGEON, Assistant Provincial for a mandate of 3 years
- For the Vice-Province Saint Pierre Chanel (Tahiti and the Marquisas Islands)
Brother Henri ALANOU, Vice-Provincial for a mandate of 3 years

2.2 Opening of a new community:

Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, on the request of the Province Jean de la Mennais, has authorised the opening of a new community at Bedford (Canada), considering the closure of that of Philipsburg decided recently. This new community will permit some Brothers to pursue their apostolic engagements in the same sector.

3. The Treasurer General's Financial Report

Brother Treasurer General presented a detailed financial report of the ensemble of the Accounts of the Congregation and of the administrative entities. That always entails a real effort to assemble all the Accounts of the Provinces (and Vice-Provinces) on time, and thus present them to the Council.

In spite of the progress in computerization and the formation of Bursars, some entities still find difficulties in submitting the community Accounts in a way that is sufficiently precise and technical. However, each year we get some improvements, encouraging for the future.

The global financial crisis affected the income of certain Provinces and its effects are felt in the balance sheets. In the same way that affects also the implementation of the Solidarity Fund which, however is being constituted progressively.

The General Council has also approved the contributions from the Provinces and Vice-provinces for the year 2010 and the provisional budget. Given the catastrophe that affects the Province of Haiti, the Council has dispensed it from the contribution to the common fund.

The Council emphasised that the presence of the Treasurer General on the site should be pursued in view of a better accompaniment of the Provinces and the Vice-provinces that need it.

4. Information and communication in the Congregation

The International Council of Information met in Rome for the first time from the 3rd to the 6th of November 2009. This meeting permitted the participants to experience the strength of the fraternity and of the wealth of the international dimension of the Congregation.

During this session, the new Council specified the objectives of their work:

- Being a source of proposals and of prospectives,
- Realising the items of information for the Congregation and the Mennaisian Family (*La Mennais Magazine*, Internet sites such as www.lamennais.org, publications, a stock of images, videos and other media),
- Thus contributing to the education of the media, of Brothers, of the Laity and of the youth of the Mennaisian Family.

The International Council of Information submitted to the General Council an ensemble of reflections and of proposals for the sustenance and the development of communication and information in the entire Congregation.

The General Council invites the Superiors to pay attention to the diffusion of the review *La Mennais Magazine*. It calls to mind that the review is not addressed solely to the Brothers but also to the Laity and the youth of the entire network of the La Mennaisian Family. It is therefore convenient to make it largely available among us.

The Home Page (reception page and summary of headings) of the new Internet site of the Congregation is now fixed and the graphic model ready. The translation work is continuing thanks to the collaboration of many Brothers. Some texts of evaluation of the site are still underway, especially with groups of youth.

The launching of the new site could be made with the opening of the Year John Mary de la Mennais in November 2010.

5. The Year John Mary de la Mennais

The special issue of *La Mennais Magazine* on Father de la Mennais has just been published. The General Council strongly encourages its diffusion and its utilisation for activities with the Laity, the children and the youths.

For the animation of the 150th year, some items (calendar-passport, bookmarks, posters, images etc.) are proposed for the entire Congregation. According to the orders placed by the different Provinces and Vice-Provinces, a feasibility list of different productions has now been drawn up. The sectors will soon be informed.

The General Council calls to mind that it is the responsibility of the Provinces and Vice-Provinces to celebrate, to organise and to animate by diverse initiatives this year of anniversary.

6. The Cause of beatification of Father de La Mennais

The Cause of the Founder has gone through some important stages in the last weeks. First of all there was, in the month of December, the Diocesan Process at Buenos Aires concerning the case of the cure of Enzo Carollo attributed to Father de la Mennais. Then the opening of the dossier of the cure (a ceremony called the « Transunto ») took place on the 24th February 2010, in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome, in the presence of the community of Casa Generalizia (Internet site: www.lamennais.org).

It is an important stage which has been reached thanks to the tenacious work of Brother Delfin López, Postulator. However, we still have a long way to go ! Our persevering and trustful prayer must therefore be continued so that the Lord's will be accomplished.

Calendar of the members of the General Council

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY

10th – 18th March	Haiti (visit with Brother Treasurer General)
23rd – 30th March	Philippines
31st March – 15th April	Indonesia
Mid-April to beginning of May	France
May and June	Rome : Council session

Brother Miguel Ángel MERINO

8th – 23rd March	Spain
April	Different Sessions
May and June	Rome : Council session

Brother Gerard BYARUHANGA

10 th March to 10 April	Kenya and Uganda
16th – 30th April	USA
May and June	Rome : Council session

Brother Gildas PRIGENT

25th March to 18th April	Indonesia
20th – 27th April	Ploërmel
May and June	Rome : Council session

N.B. : The next Council session will be in Rome from 17th May to 18th June 2010