

ECHOES of the General Council



Number 81 - March 2014

The General Council held its regular meeting from 17 to 28 February 2014 at Casa Generalizia Rome.

This session was followed from 4 to 6 March, by the meeting of Provincial/Vice-provincial treasurers of the Congregation with the participation of the Council experts.

This issue of Echoes informs the whole Congregation of the following information and decisions:

1. The animation of the Congregation

In recent months, the Brothers of the General Council participated in several significant events in the life of the Provinces/Vice-provinces:

The opening of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Brothers in Haiti:

The opening celebration at St. Louis Delmas presided by the Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, in the presence of Brothers Gildas Prigent and Guillermo Dávila, Brothers from Canada, France, USA, Mexico, was attended by a large crowd of over 5,000 people, including delegations from all mennaisian schools in Haiti.

The Superior General will participate in the closing of this year on 2nd June 2014 in Port-au-Prince.

The Chapters of the Vice-Provinces of Central Africa (17 to 21 December 2013), Japan-Philippines (27 and 28 December 2013) and the Province of the Immaculate Conception (13 to 15 January 2014).

The Session of Formators at Kisubi from 2 to 7 December 2013.

Meetings of Brothers and lay people in South America (16 to 18 August 2013) and Spain.

The perpetual professions at Dapaong (Togo), Bunia (DRC), Kirambo (Rwanda) and Kisubi (Uganda).

At the same time the Superior General and the Brothers Assistant made visits to different areas of the Congregation and several houses of formation. Some aspects should be emphasized:

In several Provinces and Vice-Provinces, the communities need to be strengthened with regard to their number and more support for animation and ongoing formation. The issue of personal accompaniment of Brothers remains open and requires the vigilance of Major Superiors throughout the Congregation.

The number and dispersion of our local communities make the local Superior a key player in the life of the communities. His formation and his accompaniment, especially by the Major Superiors, are vital to the renewal of the whole Congregation.

International formation houses are an opportunity for the Congregation but also a challenge for quality formation. The selection and formation of Formators remain more than ever a priority for the General Council.

The Mennaisian Family is further addressed in the animation of Provinces and Vice Provinces. But it would be useful to adopt and implement better the Mennaisian framework document.

1.1 The theme of the year: "Being a Brother, good news"

The theme for the 2013-2014 year (or 2014 for the sectors that start the school year in January) **"Being a Brother, good news"** continues to support the animation of communities. A 2nd phase will be given in a few days, it will seek to link with videos, slideshows or photos - different houses of formation (Postulates, Novitiates and Scholasticates) and communities of the Congregation.

The Young people who have prepared these documents will be happy to receive letters of encouragement from communities in various regions of the Congregation.

1.2 The Initial formation

The Formators' session was held at Kisubi (Uganda) from 2 to 7 December 2013. It was attended by a dozen Brothers in-charge of houses of formation, especially at the level of Novitiates and Scholasticates. It was an occasion of fruitful exchanges between Formators and through this joint reflection, encouraged everyone in this demanding and vital responsibility for the Congregation. During this session, the work of preparing the Ratio Studiorum was started, it will continue in the coming months to gradually achieve a document to be submitted first to the General Council and then to the Major Superiors.

January marks the beginning of the year in some areas, many young people have just started their formation:

- ✓ A dozen new Postulants for the first year at Kisubi (Uganda), 5 at Moshi (Tanzania) and 2 new Postulants in El Alto (Bolivia).
- ✓ 6 new Novices at Kasasa (Uganda).

1.3 The Community Superiors

The General Chapter focused on the local Superior: *"To animate the community, the mission of the local Superior is vital. This is why the Provinces/Vice Provinces pay particular attention to his formation. Other documents as well as the Guide for Community Superiors can help the Major Superiors in this task"* (Document of the General Chapter p 10).

To answer this call, the General Council decided to propose an approach to all Provinces/Vice Provinces, in a spirit of communion. A document will be sent shortly to the Major Superiors in view of a consultation of all the local Superiors.

1.3 . Economic issues and the solidarity

The Financial Report of Brother Treasurer General:

Brother Daniel Briant presented, for the first time, the Accounts of the Congregation to the Council. Only the Accounts of the General Administration were approved, for, all the Accounts from the Provinces and Vice-Provinces had not yet reached Rome, they will be presented during the session in June.

The meeting of Provincial / Vice-Provincial treasurers in the presence of the Council of experts:

This meeting took place at the Generalate from 4 to 6 March 2014. Among the questions discussed, we may emphasize in particular, the issue of contributions from the Provinces/Vice Provinces of the Congregation for the operation and status of the Solidarity Fund and how to increase it.

To better take into account the reality of the Congregation and the support the General Administration must provide in several missionary sectors, Brother Treasurer General and the Council of experts proposed another mode of distribution of contribution fees. All Provincial/Vice-Provincial treasurers approved this new approach. Thus the contribution "fee" is now divided into two distinct parts: the "*basic fee*" for the running of the General Administration and Casa Generalizia, and the "*Mission fee*" for solidarity with the poorest sectors.

A major effort will also be made to increase the Solidarity Fund so that it reaches a sufficient amount in the next 5 years. It is from this moment that it could go into action and substantially participate in the financing of solidarity in the Congregation.

1.4 Information

Mr. Michel Tanguy, Director of Information, gave an update on various aspects of communication in the Congregation:

- The new Logo is now well distributed throughout the Congregation and Mennaisian Family. It received a positive and nurturing home. This Logo is used on all types of media and publications as a sign of unity and communion.
- New websites have been created in recent months:
the Province of Haiti (www.haitiprovincefic.com),
the Vice-Province of Central Africa (www.ficvpac.org),
the Province of St. John the Baptist will inaugurate a renovated website on March 19 (www.mennaisien.org).
- The review *La Mennais Magazine* will change its layout from the next issue. This natural evolution after five years should facilitate its reading, stimulate interest and broaden its audience.

The upcoming releases:

- The booklet of Bro. Yannick Houssay, Superior General, for young adults, "*30 Days with Jean Marie de la Mennais, milestones for your life*" is being printed. It should arrive in the Provinces/Vice-provinces in the coming weeks.
- The *2014 Directory* is printed, the shipment will be during the month of March.

A meeting of officials "Information and communication" of religious Congregations was held at Casa Generalizia, Rome, on 27th February 2014. The objective was to create a sharing and a presentation on the presence of Congregations on Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.). The next meeting is scheduled for October 2014.

2 . Decisions of the Superior General and his Council

2.1 Establishment of Districts :

To implement the possibility offered by the Rule of Life to experience the new administrative structure of the District, the Superior General with the consent of his Council decided that:

- The Vice-Province of Central Africa (DRC and Rwanda) becomes the **District of Central Africa**;
- The Vice-Province of West Africa (Benin , Ivory Coast, Senegal and Togo) becomes the **District of West Africa**;
- The Vice-Province of the Japan -Philippines becomes the **District of Japan –Philippines**;
- The Vice-Province of French Polynesia becomes the **District of Polynesia or District Saint Pierre Chanel**.

This change in status will be effective from 1st July, 2014. In the coming weeks, consultations will be launched for the appointment of new Brothers Visitor at the next Council meeting in May. Statutes and economic agreements between each new District and the Mother Province will also be approved at the next session of the General Council.

2.2 Appointment

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council appoints:

Brother **Gabriel Gélinas**, Provincial of Jean de la Mennais (Canada) for a three year period.

2.3 Approval of Provincial/Vice Provincial Chapters:

During this session the Council considered and approved (Rule of Life C. 117) the Chapter texts of the Province of the Immaculate Conception (Argentina and Uruguay), the Vice-Province of Central Africa (DRC and Rwanda) and the Vice-Province of Japan-Philippines. The guidelines and decisions taken are now binding in the Provinces and Vice-Provinces concerned.

The Province of Canada will hold its Chapter in the month of May. It will thus conclude the list of Chapters held after the General Chapter 2012.

Calendar of the members of the General Council

Bro. Yannick HOUSSAY

19 March to 16 April 2014	Kenya and Tanzania
22 to 27 May 2014	Rome (session of the General Council)
28 to 29 May 2014-	Rome (session of Superior generals)
29 May to 4 June	Haiti (closing of the 150th Year)
9 to 27 June 2014	Rome (session of the General Council)

Bro. Gildas PRIGENT

26 March to 2 April 2014	Kisubi (Scholasticate)
2 to 15 April 2014	Vice-Province of Central Africa (RDC)
16 to 18 April 2014	Nairobi
26 April to 7 May 2014	Senegal
10 May 2014	Rome
22 to 27 May and 9 to 27 June 2014	Rome (session of the General Council)

Bro. Gerard BYARUHANGA

12 March to 30 April 2014	Uganda
30 April to 15 May 2014	Rome
15 to 21 May 2014	Canada (Provincial Chapter)
22 to 27 May and 9 to 27 June 2014	Rome (session of General Council)

Bro. Guillermo DÁVILA

30 March to 16 April 2014	USA
16 April to 1st May 2014	Mexico
1st to 7 May	Spain
7 May	Rome
22 to 27 May and 9 to 27 June 2014	Rome (session of the General Council)

The next General Council meeting will be held in Rome from 22 to 27 May and from 9 to 27 June 2014.