

MESSAGE OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL



Jean-Marie de la Mennais has been our guide throughout these 25 days

We have enjoyed his closeness. We have walked with him in the drives of the Mother House. We have more clearly heard his call to live for God Alone.

With the lay delegates who joined us, we also delighted in walking in the footsteps of our founder, in St-Malo and then at La Chesnaie, these places that he loved so much and where we also imagined him in the company of his brother Feli.

But it was especially in the chapel, around his tomb that we liked to pray, to listen to him, heart to heart, allowing ourselves to be penetrated by the Spirit which set him on fire with the desire to evangelize children and young people. We are now even more ready to give our lives so that the “poor children” to whom we are sent may be saved.

This Chapter was a time of grace for us. We hope that it will be also, for all the Congregation and for the Mennaisian Family. Thanks to modern communication many people were able to follow the daily events which marked the life of our gathering. Now it is by our word and our witness that they will be able to grasp the depth of the message.

We are a family made up of brothers and Lay Mennaisians.

The presence of Lay delegates for five days at the Mother house enriched our discussions and helped us to understand better what we are invited to experience together. Journeying with them, they evoked in us the desire to respond better to our vocation as Brothers, and to live the educational mission in the context of a rich ecclesial experience, a sign of the Spirit. They expressed the desire to enter deeper into communion with us.

We brothers, we hope to respond with them to God’s call to us today. Each one of us felt drawn into a deeper fraternal relationship, to find new ways to build the Kingdom.

Now we must return to our Brothers and Lay people, to children and young people. With them we must commit ourselves to a new evangelization.

Evangelization for us is to be sent to children and young people.

We have been called by God, not primarily to be happy in this world, but that the kingdom of Heaven may be announced to the poor. So we are called to be messengers of Love, Witnesses of Him who the Father sent onto the world not to condemn it but to save it. We are Children of God with the Only Son, children who are “sent”. We will go wherever we are sent seeking only to do God’s will. We are Brothers, friends, disciples of Him who did everything the Father asked Him. Thus let us listen to this “For God Alone” which we so often love to sing. We like the meaning of the vow of obedience that Father de la Mennais demanded of his brothers. It liberates us for the mission and makes us available to proclaim the Kingdom.

Evangelization for us means to have the heart of a missionary

To leave our own country step away from our own habits, leave behind what we know, what we are comfortable with, to be open to other cultures, to support other confreres, to open new missions, to educate poor children, to bring aid to those who place themselves at the service of the most disadvantaged, everywhere in the world, to be big hearted, these are the calls that God addresses to the congregation and to the Mennaisian Family today.

In the footsteps of our predecessors who have sown the Word far from their own country, giving their life so generously, we wish to embark on the same missionary effort. Generosity is not lacking, especially among the young brothers and among many young people and the Mennaisian Family. With them we will, again, be able to respond to the call of the Spirit to leave our own country to be witnesses to the mercy of God.

Evangelization for us is to understand that we are responsible for the salvation of Young people.

Young people are the future and the joy of the world. They represent the greatest gift of God. But they also represent what is most fragile.

We are their guardian Angel. We are to them like a shepherd taking care of his sheep, not wanting to lose even one of them.

We want to walk with them, listen to them, and help them to find the road to true liberty and to be truly human. It is a road that leads to Christ.

We are called to be Christ among them. It is a demanding vocation but a great vocation because it is that of Christ himself.

We hope that we may act in such a way that across the whole congregation our centres of education may be places that open the way to true freedom, which leads to Christ, the friend of young people. We know that He alone can be their true path to self understanding.

We believe in young people in their ability to become, in their turn, disciples of Christ. We believe that many possess His Spirit even without realizing it. We are trying to make them hear the voice of the Beloved of their soul, who knocks on their door.

With the Lay people of the Mennaisian Family, we carry this concern, but peacefully, because we have confidence in Providence who is for each of us more than a mother and constantly inspires us as to how we need to help them.

Evangelization for us is to believe that only the Spirit knows how to speak about Christ and it is to witness to a meeting that completely changed our lives.

It is the Spirit who evangelizes. He lives within the mystery of each of the children and young people that we serve, the adults with whom we work and whom we encounter. It is important today, more than ever, to believe in the power of the word of God, a living Word more incisive than a double edge sword which penetrates the heart and enkindles love.

How can we show Christ to children and young people, to their families, to adults who have never heard of Him? How can we offer the Good News of life to those who have known him but have allowed the light to dim within their hearts?

Where can we find the strength to offer to young people this Good News while so many things hide the face of Christ?

In all countries young people need to be accompanied. They need not only teachers but also witnesses.

Who can have faith in Christ without the Spirit? What can someone say who has no faith in Jesus?

Our opinion of our brothers, our opinion of young people, our opinion of adults must be the same as Christ's.

We have perceived the urgency of a careful listening to this Word which is Christ himself coming to us to transform us into his likeness.

Only those who daily learn from Him, in the secret of their heart, can then, inspired with love find words to witness and in their turn to touch hearts.

No words can express these things. Only the experience of interior communion with the Spirit can reveal the secret of the Father's love for those who, like us, are called to be in Christ, Bodies given and Blood shed.

Evangelization for us is to love to be a brother.

"Those who are consecrated are specialists in the mission which starts from the evidence of God in human kind".(Salvadore Currò)

The encounter with Christ reveals the richness and the beauty of our humanity. Because it is through our humanity that Christ comes to us. Such is the mystery of the Incarnation. Our humanity is transfigured in Christ.

It is through our relations with our Brothers, with our educational contacts with young people, with our friendship with adults that we perform the work of evangelization. At the heart of our human relationships, an interior healing light is revealed. To be a saint is to be fully human in the image of Christ. We do not attain this alone but in union with our Brothers. Only communities that are truly fraternal are able to astonish the world and to reveal the living Christ.

We are Brothers to our brothers, Brothers to all who come to us, brothers especially to young people. Because we are the Brothers of Christ. Remember always that it is our Communion that gives us strength. It is our unity which is our true and only riches, that which lasts, that which no one can take from us and makes our lives fruitful.

We love our vocation and we desire to find ways of making it loved, not for our own glory but because it will enrich the lives of so many young people both now and in the future.

To love our vocation does not mean to examine ourselves as in a mirror, it is to love the work of God and to render to him glory.

To pass on our charism is not to believe that we are the centre of the world it is to desire that in our face may shine the face of Christ who welcomes little children, to the glory of His father.

By the faithful response to our vocation, Jesus still welcomes little children and grants that they may grow in human virtues. He is the Living one who brings them joy.

To love our vocation also means to believe that the fruitfulness of our lives does not depend on us but on the living God.

I think especially here of the brothers who can no longer be close to children or young people because of illness or their age or because the work they have been assigned to does not allow it. They need to remember that the value of their lives is different from any personal glory that they may receive. Jesus gave us life by dying on the cross. With Him we are the grain which dies and which bears much fruit. By the offering of our lives we live fully the charism of our congregation, the value of our life is not measured by the sum of our activities, even if they are adapted to the times in which we live, it is measured by our love.

By giving our life we offer life, we invoke hope in the heart of all those whom we meet.

Conclusion

Brothers at the close of this Chapter may it be given to us to taste anew and to live these words of Jean-Marie de la Mennais: have “the desire to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, to be gentle and humble of heart as he was, to be like him obedient, even to death, following the will of our Heavenly Father”. Peace be with you! Peace in your hearts whose every affection and desire belong to God. Peace, perfect peace, in all your undertakings.

I would wish also that you might keep as a guide for life these words of our founder, words that we might each keep with us to support us in our daily following of Jesus and to help us to lead young and not so young on their path of life: “To hold ourselves in great dependence on the Spirit of God and to never sadden Him, to be attentive to understand what he asks of us; to question him often, and when we are uncertain about which way to take to pray to him with renewed ardour, that he may enlighten our souls.

By the prayers of Mary may we always be inspired with a great love for each other and may this communion in the midst of the Mennaisian Family, far from turning us inward open us to this world, that Jesus loves and that he wishes to save.

God alone in time! God alone in eternity!

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