

# The Mennaisian Charisma

1966 - 2016



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It is 50 years now since the recognition of the heroicity of virtues of Jean-Marie de La Mennais the Servant of God.

On 15th December 1966, was published the decree of recognition of the virtues lived in a heroic manner by the Servant of God, Jean-Marie Robert de la Mennais.

This publication was preceded by the preparatory meeting of the General Congregation of the 21st June 1966, attended by Pope Paul VI, sixteen cardinals, four bishops, eight prelates and eleven consulters. At the end of the meeting the Pope signed the decree of the heroic virtues, a decree published on 15th December, exactly 50 years ago.

Brother Gabriel Potier, the Postulator, thus concluded the article about the event: "The feeling that dominates the members of the Mennaisian Family is that of thanksgiving. Hasn't the Lord glorified his servant as we have always prayed him? And is he not always disposed to even glorify him more, by granting, through our intercession, the happy outcome of the examination of a miracle, the next and last stage of a long and difficult journey since the death of our Founder until his beatification?"

Henceforth, 50 years have passed since this happy event, in which we had placed our hopes of seeing Jean-Marie "glorified". We know how things have evolved, even in the most recent events. How can we understand the vicissitudes of such a "long and difficult" process marked by obstacles?

Only God, in his wisdom, disposes times and ways of every event, and this is certainly one of the most important in the history of our Congregation. We can only seek to understand the messages that facts offer us and put us in the just attitude so that this event becomes an occasion of renewal, of new

fervour, of new impulses, and of a new actualisation of the charism that our founder left us.

The Superior General, at that time Brother Élisée Rannou, concluded thus his comment at the time of the publication of the decree:

"In this post-conciliar period of spiritual renewal we shall never sufficiently meditate on the examples of the Venerable Founder of our Institute. If, like him, we know how to overcome personal interests, when the challenge is the glory of Christ and the docility to the directives of the Church, we will prove ourselves worthy sons of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, to whom a Roman prelate confessed to have discovered a faithfulness without fault, a clear sign of authentic holiness.

Certainly, during these 50 years, the Congregation (like all the others in the West), seems to have gone through difficult times and deep crises. The number of the members of the Congregation has reduced by more than a half, the average age is much higher, the number of schools and communities that have been closed outnumber those that are opened. And yet, in this period of exodus, of desert and crisis, signs of hope are not lacking. New vocations, the presence of young Brothers who give life to 'Mennaisian' places and encourage the opening of new foundations; the charism of Jean-Marie has been deepened and is undergoing a new impetus; the Mennaisian Family is extended to the Laity, so does the Mennaisian spirituality; Communion in the Church is always more in agreement with the instances of renewal and adaptation proposed by the Popes or local Bishops.

The signs of hope that we note are still many today and they confirm that the charism, the spirit

and the presence of Jean-Marie are very alive even in these difficult times. They comfort us and push us to a greater creative fidelity.

Perhaps this is the "favorable moment" for the beatification?

Let us entrust these choices to the Lord. Let us work to live the effects of the presence of Jean Marie de la Mennais in the Church: his unfailing fidelity, missionary enthusiasm, evangelisation through school and culture, his compassion for the little ones, his humility of heart, and in a daily and simple apostolate, his filial abandonment to Providence, his solid and profound faith ...

Thus we will be able to prepare ourselves for his "glorification" and ensure that it is not for us the search for an unwarranted "prestige" but that it may become a new stage of growth of the Mennaisian charism in each one of us and in the Church.

"Glorification" in the language of the Gospel means fidelity to the Father and the Mission of salvation pushed to the heroism of the Cross. For that we must pray and set ourselves on the journey. And then the difficulties and trials that we live in many parts of the Congregation will become seeds of fertility for the whole Mennaisian Family, for the whole Church and especially for the little ones that our founder entrusted to us.

*Brother Dino De Carolis Postulator*



*Brother Elisée, presenting his homage to his Holiness Pope Paul VI.*

*He was accompanied by Bro. Gabriel-Henri Potier.*

## The publication of the decree



This morning the 15th December, in the presence of the Holy Father, the ceremony of reading and promulgating the decree proclaiming the heroic virtues of 6 new Venerables took place. (We know that under the old regulations, the title of Venerable could be given to Father Jean de la Mennais, because his Cause of Beatification and Canonisation had been introduced in the Court of Rome before the publication of the new Regulation).

According to the former Postulators in office, the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI considerably reduced the ceremonial. The one of this morning was very simple.

The Postulators had been notified less than 24 hours in advance. They were summoned to be at the Vatican on the 15th of December at 10:30 am. They were expressly advised not to be accompanied. At 10 o'clock precisely, they were 5 in number - one of them presented 2 Causes - They were welcomed at the Clementine Hall door by an officer of the Pontifical Guard and immediately entered the "Tronetto" Hall where, shortly after, they were joined by His Eminence Antonelli, the Secretary

of the Congregation of Rites, R. P. Perez, Promoter of the Faith and a Consulter of the Congregation of Rites. Then came Cardinal Aloisi Masella, Ponent of 3 Causes, and Cardinal Larraona, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Tisserant was attending a meeting of the Consistorial and could not be present at the ceremony of promulgation of the Decree.

At the invitation of the Private Secretary of the Holy Father, the small group of 10 people was greeted by the papal guard and headed for the Pope's Library. A few moments later the door opened and His Holiness invited them to enter. After receiving the homage of each of the Postulators, Paul VI advanced towards a slightly elevated throne, prepared for the occasion in the middle of the library. Opposite to the Holy Father and in front of a long table, the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites took his place. On the right and left of the Pope, the Cardinals, the Consultants and the Postulators occupied the seats arranged in a semi-circle.

After the recitation of the "Veni, Sanctus Spiritus" by the Holy Father, the decrees of each one were read giving a brief summary of the life and activity of the new Venerables and confirming that they practiced to a heroic degree the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity towards God and towards the neighbour, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, strength, as well as the other virtues of humility, chastity ...

For the first 3 Causes, those of Mgr Grandin, O.M.I., of Gaspare Bertoni, founder of the Stigmatini, Fr. Beltrami, Salesian of Don Bosco, the General Congregation took place on the 24th last May. For the other three, that of Father de la Mennais, that of Fr. Petit, S.I., and that of Mother Michelotti, Foundress of the Poor Servants of the Sacred Heart, the General Congregation took place on the 21st last June.

The Decrees should have about the same length; in fact they differ according to the

redactor. Today the Bishop Secretary has brought them all to the same length, suppressing in reading what he, without doubt, judged less important.

When the reading ended, the Holy Father asked for some general explanations about each Servant of God: the region where he lived, the characteristics of his holiness, his type of apostolate, the present vitality of his undertakings... His Eminence The Secretary of the Congregation of Rites having answered all the questions, the Holy Father again gave his approval and ended with the prayer of thanksgiving, thanking God for what he is doing in his saints and by his saints.

The Holy Father then spoke briefly with each of the Postulators. To the signatory of these lines, he expressed among other things - his great satisfaction of seeing the Cause of J.-M. de la Mennais moving towards beatification.

According to the ceremonial so far, each Postulator had to address a speech of thanksgiving to the Pope. The 5 Postulators had their work in their hands, but none of them was invited to read his. Smiling, the Holy Father made a sign to show them where they could be put on his desk. The 10 assistants then withdrew after receiving the Apostolic Blessing. The ceremony lasted a little over an hour.

*Brother Gabriel-Henri Potier  
Procurator General to the Holy- See  
Postulator of the Cause*

