

Novena for the month of Novembre 2016 (for adults)

## «Jean-Marie, the brother of children»

### Introduction

°Jean-Marie was guided by Providence to take care of little children and young people. Already as a young man he had foreseen and adolescence, the construction of a society without God.

Everything had to be organised with only human means, and reason without faith was to be the guide. A dangerous threat in the eyes of Jean-Marie, a young Christian, who wanted to found every aspect of life and society on the basis of the Gospel: the dignity of the human person, the values of freedom and respect for each life, the fundamental equality of all members of the great family of God, the Fatherhood of God who watches over every person especially the little ones. Already, in their early years, it was necessary to educate children in the light of the Gospel and so it was necessary to make a school that would illuminate the culture by faith, which would give the human mind its true divine horizon.

The danger that Jean-Marie saw materializing in the mutual schools was that knowledge and religion marched on parallel roads where knowledge was simply by rote learning, without a heart or a vision of those who lived their faith and could combine it with the culture, although it was still very elementary.

And then Jean-Marie offered himself to found, to support, to improve, and to expand schools to give a real education and "Christian" instruction to children and young people. Practically he brought them Jesus and his Gospel, by means of the school, by the teaching inspired by faith and education of the heart rooted in the Gospel.

Féli addressed his brother Jean-Marie, telling him: "The schools of the Brothers, that is your work."

### Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November

Already in 1816, in a letter to the prefect of the Cotes du Nord, he had written:

"We have been complaining about the corruption of the children in the cities for a long time, and their precocious immorality grieves us. Even the courts have been alarmed to have to punish such young offenders for such heinous crimes,... whose frequency were rare in the past, especially among girls. We have been occupied,... to multiply establishments where the middle class or the rich families could find a refuge from the dangers that surround them on all sides, and a solid and truly Christian instruction. (Fr. Symphorien: Lettère I, pag 143-144.)

**Help us, Lord, to listen to the cry of the children who ask for the bread of instruction and Christian education.**

### Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November

Today we still pay great attention to children and young people, but often in a reductive and disrespectful manner. It is a great pity to see with what contempt we hold man! [...] We consider man as simply a physical being and not like an intelligent, immortal person that is passing on this earth while preparing himself for the eternal society of God in whose image

he has been created. He is barely born when we remove him from religion for fear that it might teach him the excellence of its nature, duties, hopes and that its holy doctrines might feed him with too much love. This child taken from the bosom of his dear mother is thrown into the arms of philosophy, which hastens to extinguish the budding religious sentiments while being satisfied with tending the bodily needs of so vile an animal. She believes she has taken care of his bodily needs when she has given him materialistic instruction and put him on the path for the prizes of reading and mathematics. ( Jean-Marie de <la Mennais, " On religious education" p. 1)

**Help us, Lord, to know the real needs of children and young people and to reach out to them with respect, love, and with the eyes of faith. Through the intercession of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, Lord, hear us.**

### Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November

Jean-Marie has a clear vision of his foundation: to give Jesus to the children and the young people by means of education.

The great advantage of such an education is « to instill, early enough, in the child God's love and the knowledge of religion, to engrave in these young minds the notions of morality and duty, to inspire in them the horror of vice and to caution them from their earliest years, with good habits, against the seduction of bad examples and passions. And this is precisely what should be the main goal of education. » (John -Marie de La Mennais, The Friend of Religion, No. 339, p. 403)

**Help us, Lord, to lead children to God by offering them a joyful and solid Christian education. Through the intercession of Jean-Marie de La Mennais, Lord, hear us.**

### Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November

Jean-Marie wants teachers to transmit to their students the faith they themselves have lived first.

It is not enough to give a child the little vague knowledge of religion he needs. We must make him love and practise it. What interest will he have in persuading others, if he himself is not thoroughly permeated? We speak with conviction about what we believe, with love about what we love, with ardour and zeal about what we feel and hope. What favourable comments can a non-believer make? Will he convince children to go to confession, if he himself never goes? Will he dare comment on a student's infrequent reception of the sacraments, if he himself does not receive them? Will he blame him for not fulfilling his Easter duties, if he himself does not fulfil them? If decency, hypocrisy, or politics mention something on the subject, won't these words seem cold and lifeless? He will be happy if he does not betray his religion at some point! We all know how children pick up on the ridiculous, the defects, and the vices of those who are appointed as their teachers. The students will note all that could indicate that the teacher is irreligious, and what damage will this fatal discovery cause? (Jean-Marie de la Mennais, « The friend of Religion » n° 339, p. 403)

Help us, Lord, to be witnesses to the faith that we preach, so that the word that we proclaim may bear fruit in the hearts of children. Through the intercession of Jean-Marie de La Mennais, Lord, hear us.

## Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November

*Jean-Marie wants that the little children that the Brothers evangelise be actively inserted in the Christian community.*

"Neglect nothing for the progress of your students, but apply yourself especially to teaching them religion and to inspiring them with a spirit of piety." (Letters to the Brothers)

Help us, Lord, to be active in the Church ourselves, which Jean-Marie loved so much and thus be able to introduce our students to the great family of Jesus. Through the intercession of Jean-Marie de La Mennais, Lord, hear us.

## Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November

*At the centre of teaching and educational work of the Brothers there must be religion, the Gospel, and Jesus.*

"What you're telling me about your children's attachment to you makes me hope that they will benefit from your lessons, the main purpose must be religion and, consequently, the study of catechism; this is the essence and the main purpose of your beautiful and sacred mission... On the occasion of first communion... you should have had, without doubt, new consolations. May God be blest! "(Letter to Br. Emeric)

Help us, Lord, in our various educational activities not to forget that everything comes from Jesus and must return to Him Like Jean-Marie has taught us, through the intercession of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, hear us o Lord.

## Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Novembre

*Making Jesus known and loved to the children and young people: This is the purpose of schools and the Mennaisian educational centres.*

"Strive to inspire the children of your school with the spirit of piety; it is essential " "You must be very happy in the midst of the little children that you teach, inspire them all with a great love for Jesus Christ and a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. " (Letters to the Brothers)

Help us, Lord, to make you known and loved by the children and the young people, as the only friend, a brother who leads to the Father, and Master full of love. Through the intercession of Jean-Marie de La Mennais, Lord, hear us.

## Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November

*A mennaisian school is an integral school, where all the human dimensions are evangelised.*

"In these schools, - he said to the parents while presenting the foundation project - we form the whole man, his heart as well as his mind ... A child acquires knowledge that will be indispensable to him later, regardless of the state he is destined to and, at the same time, he is preserved from the vices that would make him unhappy all his life. "(Sermons II, p.794)

Help us, Lord, to give students the knowledge of life and of the world, placing at the center the living relationship with Jesus the source of everything.

Through the intercession of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, Lord, hear us.

## Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November, feast of our Father Jean-Marie

### The Word of Jesus

"Then people brought little children to him, for him to lay his hands on them and pray. But the disciple scolded them, but Jesus said, "Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as them that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Mt 19, 13).

### The Word of the Church

"The Gospel is the true antidote to spiritual poverty. A Christian is called upon to spread this good news of liberation everywhere. (Pope Francis).

### The Word of Jean-Marie de La Mennais

"Sublime vocation! It is that of Jesus Christ himself. He left the bosom of the Father to do what you do by following his example. Scripture tells us that he went about doing good, instructing the poor ...; and you also teach the true doctrine to those who are ignorant about it, and deprived of your lessons, they would always be ignorant about it ... "(Sermons II, p.794)

We thank you, Lord, for giving us this sublime vocation. Grant that we may be worth it, support us in difficulties and fatigue, so that we can always and joyfully proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to the children and young people.

- Choose a suitable song for each day.
- We pray for the sick, the needy, and the following intentions (they can be said aloud).
- Prayer for the beatification and canonization of John Mary de la Mennais

### O God, our Father!

You have aroused Jean-Marie de la Mennais and You gave him a fiery zeal and iron courage in the service of the Gospel.

Through him, you have given birth in the Church to two congregations devoted to Christian education of the little ones and of the poor.

Grant us to be faithful to the spirit of our Father. May his charism of founder be constantly deepened and developed in our religious family and throughout the Mennaisian family.

By his prayer, grant us the gift of a new Pentecost that transforms our hearts and make us bolder to make Jesus Christ and his Gospel known to the children and the young people of today.

For the glory of your Name, let the holiness of our Father be recognised and proclaimed by the Church.

Hear also the prayer we address to you now through his intercession ... (time of silence)

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**O Lord Jesus, glorify your servant, Venerable Jean-Marie de la Mennais!**