

ECHOES of the GENERAL COUNCIL

Number 61

November 2007

The General Council session was held at the Ploërmel Mother House in two parts : from September 27 to October 9 and then October 26 – 30, 2007.

In the interval, the meeting of the Major Superiors of the Congregation took place.

During their stay in France, the members of the General Council met the Provincial Council of France and had the occasion to visit some communities.

This issue of the Echoes conveys to the entire Congregation the following news and decisions taken :

1. Outcome of the Session on Vocations Ministry :

The General Council took the time to evaluate the session on Vocations Ministry which was held at Castelgandolfo last August.

The Superior General's letter, "*To Call, the Way of Hope*", recaptures the essence of the work carried out during the session and presents the main suggestions made by the participants. It is an invitation addressed to the entire Congregation to pursue and re-invigorate the work of the vocations ministry.

2. Life of the Provinces and Vice-Provinces :

The General Council made an overview of some sectors of the Congregation following the different visits of the Superior General and his Assistants : Province of Argentine-Uruguay, Province of Haïti, Province of the United States, Congo. The General Council has particularly studied the text of the last Provincial Chapter of the United States and approved it.

3. The Session of the Major Superiors : October 10 - 25:

The 20 participants at the session (the members of the General Council, the Major Superiors, the Secretary General, and the Treasurer General for two days) were welcomed at the Ploërmel Mother House where they were provided with an optimum working environment, board and lodging. The sunny but somehow cool weather filled the three and a half days of the Mennaisian pilgrimage as well as the moments of relaxation.

In the spirit of the General Chapter, this session was meant to be an « **enlarged council** » to share with the members of the General Council the main issues affecting the life of the Congregation. The schedule of these fifteen days also made it possible for the participants to review all the major themes of animation and to deal with some specific questions.

Here below are the **major orientations** that came out of this session which the General Council will endeavour to implement in the coming months :

- **Shared Mission** :

A meeting is scheduled for August 19 – 24, 2008 at Ploërmel, to last five days.

Objective :

To come up with a document that is somehow legal which will spell out a **framework for the Shared Mission** and to elaborate a **formation programme** for the laity and the Brothers. In order to attain this objective, the results of the May – June 2007 survey and the lived experiences in the various provinces and vice-provinces will be useful, as well as what is lived out in other congregations. The General Council will produce a working document on this theme.

This meeting will constitute a working and discerning session made up of participants convened as follows :

	Laity	Brothers
England	1	1
Argentina	4	2
West Africa	2	2
Canada	6	4
Chile – Bolivia	2	2
Spain	6	4
U.S.A.	1	1
France	8	5
Haïti	2	2

	Laity	Brothers
Indonesia	0	1
Italy	1	1
Japan	2	1
Tanzania – Kenya	2	2
Uganda	2	2
Philippines	2	1
French Polynesia	2	1
Rwanda – R.D.C.	2	2
TOTAL = 79	45	34

- **The Ratio** :

The text of the Ratio, now printed (in English, Spanish and French), will be first sent to the formators, accompanied by an introduction prepared by the General Council. It will be eventually available to all the Brothers in the Provinces and Vice-Provinces. The General Council will also send an introduction accordingly.

- **Initial Formation** :

Several **meetings for the formation of formators** have been scheduled by the General Council during the coming months. Particular attention will focus on the Postulate level without neglecting other levels, with special concern towards the harmonisation and coherence of the entire formation programme according to the spirit of the Ratio.

For the **preparation to Perpetual Profession**, the General Council proposes a formation taking place from within the communities where the young Brothers concerned are living, with the help of some booklets for personal accompaniment. Then there will be an international session which will take place in Rome and at Ploërmel in July – August 2008.

- **Ongoing Formation** :

To allow all the Brothers to grow in the following of Christ, the General Council, the Major Superiors, and the communities must all be involved in this endeavour. During the Major Superiors session, a number of elements have been foreseen :

- A theme for the **year 2008 – 2009** has been formulated : The Brother's Identity in the context of the Shared Mission with the Laity.
- **Some proposals on the level of the** Congregation, organizing international formation sessions for seven weeks.
- **Accompaniment by the General Council** regarding the initiatives taken by the Provinces and Vice-Provinces.

The idea of an international formation team was raised. However, before that is put in place, it is necessary to have a Brother in each Province or Vice-Province responsible for ongoing formation.

- **Vocations Ministry** :

In order to respond to the expressed wish of the participants during the last August session at Castalgandolfo, another session on this theme will take place in 2009 or 2010. The objectives and number of participants will be determined later.

- **Missionary Engagement** :

The Major Superiors attention was drawn to two issues :

- Participation in a mission undertaking in **Southern Sudan** (see Echoes No. 59). This project, initiated by the Unions of Superiors General at the request of the Bishops of Southern Sudan, is in the realm of 'education', to begin with, by establishing a normal school that will form teachers for all the dioceses in the south of the country, thereby gradually making it possible to propagate Catholic teaching. The Brothers of Christian Schools have spearheaded this project. The General Council has requested the Province of Uganda and the Vice-Province of Tanzania / Kenya to be actively involved in supporting this project by providing personnel (opening a community) in the course of 2008.
- Reinforcement of the **mission in Indonesia** : It has been strongly felt that **2 more Brothers** be sent to this mission in September 2008. We very much count on the involvement of all the Provinces and Vice-Provinces of the Congregation in this undertaking. It is an appeal addressed to the heart of every Brother to listen to the Lord's invitation who knocks at each one's door. We put this in the hands of Providence.

- **Solidarity Fund** :

The last General Chapter dealt with the issue of solidarity in our Institute. In order to proceed on this subject that has featured over and over again since some years ago, the following was proposed :

- Putting in place a **consultative committee** (think tank) which will have as its objective to prepare a dossier on this issue for the next meeting of the Major Superiors and Treasurers in March 2009. This committee will be assisted by advice from lay people who are experts and competent in the field.
- Objective : To establish a **solidarity fund** at the level of the Congregation.

- **The Rule of Life** :

The last General Chapters brought about some important modifications to the Rule of Life, especially with regard to the Government of the Congregation (for example, the suppression of the Regions). In the hope of revisiting this issue at the next General Chapter of 2012, an **international commission** will prepare a document to be presented to the Major Superiors in March 2009.

- **Vade Mecum** :

In order to help the Major Superiors in their work, the General Council has come up with a document dealing with the major issues pertaining to their role of governing the Provinces and Vice-Provinces, a sort of practical guide entitled 'Vade Mecum'. This document will be used as **a tryout till 2009**. It will be revised during the next meeting of the Major Superiors in 2009.

Other topics were discussed, such as the preparation for the 150th anniversary of the death of Father de la Mennais in 2010, the issue of our reviews of the Congregation (La Chronique and Etudes Mennaisiennes).

Finally, **the next meeting of the Major Superiors** has been scheduled for March 2009. A **session** of the Treasurers will take place at the end of this meeting of the Major Superiors.

4. Decisions by the Superior General and his Council

Appointment of a Novice Master for South America :

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

Brother Oscar Ruiz CASTRO, Novice Master in South America, for the first term of three years.

The Novitiate will be in the community of *Quinta Normal* in Chile and will start with one Chilean novice at the beginning of 2008.

Calendar of Members of the Conseil General Council

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY

November 2 – December 7	Rome
December 8 – January 5	Japan and Philippines
January	Rome

Brother Miguel Ángel MERINO

November 6 – 9	Rome
November 9 – 30	Chile and Bolivia
December – January 12	Spain
January 12- 26	Argentina
February 1	Rome

Brother Gerard BYARUHANGA

November 8 – 16	Rome
November 16 – January 10	Uganda
January 10 – February 10	Canada
February 10	Rome

Brother Gildas PRIGENT

November 7 – 28	Indonesia
November 30 – December 11	Rome
December 11 – January 5	Togo, Abidjan
January 5 – 15	Rome
January 15 – 25	Rwanda
January 25 – February 15	France
February 15	Rome

N.B. : The next General Council session will take place in Rome from February 15 to March 8, 2008.