

THE CAUSE OF VENERABLE FATHER DE LA MENNAIS
From The Chronicle, Tome XIV, no 9, December 1901, p.268-274

Using this title, The Chronicle published, about two years ago, a report on the solemn feast which had been celebrated at Ploërmel on October 7. It was, our readers did not forget it, about the formation of an ecclesiastical Tribunal, whose responsibility depends on the Bishop of Vannes, for the trial said of the Ordinary, for the Cause of beatification and canonization of our Venerabler Father de la Mennais, founder of our Institute and the Institute of the Sisters of Providence of St.Brieuc.

Since that date, how nice it is to recall that the Tribunal, with a zeal and devotedness for which the Institute will never be thankful enough, has held 86 sessions and heard 26 witnesses, 10 official witnesses, and 19 co-witnesses, a total of 55 depositions.

The trial of the Ordinary, opened, we said it already, on October 1899, was closed solemnly on August 1901. On that day, Bishop Latieule, bishop of Vannes, giving the Servant of God a new proof of his veneration, and our Institute a mark not less touching, nor less appreciated of his great sympathy, had left, especially for us, on a trip from Vannes to Ploërmel.

At 2 o'clock, everything was ready in the Chapel for the announced ceremony. Independently from the Tribunal, the witnesses to the deed: (Canon Perrichot, former parish priest of Trinité-Porhoët, and Father Daniche, missionary in Haiti), and Father Giffard, pro-notary for the Cause, standing in half a circle around His Grace, we could see in the choir stalls: our Reverend Brother Superior General and the members of his council, R. F. Freydier, S. J., from Toulouse; Messrs Geffray, rector of Montertelot; Loyer, rector of Augan; Bavard, rector of Loyat; Courtois, rector of Caro; Messrs the assistant priests of Ploërmel; Father Baslé, assistant priest of Saint-Etienne of Rennes.

In the center of a table placed in the middle of the choir, there was a book of the holy Gospels. We could see, on two other tables, the documents of the trial, in other words, the depositions constituting a volume containing more than 2000 handwritten pages, artistically bound at the Mother-House thanks to the brothers, and numerous things needed for the ceremony.

The Veni Creator hymn being over, Father Mathorel, the notary for the Cause, reads some documents. B Then the Superior General reads a formula in which he swears, under oath, with his hand placed on the Gospel book, to take to Rome, to the Sacred Congregation of the Rites, in the name of the Bishop of Vannes and the members of the Tribunal, the documents of the trial, and signs his name. Then, numerous conclusions are read by Father Mathorel, and signed successively by the Bishop, the members of the Jury, and the co-witnesses.

The Advocate for the Cause now reads a note concerning the appending and description of the seal of the diocesan Bishop, and those of the Jury members. And after the reading of a letter from the Bishop, another letter from the judges, and a third letter that, in turn, the Promoters of the Faith, the co-witnesses sign the documents presented to them, and the ceremony ends with the solemn hymn Magnificat. In fact, the depositions are written in duplicata, one to be given to the Sacred Congregation of the Rites, the other to be kept for the Archives at the Bishopric of Vannes.

That is, in a few lines which do not pretend to say everything, how ended, on August 20, in the chapel of the Mother-House the trial of the Ordinary for the Cause of the Servant of God, Father Jean-Marie de la Mennais.

After the ceremony, the Superior General sent to the Brothers of France the following letter that, we believe, should be inserted here.

MY DEAREST BROTHERS,

The informative trial for the introduction of the Cause of our venerated Father de la Mennais has come to an end in the chapel of the Mother-House, under the presidency of Bishop Latieule, bishop of Vannes. Appointed by Her Majesty to take to the Sacred Congregation of the Rites the documents of the trial of the Ordinary, I wish to ask you not to forget in your prayers the pilgrims to the Eternal City, and offer to heaven the deepest prayers for the success of the Cause that is so dear to all of us. Consequently, you shall answer with your whole heart to my call, I am sure of it, 1st having a Mass celebrated in each one of the parishes, or in the chapels of your boarding schools, 2nd offering to my intentions your communion of the first Friday of the month and that of the second Sunday in September. This latter date, remembering the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, will also recall to you, happy coincidence! the 121st anniversary of the birth of our venerated Founder. Double raison, is it not true, to make your prayers more fervent and to have more hopes in our hearts! My dearest Brothers, yours sincerely, with my most complete devotedness to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.
Brother Abel, Superior General.

The following day, August 30, after having attended the closing of the second retreat, the Reverend Brother Superior General and his two travelling companions left for Lavacan where they spent too short moments with the dear Brothers of the Province of Sainte Marie. They arrived in Rome, in the morning of September 4, right on time to hand to the Sacred Congregation of the Rites the documents of the trial.

AA delay of a few hours,@ said the Reverend Brother, A and we would have been... too late!@ In return for his precious parcel, the Reverend Brother received from the Substitute Bishop of the Congregation of the Rites a document whose translation is the following:

I, the undersigned, certifies that Reverend Brother Abel, Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Instruction, has given to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation an authentic copy of the trial investigated in the curia of the Ordinary in Vannes, about the holiness in general of the Servant of God, Jean-Marie Robert de la Mennais, founder of the Brothers of Christian Instruction and the Daughters of Providence of St.Brieuc. In the Secretariat of the same Sacred Congregation , on September 4, 1901, PHILIPPO DI FAVA, Substitute.

Greater consolations were reserved for the Delegate of the Bishop of Vannes. Upon the pressing request of the Reverend Brother, his Eminence the Cardinal Vincent Vannutelli, brother of his Eminence the Cardinal Séraphin, accepted with joy to become the Cardinal Ponent or Reporter of the Cause. Reverend Father Le Cerf, Postulator, known by our readers, whom many of our Brothers had the pleasure to hear last August, at Lannion or Ploërmel, implores the Holy Father to confirm this choice by a Decree, and to allow a second Decree for the beginning of the Trial.

On Sunday, September 8, when only a few pilgrims (about 50) were admitted at the papal audience in the St. Clementine's Room, the Reverend Brother asked the Holy Father the same request. The following day, September 9, the Decrees were signed. These precious

documents, that our missionary Brothers, like our Brothers of France, will be happy to find in The Chronicle, constitute the first official record of Our Most Holy Father the Pope regarding the Cause of our Venerated Father de la Mennais.

Since the Congregation of the Holy Rites must deal with the Cause of beatification and canonization of the Servant of God JEAN-MARIE ROBERT DE LA MENNAIS, R. F. Julien Le Cerf, member of the Society of Mary and Postulator chosen for the Cause, asked very humbly Our Most Holy Father Leo XIII to choose and appoint a Ponent or Reporter for this same Cause among the most Eminent and Reverend Fathers assigned to the security of the Holy Rites. His Holiness, in the report that I, the undersigned, Cardinal Prefect of the same Sacred Congregation, had prepared, chose and assigned the most Eminent and Reverend Cardinal Vincent Vannutelli, Bishop of Palestrina, as the Ponent or Reporter for the above-mentioned Cause, with all necessary and opportune responsibilities, which, according to style and customs, we are used to allow. All contrary dispositions may not be an obstacle. September 9, 1901.

D.CARD. FERRATA, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Rites.

D. PANICI, arch. of Laodicée, Secretary,
(PLACE OF THE SEAL)

The informative trial about the reputation of holiness, virtues and miracles of the Servant of God JEAN-MARIE ROBERT DE LA MENNAIS, written by the ordinary authority in the ecclesiastical Curia of Vannes, has been presented, closed and confirmed with the bishop's seals, in the Offices of the Sacred Congregation of the Rites.

R. F. Le Cerf, priest of the Society of Mary, and Postulator of this Cause, asked very humbly Our Most Holy Father Leo XIII, permission to begin this same trial. His Holiness, in connection with the undersigned, Cardinal of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Rites, was quite happy to accept the requested option, as long as the opening of the above-mentioned Trial is done lawfully, protecting what must be observed according to the law, style and customs. All contrary dispositions may not be an impediment.

September 9 1901,

D. CARDINAL FERRATA, Prefect.

D. PANICI, arch. Of Laodicée, Secretary,
(PLACE OF THE SEAL).

And now, it is more than ever time for prayer. While, under God's eyes, the Princes of the Church will study the life and virtues of Venerated Father de la Mennais, Bishop Angelo Mariani supervizing, with the greatest interest, the Cause whose notary he is, from all places in the world where stands a school managed by our Institute or that of the Daughters of Providence, the same prayer will rise so that the day of the glorification on the Servant of God soon shines, so that the holy Church, France and Brittany may include in their diptyches the name of a new Blessed!