

MENNAISIAN EDUCATION



200



BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION

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MENNAISIAN EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Some identity keys.

THE FIRST SEED

THE BASIC LINES

- **1. MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, A MEETING BETWEEN CHRIST AND YOUTH.**

To make Jesus Christ known and loved

- Freedom of teaching.
- Choice and training of the Mennaisian educator.
- Dialogue between faith and culture.

BIBLICAL-MENNAISIAN ICON

Jesus and the children: "Let the little children come to me. » (Mk 10,13-16)

- **MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, A GOOD NEWS.**

To educate while instructing; to evangelize while educating.

- The educational community.
- Educational pastoral care.
- Spiritual development - Intelligence of the heart.

BIBLICAL-MENNAISIAN ICON

Temple School: "I'm going to make a detour to see this strange appearance. " (Ex. 3, 3)

- **MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, TOWARDS THE PERIPHERIES.**

Go out to meet those who are deemed unworthy

- Inclusive education.
- Education open to the world: SERVING, a way of life.
- Education that defends the "little ones".

BIBLICAL-MENNAISIAN ICON

School of the Good Samaritan: "He saw him and was filled with pity. » (Lk 10, 33)

- **MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, LINKS OF FRATERNITY.**

To weave bonds that humanize.

- Relationship of the educator with the child and the young person. Gentleness and firmness
- The student put at the center.
- Pedagogy of the presence

BIBLICAL-MENNAISIAN ICON

The school seen as a hospital: "Jesus was traveling all over Galilee, [...] proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom and healing any disease and all languor among the people. "(Mt 4:23)

- **MENNAISIAN EDUCATION: QUALITY WORKSHOP.**

To be creative so as to love better.

- Innovation as a response to new needs.
- Ongoing formation.
- Team working.
- Transformative pedagogy.

BIBLICAL-MENNAISIAN ICON

Multiplication of the breads: *"Give them yourself something to eat. "(Mt 14:16)*

THE FIRST SEED

A LARGE TREE

"Little by little, the mustard seed has become a big tree, under which come today to take refuge a multitude of children. "¹

*The same seed on two different grounds:
Auray/Saint Brieuc*

- **Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, two men attentive to the signs of the times.** - These two priests with a heart of apostle were dismayed at the sight of the enormous educational needs of the country villages in Brittany, seemingly a situation that was affecting all of France. In seeking answers to that problem, they became founders of congregations and initiators of many works of mercy.
- **The dangers of new Government provisions.** - The Royal Order of February 29, 1816 inaugurates in France the era of primary education. The objective pursued was to make education a prerogative of the State, and the teacher a civil servant who implements the recommended method.
- **A will to meet the "little ones"** - These new provisions preoccupied Father Gabriel Deshayes, priest of Auray. He consulted his bishop, then the Brother Visitor of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, *"to try to find the best means to support the pious intentions of the monarch"* namely: to make the children of the countryside benefit of the advantages of education.
- **Alert spirits, compassionate hearts.**
 - **Gabriel Deshayes**, in his cure of Auray, receives, in 1816, a group of young people whom he wishes to prepare to go to the distant and humble villages - that the Gospel made him desire - which were the small villages of countryside in Brittany.
 - **Jean-Marie de la Mennais**, with the language of his time, remembers: *"This piece fell into my hands in 1816, during the retreat of the clergy of Saint-Brieuc, whom I chaired as vicar capitular. I studied this work with great attention, and there I discovered a plan of organization of the primary education in France skillful as well as complete. The Revolution had destroyed the country schools without putting anything in their place. The soul of children belonged to those who knew how to seize it. Neither the programs of Carnot nor the teachers recommended by him offered me guarantees. I did foresee however, that his report would serve as a basis for the next regulation of primary education. Full of this idea, I ascended the pulpit, and drew the clergy's eyes towards that black spot, barely visible on the horizon, which foreshadowed the storm. "*²
- **Two priests that Providence unites** - Both concerned about the issue of childhood education, they meet for the first time in Saint-Brieuc, May 10, 1817. That day, Jean-Marie de la Mennais writes a letter to the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Brother Gerbaud, begging him to open a school there:

"I beseech you with the most earnest entreaties, my Reverend Father, to receive our request; if you refused it, I would be inconsolable, because I foresee that however sooner or later, here as elsewhere,

¹ Jean-Marie de La Mennais, Letter of January 12, 1844 to Father Boucarut

² Laveille, Volume I, p. 229

*a school with the Lancaster style would be established, and from then on, we would have no more hope to possess in this city a Christian school.*³

To this letter, Gabriel Deshayes adds some lines of recommendation that his personal closeness to the La Salle Brothers allowed him. He had already obtained the presence of three of their Brothers at Auray.

*"Mr. de la Mennais asks me to join him in committing you to grant to the city of Saint Briec an establishment of your brothers. It is with the greatest pleasure that I yield to his invitation. You cannot oblige a more zealous and respectable ecclesiastic, and I hope you will only have to congratulate yourself on having acquiesced in his request."*⁴

The idea was to open an establishment of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Saint-Briec to precede the supporters of the Mutual School.

- **A reinforced collaboration - Second meeting** - At the end of May, beginning of June 1817, Jean-Marie de la Mennais goes to Auray. There he meets Father Deshayes in order to obtain from him three candidates for the novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a condition required for them to settle in Saint-Briec.
- **A 'shared' mission** - In July 1817, Gabriel Deshayes sends a first postulant from Auray to the novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and two others in September. Jean-Marie de la Mennais pays their pension.
- **Unlimited Confidence in Providence - Third Meeting** - In December 1817 a mission was held in St Malo/St Servan. Gabriel Deshayes participates. On that date, Jean-Marie de la Mennais travels to St-Malo for family reasons. He was then preparing to open a boys' school in Pordic and hoped to get from Father Deshayes the educator he needed.
- **Associates to build the Kingdom** - From January 4 to 24, 1818, in collaboration with other parish priests, chaplains and vicars, Jean-Marie de la Mennais leads a mission in Pordic. It was at the end of this mission, January 25, 1818, that a Christian school for boys was founded. For the occasion, they rented a humble hall laying on the ground. It was entrusted to Brother Paul (Mathurin Guyot), one of the first Brothers trained by Gabriel Deshayes.
- **For Jesus and the children** - Three Brothers of the Christian Schools and the teacher of the Mutual School, Rémond, arrive at Saint Briec almost at the same time, around mid-November 1818. The Brothers open their school at the end of month and the teacher of the Mutual School in December. The battle begins. Jean-Marie de la Mennais gets two other Brothers from Father Deshayes to open two other classes. He did not want to turn down any of the many students who showed up.
- **A worrying situation: the educational needs of poor girls** - In 1816, Jean-Marie de la Mennais asked the Jesuit Fathers to preach a mission in Saint Briec. In search of solutions to many needs, he organizes various groups for children, boys and girls, and for adults. He wants to enable them to deepen their faith and to engage in social and solidarity actions. An association of young women settled in the chapel of Notre Dame du Refuge. The first associates are Marie-Anne Cartel and Fanny Chaplain. They have the same concern: to do something in favor of girls who wander the streets, victims of ignorance, careless of their own dignity and exposed to a thousand and one dangers.

³Jean-Marie de la Mennais, CG 1, L 579, p. 522

⁴ CG I, L 579, p. 523

- **Obstacles to overcome** - On January 16, 1819, Gabriel Deshayes was ordered to do everything possible so that the Brothers of his school obtain the teaching certificate within three months. Otherwise, the school would be closed.⁵
- **Events received as calls** - On January 20, 1819, appeared in the official Bulletin, the circular of Louis Rousseau of Saint-Aignant, prefect of Côtes-du-Nord. Addressed to the mayors of the province, it urged them to send someone to the model school of the Lancaster system, and to vote subsidies for this purpose. Mutual Schools opened as planned at Lamballe on April 2, at Guingamp on May 12, at Paimpol on June 1, at Pontrieux on September 1.
- **To train their own masters to "go to the borders"** - That same day, Jean-Marie de la Mennais writes to Father Tresvaux, priest of La Roche-Derrien, to find him three young aspirants. His decision is made indeed: it is necessary to establish in Saint-Brieuc a novitiate as Father Deshayes did in Auray.
- **A monument of unreason - Signature of the Treaty of Union, June 6, 1819** - Beginning of June 1819, Gabriel Deshayes, Vicar General of the Diocese of Vannes, leads young Brothers to Dinan. They make a stop in Saint-Brieuc where the small group is welcomed by Jean-Marie de la Mennais.

On June 6, Holy Trinity Day, a memorable treaty specifies the agreement that seals the origin of a new congregation:

*"In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, ... We, Jean-Marie Robert de la Mennais ... and Gabriel Deshayes ... animated by the desire to provide the children of the people, especially those of the countryside of Brittany, teachers firmly pious, we have resolved to establish temporarily at Saint Brieuc and Auray two novitiates of young people who will follow, as much as possible, the rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and will use their method of Teaching."*⁶

Only two years after this founding event, Father of La Mennais reflected upon it: *"Mr. de La Salle had planned to send some of his brothers to the countryside to keep the schools there, but he was diverted by the difficulties of finding in each village the funds necessary for the subsistence of two brothers, and furthermore, because he feared for these solitary brothers, as he called them, the dangers of laxity ... Mr. Deshayes, former priest of Auray and I thought that, if it was almost impossible, as Mr. de La Salle thought, to entrust his Congregation with rural and small town schools, the same goal could be achieved by forming another congregation specially intended to provide primary teachers to communes which are neither populous nor rich enough to found a school of three brothers."*⁷

Thirty years after the signing of the Treaty of Union, Jean-Marie de la Mennais still remembers the spirit of joy and hope that surrounded the contract that gave birth to the Congregation of the Brothers of Christian Instruction: *"... This two-man government was the most extravagant and least practical design; yet, as **the two founders admirably adapted to each other in all respects and loved each other, it went well.**"*⁸

It was also with great joy that Gabriel Deshayes returned to his parish of Auray a few days later: *"My Brother,"* he said to the Brother who was accompanying him, *"How pleased I am! How happy I am! I had certain apprehensions about the future of your nascent society; but I have just made arrangements with Mr. de la Mennais: the work is going to succeed, I have full confidence in this; all my fears are gone."*⁹

⁵ cf. Rulon, 04-23

⁶ CG II, Doc. 186, p. 122

⁷ JMLM, Au Président du Conseil Royal de l'Instruction publique, le 14 novembre 1821, CGII, L 964, p 179

⁸ Dans Revue provinciale de M. Louis de Kergorlay et Arthur de Corbineau, 1849, p 87

⁹ Frère Hippolyte, Mes souvenirs, carnet n° 1, p. 12, AFIC 80

- **The first school of the nascent congregation** – On the same day, June 6, the two founders arrive in Dinan with Brothers Charles, Gabriel and Andrew who came from the branch of Auray. They founded there the first school, the fruit of the signing of the Treaty of Union.
- **The preparation of disciples** - The Novitiate of St-Brieuc - 1819 - The three young postulants asked by Jean-Marie from Father Tresvaux arrive in St-Brieuc, probably in the second half of June. They were Yves Le Fichant, Allain Coursin and Jean-François Mindu, aged respectively 18, 20 and 16 years old. The novitiate of the branch of St. Brieuc could begin.
- **The seed is offered to the Master of harvest.** In 1820 takes place the great Retreat of Auray in the community of the Eternal Father. It is held from September 9 to 15. On this occasion, the small association of the Brothers is constituted as Congregation under the name of Brothers of the Christian Instruction. They also receive their motto: God Alone. The Rule is promulgated. Everyone receives the habit of the new Institute and pronounces the vow of obedience.
- **To discern and to do the will of God.** On the same day that Father Deshayes was elected Superior of the Montfort Congregations on January 18, 1821, the Bishop of St-Brieuc, M^{sg.} de la Romagère, decides to discharge Jean-Marie de la Mennais from his responsibility as Vicar General and to entrust to him *"especially the care and administration of the small schools which he cares for well"*. Thus, in this month of January, Providence calls him, in two different ways, to the direction of the "small schools" and therefore to that of the new Institute.
- **Providence points to other borders (1837).** The opportunity to send Brothers in mission is presented to the founder under an initiative of the French Government which wants to send teaching Brothers to the Colonies to normalize relations between free, white and colored men. Jean-Marie sees there the opportunity to engage in favor of the slaves: *"This work, especially if it extends to the poor slaves, will be a beautiful work because it is very Christian."*¹⁰

¹⁰ LETTRE 2141. Au ministre de l'Instruction publique. Ploërmel le 10 décembre 1836

FUNDAMENTAL INTUITIONS OF THE FIRST SEED.

The foundation process briefly presented above, showed how two dedicated priests collaborated profoundly to give birth to the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel. As we have seen, Providence will soon lead Gabriel Deshayes on other paths where he will have to support the founding or founding anew of other religious families. Providence will guide Jean-Marie de la Mennais, meanwhile, towards the taking in charge, as superior general of the Brothers, of the development of what we call today the Mennaisian educational tradition.

From the history of the beginnings of the Mennaisian educational project, we can identify the following characteristics:

- **Teamwork.**

The Mennaisian educational project is the result of a collaborative work in the service of which two enthusiasts for the Kingdom and children, share talents and intuitions to help the neediest, especially rural children. They read together the reality of their dioceses and give creative answers to the educational problems of their times. They are inspired in this by an intuition that had, a century earlier, animated another great apostle of childhood, Saint John Baptist de la Salle, though the La Salle brothers had not been able to respond to it this time. The two founders take on that same intuition while adapting it to the circumstances of their time.

- **Freedom of teaching.**

Mennaisian education supposes the freedom of teaching and gives it meaning. This freedom is based on the conviction that the gospel project is educative and gives meaning to society. One of the effects of freedom of teaching is to compete with others, which has both advantages and disadvantages. This freedom, moreover, must be accompanied by an education free of charge¹¹ if it wants to guarantee the right to education for all children and young people.

- **Integral education.**

Mennaisian education upholds that in the field of education there can be no walls. Teaching, education and evangelization are mutually supportive in the same act, and are at the service of the whole person. From the perspective of our Founders, the school's mission is not only to transmit to young people the basic knowledge and sense of civic duties. It must also contribute to educating and training the whole human person, in its bodily, social, ethical and spiritual dimensions, and its deep nature as creature fashioned to the image of God.

- **The young and the child at the center.**

The child and the young are at the center of Mennaisian education. Mennaisian education therefore requires educators who live their profession as a mission. They are not mere officials charged with implementing the educational policies in force. This is why the permanent formation of an educator must include two indispensable aspects: the professional dimension and that of the mission / vocation.

- **Teachers: 'teachers and witnesses'.**

The Mennaisian education project attests that it is not enough to know certain religious symbols, to practice certain customs or traditions by repetition, with the purpose that the students integrate them as references of their personal identity. The Mennaisian educator is not satisfied just with having some

¹¹ Cf. Jean-Marie de la Mennais, about primary education in Brittany, 1832

religious knowledge. It is his personal attitude that gives meaning. In Mennaisian education project, the educator is a witness.

- **Up to the existential peripheries.**

The Mennaisian project was born through the founding of schools where others could not go, in the very remote villages of Brittany. The horizon then opened towards geographically and socially more distant latitudes. The goal was to help every human being to free him/herself from everything that prevents from growing as a person: ignorance, slavery in the physical or moral sense of the term, economic and cultural poverty, etc. with the firm conviction that the Gospel humanizes the person and society.

- **To weave human bonds in the manner of Jesus.**

The Mennaisian School is based on interpersonal relationships. The bonds of friendship between these two priests were rooted in their way of looking with faith at the situation of children in their region. The project they formed united their hearts and their desires. To the young Bretons who joined this adventure, they would ask to take care of these same "human bonds". One of the reasons for the opposition to the Lancasterian method was in the style of relationship of the educator with the young. Jean-Marie de la Mennais wanted to "*perform a true education, ... which results from the personal, often confidential, communications of the teacher with each of his pupils ...*"¹². For Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, the educator transforms the heart of the child through the "bonds" that unite it to him.

¹² JMLM, Sur l'éducation religieuse, S I, p. 58

**1. MENNAISIAN EDUCATION,
A MEETING BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE YOUTH.**

"Schools to make Jesus Christ known and loved."

"I recommend to you our dear little black people. Work with great zeal to make them know and love J-C; this is the main object of your mission. Ah! How beautiful it is! Do not neglect anything to fulfill it well."¹³

"The Brothers will constantly remember that the children whom they are in charge of, are entrusted to them by God himself in order to teach them to know him, to love him and to serve him; and, in consequence, their main care will be to train them to virtue."¹⁴

Mennaisian education seeks to humanize. In the school dreamed by Jean-Marie de la Mennais, teachers and students are inspired by the attitudes and gestures of Jesus. Christ fully man manifested to man himself¹⁵. In this school, people are invited to cultivate the science of encounter in the logic of the parables of the Kingdom, by weaving links of socialization the same way that they are inspired in the miracles of the Gospel.

For Jean-Marie, every person is called to be an image of Jesus Christ. To know and love Christ is, for him, the end of the existence of man. The Mennaisian school, while respecting its own identity as any educational institution does, makes possible the discovery of Jesus as a model of every human being, and as the one who invites all to be disciples.

A Mennaisian institution is a place where all, beyond cultures and religions, are considered brothers, children of the same Father. Through the welcoming especially of those who are excluded from society, it claims clearly to mean that God wants all of us brothers.

A Mennaisian educational center *"is a place of evangelization, of authentic pastoral action, not by virtue of complementary or parallel activities, but by the very nature of its mission"*¹⁶. Through his educational project in which faith, culture and life are blended together, the Mennaisian School tries to recreate the relationship style that Jesus had with his contemporaries, and to provide the new generations with the necessary skills to be builders of the "civilization of love". As members of the educational community, students experience that the world can be made a better place, that there is always an opportunity to do more to humanize our world.

To make this project a reality, Mennaisian education needs educators who understand its meaning. For Mennaisians educating is more than a profession or a task. The educator who seeks to enter the thoughts and feelings of Jean-Marie de la Mennais conceives education as a mission, makes the option of serving young people and journeying with them. He discovers in them the face of God, and in turn, through his words and gestures, knows that he himself is God's presence before his/her pupils.

The Mennaisian educational experience understood like these shapes the hearts of all members of the educational community. It makes them more apt to respond creatively to the needs of children and young people. It allows everyone to take a fresh look, to have a compassionate heart. It pushes to quench the thirst for presence and proximity that, especially to the needy.

Thus understood, a Mennaisian center is:

- A place of intellectual, ethical and spiritual growth.

¹³ To Brother Liguori-Marie, December 10, 1844, CG 5, L 3572, p. 266

¹⁴ Statutes of 1823

¹⁵ cf. GS 22

¹⁶ Cfr. Religious dimension of education in the Catholic school, 1988

- A place of initiation where the Gospel is incarnated in dialogue with the culture of children and young people and with scientific knowledge.
- A place where people who base their life on different sources of inspiration, collaborate to the construction of the common 'home'.

ORIENTATIONS

The freedom of teaching.

*"Monopoly kills; freedom vivifies and enriches all around it."*¹⁷

Freedom of education, in connection with "respect for life and religious freedom"¹⁸, is a fundamental human right. Mennaisian educators, at the example of their founders, therefore support the principle of freedom of education. It allows them to implement an educational project based on the Gospel. This project, indeed, is a path that can really show that "to believe in Christ and to love him is not only something true and just, but also beautiful, capable of giving life a new radiance, and to provide deep joy, even in trials."¹⁹

In addition, the Mennaisian School, as part of the Catholic educational tradition, contributes significantly to the development of society in whatever socio-religious-cultural context where it is established. In this sense, those in charge of Mennaisian educational institutions actively participate in the civil and ecclesial organizations that decide the orientations of educational policy at the local, national and international levels.

Choice and formation of the Mennaisian educator.

*"How to safeguard the countryside? I could not send Mr. de la Salle's Brothers whose rule forbids them to accept schools held by a single master. I gathered and trained some young men who consented to go away, one by one, in the isolation of a lost country, to instruct our poor little peasants. They were the first little Brothers."*²⁰

*"One speaks with conviction only when one believes in his words, with love when one loves, with warmth and zeal when moved more than one usually feels and hopes for. What can someone who does not believe say to the benefit of religion?"*²¹

The integral and permanent formation of the educator was the fundamental concern of our founders in regard to the young Brothers whom they sent to found the first schools.

The Mennaisian School, to implement its educational project, needs educators passionate for children, competent, rich in humanity, attentive to reality, reliable, witnesses to life and hope, open to transcendence. It requires educators who love their students intensely, and especially the weakest and the most difficult, the foreigners and the most underprivileged ones.

Administrators of Mennaisian educational centers, taking into account local possibilities, are attentive to the choice of new educators and offer them the training itineraries they need. These should include the vocational professional, human and Christian dimensions of the educator's person, taking into account the local context but also the identity of Mennaisian education.

¹⁷ Jean Marie de la Mennais, letter to Sivry, September 27, 1832, CGII, Doc 317, p. 587

¹⁸ See the Catholic School on the threshold of the 3rd millennium, n ° 17

¹⁹ See Pope Francis, EG 167

²⁰ LAVEILLE, Volume 1, p.229

²¹ Jean Marie de la Mennais, On religious education, 1834 edition, S I, p. 55

Dialogue between faith and cultural knowledge.

"[...] When we say education, we understand well that we are far from the thought of those who think they have done everything for the child, when they have introduced him to calculus, arts, languages, natural sciences, and when they have given him the means to satisfy the needs of the body as if it were enough to enlighten the mind, to provide for the physical needs of man, as if it had not been necessary to train his heart to habits of virtue and to teach him where he comes from, where he should tend and how he can do it."²²

From a socio-cultural point of view, the Mennaisian educational project reacts to the fragmentation of knowledge that leads to the progressive crisis of meaning. While respecting the autonomy and the methodology of the various sciences of human knowledge, it seeks to realize a vital synthesis of culture as a whole in the light of values based on the Christian faith.

BIBLE-MENNAISIAN-ICON

Jesus and the children. *"Let little children come to me."* (Mk 10,14)

"Let the little children come to me, do not prevent them, because it is to those who are like them that the Kingdom of God belongs. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a child, will not enter it. Then he kissed them and blessed them by laying hands on them." (Mark 10: 14-16)

This Gospel text represents the aspect of the mystery of Christ that the Mennaisians are called to embody and develop.

Mennaisian educators, rather than seeking to affirm the primary importance of their own role, place the child and the young person at the center of the educational activity, following the example of Jesus-Master.

In the manner of Jesus, they welcome children and young people and accompany them in their growth. The choices required for the concrete organization of Mennaisian centers are based on the sole service of children and young people. Rules of procedure, schedules, the program of various activities, the use of spaces, the choice of teaching methods, the selection of educators, etc., all aims at giving priority to students.

The Mennaisian educator seeks, in his relationship with children and young people, to be a reflection of the goodness that Jesus expressed towards the "little ones". The limits and the resistances that he discovers among those entrusted to him, provoke his creativity so as not to lose any of them²³:

- Jesus kisses children. By this gesture, he signifies his love and joy. He receives from them, in return, the expression of their happiness and their confidence.
- He blesses them by opening them to a future. He wants them to grow and be happy by owning the goods of the earth. He wants to create a world where, for these children, it is worth living.
- He's laying hands on them. Through this, he communicates to them his strength. It is to those who are like them that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs. According to the Mennaisian pedagogy, it is to these children that we must be similar in our relationship with God.

"Your glory, understand it then, is to make Christians of these children who without you would never be... of these children who can become so only as you teach them, not by speeches but by your examples,

²² Jean Marie de la Mennais, On religious education, 1834 edition, S I, p. 52

²³ cf. Mt. 18:14

to be humble of heart... of those children to whom you must be like, so that the Kingdom of Heaven may belong to you. ²⁴

In the educational relationship, the Mennaisian educator teaches "little ones" the simplicity of heart that makes it possible to welcome the Kingdom. By looking at them, he learns to receive himself from God.

Testimony of a Mennaisian educator:

"Our goal can not only be to ensure that our students complete their schooling with excellent academic results. They must also be authentic people, trained, integrated, and supportive, with a critical eye and an ability to make decisions ... endowed with skills to live fully, knowing the Gospel and loving Jesus. Educational quality is about educating the whole person, in an integral way ... "

²⁴ Jean Marie de la Mennais VII, p. 2331

2. MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, A GOOD NEWS.

Educate while instructing, to evangelize by educating.

"In these schools, one forms the whole man, his body as his spirit."²⁵

"If it is true that instruction is useful for all, it is none the less true that it is useless without education and virtue."²⁶

"It's a great pity to see how badly man is despised today! It is considered only as a physical being, and not as an intelligent, immortal being, who must, while walking on earth, prepare to enter into the eternal society of God himself, of which he is the image."²⁷

Integral development of the person²⁸. The school dreamed by Jean-Marie de la Mennais is a place of humanization in which the development of all dimensions of the person is promoted: physical, intellectual, spiritual. The formation of the intelligence, of the heart and the will is cared for. Its project includes in the same act, instruction, education and evangelization. Jesus of Nazareth is the origin and the horizon of his project.

The critical assimilation of knowledge, the events of everyday life, the school environment, the space and times where the Gospel is explicitly announced, the transversal axes and contents, ultimately whatever educational action are presented as Good News for those who share the life of a Mennaisian school.

To instruct for authentic progress. Mennaisian education makes learning possible by promoting the expression of the talents of each pupil by means of the best educational methods.

It gives each student the capacity for initiative, creativity, innovation, autonomy, personal discipline and team spirit, the development of a deep and critical thought, open to truth, beauty and goodness.

The acquisition of knowledge is subordinated to the pursuit of the integral development of the individual, to the good of the local community and of the whole of human society. *"Education will be ineffective and its efforts will be fruitless if we do not try to propose a new paradigm at the level of the human being, life, society and the relationship to nature."*²⁹

In partaking knowledge, the Mennaisian School promotes a society based on wisdom. It invites to go beyond knowledge in order to learn to reflect, to evaluate facts in the light of gospel-inspired values, to develop a sense of personal responsibility, of commitment by the exercise of active citizenship.

To educate, to build a school of brotherhood. Mennaisian education considers interpersonal relations as the basis of its educational project. In a Mennaisian educational center, one learns to "weave links". Through the daily actions of welcoming and paying attention to the needs of students, educators and families, by the care given to those who are left out or who run the risk of exclusion, by the accompaniment offered to those who suffer from loneliness, by the unconditional defense of every person, by the free love for children and young people, Mennaisians, parents, educators, pupils, become artisans of an education that convenes a new, more just and more fraternal style.

To evangelize, to learn the way of living and thinking of Jesus. Mennaisian education offers the opportunity to open the heart and the intelligence to the mystery of self-awareness, to the discovery of the "you", to the wonder and responsibility vis-a-vis creation and the relationship to God.

²⁵ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S II, p. 796

²⁶ Jean Marie de la Mennais, on religious education

²⁷ Jean Marie de la Mennais, Of the mutual teaching, 1819, S I, p. 17

²⁸ cf. The Catholic School on the threshold of the 3rd millennium, n ° 9

²⁹ Pope Francis, Laudato si, n ° 215

It proposes evangelical values through various knowledge and though all that is at the heart of what is lived in the educational community. In particular, it promotes the uniqueness of all people, the learning of freedom, the search for justice for all, the will to build peace and to fight against all forms of poverty that weigh on humanity.

Mennaisian education considers as fundamental the transcendent dimension of the person. It encourages intercultural and interreligious dialogue. While respecting the various creeds, it proposes the search for meaning in the light of the Gospel. It accompanies the students in their discovery of the dignity of every human being and helps them to become aware of their responsibility in the management of the things of this world in reference to the Word of God.

The most beautiful task of the Mennaisian School is to encourage young people to have a free and personal encounter with the Lord, helping them to become acquainted with his words, and inviting them to let themselves be transformed by him into builders of His Kingdom of Justice and Peace.

To be holy by making saints.

"Do not consider yourself a profane teacher, but a missionary charged with establishing the Kingdom of God in souls: this is indeed your vocation, and it will be in making saints, that yourself will be sanctified."³⁰

"I fear that in order to shine, one does not seek too much brilliance, and to make scientists rather than Christians: it would be to miss the goal of your vocation."³¹

"Good schools do not only contribute to the sanctification of the children who attend them but also to the sanctification of the families in which the children report the instructions they have heard"³².

In a Christian reading of the world, Jesus Christ is the key to all human life. Mennaisian pedagogy proposes a path of imitation of Christ and invites the pupils to enter the school of Jesus-Master. Holiness is a personal call and path. Holiness is not understood as the result of the exercise of an ascetic-moral program, it is rather an ardent answer to a personal love of God.

The aim of the Mennaisian educational project is to enable students to look at reality and the world in a careful and creative way. It also offers him the opportunity to discover in the experience of God an original answer to the questions addressed to him by the historical moments and the social reality of his time.

This conception of "holiness" in Mennaisian education presupposes the deepening of interiority, a real personal freedom and the desire to work for others. Through this inner work, the young person enters further into the joyous adventure of a life that is led by the God "Providence", the God "Love", to whom he finds himself known and by whom he finds himself loved, while being aware of the fragility of his own humanity.

Christian holiness is also measured, in Mennaisian education, in the capacity to integrate and bear the suffering of those whom the Gospel calls the "little ones", and the willingness and ability to help anyone to live his/her life with dignity.

ORIENTATIONS

The educational community

³⁰ To Brother Alfred-Marie, July 7, 1844, CG 5, L 3481, p. 209

³¹ To the Brothers of the West Indies, 1st December 1840, CG 4, Doc 464, p. 372

³² Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S VII p.2214

***"What gives me the greatest pleasure is to know that charity reigns among you: this intimate and truly fraternal union will be your strength and your happiness: keep it as a treasure."*³³**

***"As long as we will be united, we will be strong, and we will be happy, yes, this holy union will be the charm, grace and strength of our society."*³⁴**

The school-community includes all those who are directly involved: students, teachers, educators, management staff, administrators and service staff, parents of students. All together they give their school the particular style that characterizes the Mennaisian educational project.

The educational intuitions of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, proposed to the entire educative community, must enter into dialogue with contemporary culture to be updated. The fruitfulness of educational action depends on the community that appropriates and puts into practice the project that promotes it. For this, it is important to offer all training programs that allow to know better the "Mennaisian charisma" and to feel part of this community.

Members of a Mennaisian school commit themselves to:

- Share their own skills in a spirit of service.
- Enrich this school with their own human and Christian vocation.
- Assume its gospel project in a positive way.

Educational Pastoral

Basically the reason for the existence of Mennaisian education and its particular color is to propose the person of Jesus Christ, as a reference and a guide, to all members of the educational community.

The formation of a community of educators aware of their mission is the source, the place and the goal of the Mennaisian evangelizing mission.

The Mennaisian center of education welcomes all families who accept the proposed project, regardless of their religion or whatever stage they are on the path of Christian faith. It offers to those who wish it itineraries that allow to grasp the beauty of the Gospel; furthermore, it makes itself close to each and accompanies them when trials come.

In the educational pastoral of any Mennaisian school we can distinguish two processes:

- a) **The evangelization of culture and the inculturation of the Gospel.** It is the task of the educational community to discern the presence of God within the culture and to keep the goods of the Kingdom growing in it. It is in systematic learning that this process is realized. *"Our educational institutions must be places where the active presence of God in the affairs of men is recognized and where every young person discovers the joy of being incorporated "into the being for others "of Christ."*³⁵
- b) **Evangelization in everyday life.** This evangelization is realized in everyday relationships, the accompaniment of all and everyone, the unexpected situations that await an answer, but also in the life of the groups and communities of faith, the training to make choices, the vocational pastoral, and the activities of mutual aid and missionary solidarity.

³³ To Bro. Hervé, April 13, 1843, CG 5, L 4070, p. 585

³⁴ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S. VIII p.2404

³⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, travels to the US, April 17, 2008

Spiritual development - The intelligence of the heart

"Let us ask God, by humble and continual prayers, that he give us the intelligence of the heart, without which we could understand nothing of his divine lessons or penetrate his mysteries."³⁶

"I see with pleasure the progress of your children in the human sciences; however, what I desire above all else is to learn that they are doing even greater in the science of the saints; you have to give them not only instruction, but also Christian education; that it be the main objective of your worries and your work."³⁷

By creating his own schools, Jean-Marie de la Mennais was determined to avoid making the pupil a mere consumer of knowledge, and of the school, an instrument at the service of the State, the economic system or of the labor market. For him, it is not enough that a young person would come out of the school educated, qualified and able to integrate society. From Mennaisian schools should come out a young person convinced that he can present a face that is more human and open to transcendence, in search for progress. The transcendental dimension of the person orients the different facets of the education that is proposed.

The Mennaisian School offers the service of education and works for the social and cultural progress of the society in which it is inserted. But it does more: it offers children and young people paths that open them to the interiority and allow them, in the light of the Word of God and in the personal encounter with Christ, to find meaning in life.

BIBLICAL-MENNAISIAN ICON

School as a temple: "I'm going to make a detour to see this strange sight. "(Ex. 3, 3)

"Your school is a temple in which you exercise one of the most august functions of the priesthood, that of teaching. Sitting at your desk, you speak in the name of Jesus Christ, you stand in his place, and, therefore, there is nothing in common between you and those mercenaries for whom a school is only a reading, writing or calculating workshop and who make instruction as a carpenter makes furniture."³⁸

"In this school, the teachers are standing in place of Jesus Christ itself ...; they re-present it, they do what Jesus Christ did; they repeat what he has said, they are the ministers of God, the interpreters of his will, the dispensers of his mysteries; they assure the salvation and eternal happiness of entire generations, for which Jesus Christ became incarnated, for whom Jesus Christ preached, suffered and died ..."³⁹

In the writings of Jean-Marie de la Mennais that present what the school, the education and the mission of the educator are, there is a rich set of expressions around the image of the TEMPLE: holy work, making saints, sublime ministry, disciples of Jesus Christ, heirs of the Kingdom, priesthood, teaching, pulpit, high dignity, ministry of God, opposed to mercenaries, interpreters of His will, dispensers of His mysteries, salvation, eternal happiness, etc.

The school is the place where the Mennaisian educator experiences the presence of God. Closeness to children and young people is for him the burning bush (see Ex 3: 1-6) through which God revealed himself to Moses. And like Jacob in another text of the Bible (see Gn 28: 10-22a), the Mennaisian educator discovers the free gift of recognizing Him: *"Really God lives in this place and I did not know it!"*

"Knowledge, in fact, if located in the realm of faith, becomes wisdom and conception of life. The tension to conjugate reason and faith, becomes the soul of each discipline, gives them unity, articulation and

³⁶ To Brute de Rémur, March 1809, CG I L 32, p. 58

³⁷ To Br. Liguori-Marie, November 20, 1847, CG 5, L 4183, p. 659

³⁸ Jean-Marie de la Mennais S VII, p. 2326

³⁹ Importance of the Daughters of Providence, SII, p. 820bis

coordination, making it emerge from the very inside of academic knowledge, the Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture, of history."⁴⁰

*The meaning of a school as an institution is to help new generations to open up to the reality and to form themselves according to a certain concept of life. Every school strives to access a truth that is beyond appearances. Mennaisian education must show that reality is a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God. "To evangelize the school means to give the Christian meaning of the human realities taught in it."*⁴¹

Just as Jesus Christ denounced the erroneous use of the temple used for exploitation and segregation (Jn 19: 45-47), the Mennaisian education, by means of knowledge and lived experiences, establishes links between the actors of the educational community with those of the civil and ecclesial community. It seeks to unmask in a critical and prophetic way any force contrary to the free and autonomous development of the person and the people.

Testimonies of Mennaisian educators:

"A Mennaisian school is a school where young people receive an education that engages them in daily life. It is a school that trains leaders to serve the poor, their country and the world. A Mennaisian school opens the eyes of children, young and old, through following the footsteps of Jean-Marie de la Mennais so that they nourish in their heart the passion to help and find the unique solution of its kind to social problems".

"To think of the temple-school in the manner of Jean-Marie is to think of the school as a holy land in which God is daily present, on the courtyard, in the teachers' room, in the classroom, in the educational community and in the neighborhood."

⁴⁰ L'école catholique à l'ombre du 3ème millénaire, n° 14

⁴¹ Cortés Soriano, J., L'école catholique, De la autocompresión a la significatividad. P.167

3. MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, GOING TO THE PERIPHERIES

To meet those who do not count.

"The children ask for bread and there is no one to give it to them." (Lamentations 4,4)

"Give them yourselves to eat." (Mk 6,37)

"This Congregation was founded, not for the rich and important communes, but for the smallest and the poorest, where there is never, where there cannot even be a deputy master; that is to say a second registered teacher, appointed and paid."⁴²

"The poor are sacred to us".⁴³

A heart that lets itself be moved by the needs of others. At the origin of the Mennaisian School there is the will to respond creatively to the educational needs of the "children of the people", those excluded from life, isolated rural areas without resources, those who do not know Jesus because of lack of evangelizers. Since the children do not come to school, Jean-Marie decides that the school will go to meet the children.

The Mennaisian School today continues to be parable and miracle of the Kingdom of God: it goes out to meet the poor:

- Children and youth who cannot access school for a variety of reasons.
- Students in our schools who have learning problems and who are experiencing academic failure.
- Those who have problems relating to their classmates, or who live in a complicated or disruptive environment, or those who have specific educational needs.
- The illiterate, the "out of school", the emigrants, the marginalized, and in general those who have not attended a normal schooling.

Jean-Marie de la Mennais was creative. By his initiatives he sought a necessary and just social progress. The most disadvantaged were at the center of his projects. But he always had in mind a project that evangelizes by educating. Today, all members of the educational community must have the same sensitivity that aims to transform society and make it more just and fraternal.

Compassion and creative fidelity.

"Without deceiving myself about the future, I am happy with the present: I gather around me, as we collect debris in a shipwreck or after it, I pick up, I would say, some young people thrown almost lifeless on the shore by the storm."⁴⁴

"If you delay a little, the wolf will enter the sheepfold and under the eyes of the pastor it will devour the flock."⁴⁵

Today, the Mennaisian School still hears the call of Jean-Marie de la Mennais to go to the peripheries:

- Compassionate in the face of human misery, the Mennaisian School gives young people at risk the means that will help them break away from their dire situation.

⁴² Jean Marie de la Mennais, Lettre à M. de Cuverville, 27 février 1855, CG 7, L 5281, p. 576

⁴³ Jean Marie de la Mennais, au Frère Lucien Deniaud, 15 mai 1849, CG 5, L 4426, p. 76

⁴⁴ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, à Mlle de Lucinière, 3 septembre 1838, CG 4, L 2437, p. 76

⁴⁵ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S VII p.2272

- Committing itself without fear in the non-formal education sector, it seeks to reach marginalized or socially excluded children or young people, or those whose families live in places without formal educational structures.
- By adapting its teaching methods, it seeks to meet the educational needs of these young people through specific pathways (technical training, craft apprenticeships, etc.).

The Mennaisian educator considers the cause of the poor as that of God. He knows that only God can save what is lost. But he also knows that he must put all his person and all his skills at the service of this cause.

The cry of the poor seizes the hearts of the Mennaisians. In all cultures, following the example of the founders, they are moved on hearing the cry of children and young people whose rights are violated by the Herods of our time. Listening and educating their conscience, they denounce the situations in which people attack these rights. They reject all forms of violence and work to humanize the educational community by taking Christ and his Gospel as a reference.

Education that is open to the world

"Examine what we could do for the Christian instruction of slaves: it is a very delicate item ... We must do our work peacefully, gently, courageously, without disturbing or troubling ourselves."¹⁴⁶

"Let's have a really Catholic heart. All those who, like us, work to enlarge the heritage and the kingdom of Jesus Christ, will always be very dear to us. Let us look with interest at their institutions and their works as well as ours."¹⁴⁷

A universal heart - Working with others - Solidarity networks.

To educate in the way of seeing things. Mennaisian education is committed to the building of the human family through the strengthening of solidarity networks, at local and national as well as at global levels. Its aim is to create a strong community fabric, to educate for active and responsible citizenship and to form solidarity personalities who learn to look at life with lucidity and compassion.

Mennaisian education collaborates with the official bodies of the ecclesial and civil world and with non-governmental organizations, to identify the needs and offer answers for the promotion and defense of the rights of the child.

The Mennaisian educational centers share their Gospel project to the families of their students. They invite them not only to be recipients but also actors in the projects they implement.

ORIENTATIONS

An inclusive school

"One can never take too much precautions not to break the already broken reed, so as not to extinguish the wick that still smokes."¹⁴⁸

The members of the administration team of a Mennaisian educational center, in connection with the competent persons (pastoral team, orientation office, tutoring, etc.), identify the various needs and answer to them by assigning the human and material resources needed.

The education offered in a Mennaisian School leads to avoiding any kind of discrimination. It takes into account all forms of poverty that afflict children and young people, in villages or in their neighborhood. It

⁴⁶ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, Informations et avis au Fr. Ambroise, le 1er décembre 1840, CG 4, Doc 464, p. 373

⁴⁷ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S VIII, p. 2499

⁴⁸ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, Mémorial 18, S I, p. 85

supports the diversity of situations, taking into account, as far as possible, students with special educational needs.

The Mennaisian educational centers are constantly reviewing their student selection policy. They seek to make it ever more coherent with the principles of its educational project which is open to various forms of material, intellectual, psychological and spiritual poverty. This is what Jean-Marie de la Mennais wanted: *"Even if we had lost our lawsuit, we would not have dismissed the poor: they are sacred to us!"*⁴⁹

A way of life: SERVICE

Mennaisian education shows to all members of the educational community a horizon of justice and solidarity, through initiatives that inspire service and the giving of oneself freely. It promotes the organization of "volunteering" which, open to the international Mennaisian network, offers a solidary, personal and collective commitment.

The defense of the "little ones"

The Holy Spirit granted Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes many gifts and among them an open heart that incited them to meet the educational needs of the youth of their time. This sensitivity, in harmony with the local environment, led them to shape a range of responses: schools for children in Breton villages, girls' education, schools in Brittany's urban centers, boarding schools, agricultural and technical training, adult education, participation in the education and emancipation of slaves in the French colonies, formation of candidates from other congregations devoted to education, etc.

Each Mennaisian establishment seeks to respond to this same call that transcends all religion and ideology: *"God wants the happiness and the smile of every child ... his favor is with them "for theirs is the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:14)"*. The General Chapter of 2012 invited the Mennaisian Family *"to deplore and strongly denounce the intolerable treatment that so many children throughout the world receive, to put in place the necessary structures to defend their rights and / or to join those already existing."*⁵⁰

MENNAISIAN BIBLE ICON

School of the Good Samaritan. *"He saw him and was overwhelmed with pity. » (Lk 10, 33)*

"And as for charity towards the neighbor, are not children our neighbors much more than other men? Is it not with them that we are bound to fulfill, in all its perfection, the precept of love, of mutual help, etc. that Jesus Christ imposes on all Christians?"⁵¹

The parable of the "Good Samaritan" is a story that opens the eyes to otherness. The Good Samaritan does not consider himself different from the wounded man. Nothing connected him to this man, and no relationship of kinship or solidarity forced him to take care of him; moreover, he was neither of his race nor of his religion, but he stopped to help him, breaking all the barriers that separated them.

Thus, in the Mennaisian School we are invited to practice the pedagogy of the way to look at things and people. We train ourselves to take a generous and free look at every event. Thus, we learn to read it from the side of those who suffer and not from ours. Our gaze becomes a look that binds, that cares for the other, that makes us responsible for him.

"When will come the supreme moment, the hour of definitive truth, the only thing that will remain, the only thing that will be taken into consideration as a criterion of salvation or perdition, will be neither piety,

⁴⁹ J.-M. de la Mennais, Letter of 15th of May, 1849

⁵⁰ cf. General Chapter 2012, n° 17

⁵¹ J.-M. de la Mennais, S VIII p. 2367

religiosity, spirituality, neither faith nor even what everyone will have done or not done with God, but only one thing: what each one will have done or not in the service of human beings."⁵²

A school of the Good Samaritan is a school that favors mercy: "Open our eyes to all distress. Inspire us at every moment the right word when we find ourselves in front of brothers alone and helpless. Give us the courage of a fraternal attitude, when our brothers are helpless or oppressed." (Eucharistic prayer for gatherings, B)

Make us, Lord, good Samaritans with children and young people.

Let us be without deceit in front of them.

Give us, Lord, eyes like yours to see them as you see them,
a clear, positive look that perceives appeals and discerns poverty.

Give us a heart that is moved with compassion

In face of the needs and injuries of others.

May we always be, Lord, communities of good Samaritans.

We have all been sent to be your witnesses,

through the education of children and young people that you entrusted to us:

- Give us, Lord, feet to walk on the pathways
and go out to find those who are alone, frail and tired.
- Give us, Lord, hands that welcome and care,
that express goodness, that guide and accompany with compassion.
- Give us, Lord, to all of us, Mennaisians,
an attentive ear to your Word
so that we can seek together your will.
Put in our mouth the right words that helps to accomplish it.

⁵² J.M Castillo, p.139

4. MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, LINKS OF FRATERNITY

To Weave bonds that humanize

"My God, deign to grant my ardent prayer. I speak to you for children whom you have given me. You know how dear they are to me. Oh! I wish I could take them all in my arms to save them; yes, I would like to bring home to the fold, putting on my shoulders, all those poor little sheep who had the misfortune to go astray. My God, bless my efforts."⁵³

"At the sight of this multitude of children who call us to their aid, who entreat and beseech us to have pity on their fate, to tear them away from death, from the eternal death they are threatened with, no human interest will hold us back. We will run to them, we will take them in our arms, and we will say to them: Dear children whom Jesus our Savior loved so much, whom he deigned to embrace and bless, come to us, stay with us; we will be the guardian angels of your innocence."⁵⁴

"Charity is eternal: death itself cannot break the bonds it forms, and the men it has united on this earth are still united beyond the tomb."⁵⁵

A Mennaisian center is a place to build community. Each pupil develops his potentials, each educator fulfills him/herself, parents see there with pleasure their children learning and growing in all the dimensions of their being. One of the most profound convictions of any Mennaisian educational community is that everyone discovers the meaning of life through the fraternal bonds that are gradually woven within it.

"Angels" of the little ones. The Mennaisian educator meets children and young people at the heart of the realities in which they are immersed. He is an "angel" for these "little ones" by unconditional acceptance, personal knowledge, confidence, presence that prevent dangers and help in difficulties. For that, he tries to leave the known paths: what has been considered the secure paths and the traditional answers. He seeks new ways, innovative projects that are addressed to all, that deal with concrete life and give a horizon of hope and growth.

The bonds that are woven at the heart of the Mennaisian educational community favor the defense and promotion of the life of each of these "little ones" in all its dimensions. They are expressed through real personal and structuring relationships that combine softness and firmness. They promote specific attention to the most vulnerable, to those who depend most on the support of others.

The Mennaisian School wants young people to keep the best possible memory of their school as a place where they felt loved, listened to, accompanied, and supported in the difficulties.

ORIENTATIONS

The relationship of the educator with children and young people is made of sweetness and firmness - Instruments of mercy.

"With children, be good, patient and gentle; no doubt you must be firm too, but without being hard and without giving way to impatience."⁵⁶

⁵³ J.-M. de la Mennais, S I, p. 147

⁵⁴ J.-M. de la Mennais, S VII p.2271

⁵⁵ J.-M. de la Mennais, à A.M. Hay, 11th september 1807, CG I, L 13, p. 30

⁵⁶ To Br. Liguori-Marie, 8th December, 1845, CG 5, L 3790 p. 405

"Try to make yourself loved by children: it is the best way to educate them: too harsh punishments repel and irritate."¹⁵⁷

"The Brother who is going to provide you with care is a second father that Providence gives you; ... he will seek above all, by a mixture of gentleness and firmness, to correct your faults and to make you holy persons ..."¹⁵⁸

The Mennaisian educator, in the service of his students, helps everyone to discover and develop their skills and talents. Concerned with the growth of each of those entrusted to him, he helps them to acquire the skills they will need to be fully integrated into society and open to the values of the Gospel.

A proper teacher-student relationship presupposes mutual respect and exemplary educators. The pedagogical relationship of the Mennaisian educator to his students is characterized by kindness and firmness, patience and encouragement, rigor, audacity and innovation in handling his work.

He is convinced that, whatever the situation of the pupil may be, *"nothing is lost, because human beings, capable of degrading themselves to the extreme, can also surpass themselves, to opt again for the good, and regenerate themselves beyond all the mental and social conditioning imposed upon them. They are able to look at themselves with honesty, to evaluate their own lassitude and to take new paths to true freedom."*¹⁵⁹

Mennaisian education seeks simply to meet the educational needs of young people. Pupils do not represent the "means" of success for the school; rather they receive from it the support they need to succeed.

The Mennaisian educational community is welcoming to all its members. It considers everyone unique and promotes listening, dialogue and deep reflection. Mennaisian educational relation is not only a relationship of help or pedagogical support, but also the accompaniment of each young person in the discovery of the Lord of his life.

The student at the center

The actors of a Mennaisian educational institution upholds that the pupil is the *raison d'être*, the subject and the end of the school, and that he is therefore the first artisan of his learning and education process. This belief requires educators to accept and train themselves in order to competently fulfill their mission as mediators.

Recognizing each member of the educational community for their specific role, the Mennaisian School puts into play the means that give the student opportunities to engage, serve inside and outside of school, and to progress in self-affirmation and self-esteem.

In its internal organization, while taking into account the local culture, the Mennaisian School provides occasions in which the student can express his points of view and participate in the decision-making process until their implementation.

Pedagogy of presence

The members of a Mennaisian educational community are convinced, as we said above, that the young person acquires the respect of life and discovers its meaning through the bonds he weaves with others. Education is a matter of heart. It is only through a true personal relationship that a genuine development process gets started.

⁵⁷ Letter to Br. Liguori Marie, 1st December, 1846, CG 5, L 3987, p. 536

⁵⁸ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, Sermons VII p. 2271

⁵⁹ Pape François, *Laudato sí*, 205

The educators of a Mennaisian School ensure a significant presence among the students, significant by its duration and by its quality, consisting in being present in the classroom and in other moments of the school life. They cultivate listening.

His constant presence among his students transforms also the educator. He lets himself be fashioned. He develops a sensitivity that lets himself be moved. He knows how to take care of the most isolated or troubled students and offer them opportunities for human and spiritual growth.

This attitude allows him to help young people to read their own lives as children of God, and to discover what bonds God wants to establish with them.

MENNAISIAN BIBLICAL ICON

School as a Hospital

"Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went according to his custom on the Sabbath day into the synagogue and stood up to read. He was given the book of the prophet Isaiah, and unrolling the book, he found the passage where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he consecrated me by the anointing, to bear the Good News to the poor; he sent me to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and to the blind the recovery of sight, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim a year of grace from the Lord. » (Lk 4, 16-19)

"A school is a hospital: all children are infirm, but the more they make you exercise patience and charity, the more merit you have, and the greater your reward will be in heaven. Therefore, do not become discouraged, but on the contrary, redouble your zeal in the spirit of faith. O my dear child, from time to time think of the indulgence you need God to use with you, following the words of the Gospel, and then be merciful in order to obtain mercy for yourself."⁶⁰

"Sublime vocation! It is that of Jesus Christ himself; He has left the bosom of his Father only to do what you will do following his example! Scripture tells us that He has gone about doing good, teaching to the poor, enlightening the blind, straightening the lame, healing the sick; and you too are instructing true doctrine to those who do not know it, and who, if deprived of your lessons, would have always ignored it, and you too will do wonders in the spiritual order: these children whose eyes you open to the divine lights, to whom you teach to know God and the road that leads to heaven; those disabled children to whom you will give the health of the soul ... "⁶¹

In the New Testament, miracles are signs that Jesus realizes to express that the Kingdom of God comes through Him and is made present in Him.

Through the simple signs that life bears, attitudes and words that humanize, the Kingdom of God is present in the Mennaisian educational project. It announces the liberation from all forms of oppression. Concretely the miracles and wonders of salvation brought by Christ are experienced there.

For Jean-Marie de la Mennais, the school is a place of healing for children and young people. In his time, he created schools for children "of ordinary people" not having access to an education that would have opened a worthy future for them. He wanted these schools to be places of healing for children who are delinquents or close to fall among them, left to their fate and without adults to guide them. His schools were thought of as places where new generations could prepare for their future through an education that touches the mind, the body, the sensibility, the moral and spiritual life.

Today, do our students need to be saved?

⁶⁰ To Br. Henri-Marie Martial, 2nd of September 1851, CG VI, Letter 4797, p. 385

⁶¹ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S VII, p 2237

The Mennaisian educational centers are places where human suffering is relieved. In these schools, the new generations establish personal relationships with adults who, in a complementary way to the family, take care of them, help them in their search for meaning, and open new horizons for them. These relationships bring about salvation, are liberating and give weight to the being of all who live. Mennaisian education offers a path of healing both individual and social. It makes fraternity an educational principle that tends to the wounds of intelligence and heart.

Lord, you who make me an "angel"
sent to bring Good News,
put in my mouth your words of love,
of unconditional welcome and of kindness,
your words of encouragement and hope.
Trace on my lips, your smile,
your grace and your boundless joy
who express the immense love
with which you envelop us and cover us.

Lord, you who make me an "angel"
sent to heal those who suffer,
you know well children and young people
burning with fever and thirsty,
unable to walk ...
Shape my hands in such a way that they can relieve their pain,
and comfort their afflicted hearts.
May I be the oil and the wine of the Good Samaritan
They are those that treat the wounds caused
by our forgetfulness, our silences or our lack of love.

Lord, you who make me an "angel"
sent to protect the lost sheep,
Submerge my heart with your thoughtfulness,
and your attentive presence so near.
That nobody be lost
because of my indifference or my negligence.
That I may look after them and take care of them.
That I be looking for the lost sheep
with the same passion and concern You had.

Lord, you who made me an "angel"
sent to accompany your children's steps,
Let me know how to be with them, like You;
without recoiling before the efforts needed for the road.
May I be, like You, the loving hand
who guides, supports and raises up
without repressing or suffocating their freedom.
May I be for them a companion
who walks with them, like You,
on the paths of life.

Lord, you who made me an "angel"
Make that I be, for children and young people

that you put on my way,
the living sign of your motherly Providence. Amen.

Testimonies of Mennaisian educators:

"Thanks to God I have worked for many years as an educator with young people, and during those years, I saw how the school was transformed for some into a "hospital school ". It is indeed in this place that we can feel accompanied in our sufferings, especially young people who need listening, encouragement, treatments for wounds for which there is no other places to go. A hospital school is one where young people like to come because they feel unique, cared for and most of all loved by God. "

"To weave bonds ... is to share life intensely, to have the same hope, a common project. It's trying to dream together. It is giving one another strength, correcting one another, sharing values and challenges, choosing together fundamental options for life ... "

5. MENNAISIAN EDUCATION, QUALITY WORKSHOP

To be creative in order to love better.

"It is very important, in the present circumstances, to strengthen and upgrade our teaching: already, wherever there has been free competition, we have won, and this is an advantage that should not be lost because otherwise we would not do good for a long time ... It is essential that we attract middle-class children to our schools, ... "⁶²

"We want to give our pupils a solid and rich education which makes them capable of exercising in the world, with distinction, the various works for which they are destined; to remain in this respect behind the other schools, not to follow the social sciences in their progress, would be to deceive the just hopes of families. "⁶³

Qualitative and meaningful learning. A Mennaisian educational center rejoices when it has been able to help every child and every young person find his way and has provided him with quality means so that he can integrate into society and play his own role. One of the signs of the success of Mennaisian education is to enable each student to actualize his maximum learning potential.

In the Mennaisian educational project, the evangelizing dimension is combined with pedagogical excellence. The quality of education is reflected in the academic results of his students, but also in their ability to serve others with compassion.

The emphasis placed on community life, on the capacity of welcoming and supporting others, on the ability to create human bonds and a healthy atmosphere of happiness and fraternal love, cannot be achieved to the detriment of the indispensable and all-natural task of any educational institution: the formation of intelligence.

Every Mennaisian school provides the progress and success of its students by promoting the development of the human and spiritual potential of each of them. Mennaisian educators help their students, especially those who are weaker, to discover and identify their talents. For the most disadvantaged, they develop itineraries adapted to their capacities.

ORIENTATIONS

Innovation as a response to new needs.

"My schools are of two kinds: those of the campaign are usually led by a single brother, sometimes by two, who live in the presbytery and whose parish priest is the local superior: those of towns are organized differently: the brothers live in community: they take boarders and half-boarders, and they organize rehearsal study for the children who are left under their supervision during the whole day, except the time of the meals when they are allowed to eat at home, if their eating at school is not convenient for their parents.. "⁶⁴

Faithful to its origins, the Mennaisian School constantly seeks to adapt its educational project, adopting innovative models that promote the formation of the whole person of the students.

The Mennaisian educational project is a learning process in which children and young people are the main protagonists of their own formation and personal growth while remaining in dialogue with the members of the educational community.

⁶² Jean-Marie de la Mennais, à l'abbé Mazelier, 8 février 1833, CG III, L 1616, p. 16

⁶³ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S II p 845 bis

⁶⁴ Au P. Dupuch, 23 mai 1836. CG VII, L 2061 p.361

In a Mennaisian educational center, children and young people feel supported, valued and accompanied. In this way, the school promotes capacity of initiative, creativity and autonomy in the learning process and in the personal growth of the student.

Mennaisian education adapts the different training projects to the needs of children and young people by proposing a **pedagogy of success**:

- The student learns to welcome doubt and uncertainty as a step to overcome obstacles and perseverance in the search for truth.
- He develops self-confidence and invites to transcend the present with a project facing the future.
- He acquires a culture of work in which it involves creative thinking and reflection.
- He has confidence in his personal potential and learns to overcome the fear of making mistakes and appearing ridiculous in the eyes of others.
- He opens himself to wonder, experimentation and research.
- He learns that all progress is based on a demanding personal work and a constant effort.

Permanent formation

*"We will never have good school children if we do not have good teachers ..."*⁶⁵

*"... Not to follow the human sciences in their development, this would be deceiving the just hopes of the families."*⁶⁶

The Founding Father encouraged the Brothers to study and be competent, not for personal glory, but for a better service.

As at the time of the foundation, in order to ensure the quality of teaching and education, and to better adapt to a constantly changing reality, the Mennaisian School organizes the permanent formation of its educators. It tries so to harmonize the proposed educational and pedagogical itineraries, to strengthen the feeling of belonging to the Mennaisian educational network, to stimulate the culture of innovation and the sharing of new pedagogical initiatives.

Participatory learning

The Mennaisian educational project has its origin in the collaboration between Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes. Beyond the differences of origin and the geographical distance which separated them, these two priests were united closely by the same passion: their heart vibrated in harmony. They wanted the kingdom of God to be established in the hearts of the children of Brittany, and they wanted that they accessed to knowledge to prevent them from staying on the sidelines or being excluded from society.

Since the beginning, the Mennaisian educational project has been characterized by collaboration. Following the example of their founders, the first Brothers helped one another in their formation by applying what today could be defined as learning communities, in which experienced educators initiated the new ones. Jean-Marie himself describes his strategy: *"We place our young brothers in a school of several classes, with a Brother who perfects their trials as educators, their instruction, their training"*⁶⁷

The way schools are established is also an example of the spirit of collaboration that characterizes the Mennaisian educational project with the aim of reaching the remote villages. It was a question of founding in small towns as Lamballe, Quintin, Guingamp, Lannion, Treguier, Dinan, etc., schools in which several

⁶⁵ à l'archevêque de Rennes, le priant de ne pas fermer un collège, 1808, CG I, L 17, p. 38

⁶⁶ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S II p 845 bis

⁶⁷ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S I, p. 38

Brothers would live in a community acting as center around which would cluster the schools with one Brother in a given sector.

This spirit of collaboration was also manifested when Jean-Marie de la Mennais agreed to share his knowledge with other priests who sought to establish such schools in their diocese.

The attestations that speak of this opening of heart of Jean-Marie are numerous. Faced with the impossibility of providing masters to cover all needs, he offers to train the candidates of other initiators like himself.

In the spirit of origins, the Mennaisian School promotes collaboration and networking, both within the school and at the level of several educational centers. These, belonging or not to the Mennaisian network, seek to help one another to improve the quality of the educational project.

Pedagogy that transforms reality.

*"It is through education that a people is what it is, just itself and not another. No profound change can be made in ideas, institutions, laws, unless education undergoes a change of the same nature. Let's say it again, we will never know it enough: everything comes out of education."*⁶⁸

*"The doing without knowing is blind and knowledge without love is sterile."*⁶⁹

The Founder was opposed to knowledge that remains purely theoretical. He himself tried to experiment with new types of training to better adapt his schools to the shortcomings of society: higher primary education, basic vocational education, agricultural and maritime education. Mennaisian schools have the will to respond, without delay and with foresight, to the different training needs expressed by families or political or societal circumstances.

Mennaisian education proposes to every person and society to be transformed in the light of the Gospel. It's not just about giving young people the skills that would allow them to pursue their education elsewhere in the field that suits them. It is a question of allowing them, during their learning, to be themselves transformative generators, agents of their own future.

Knowledge is sterile without love. This is why the Mennaisian education maintains that the student must acquire any knowledge by considering the reality, the world, with an evangelical look. In the same way, the link with knowledge goes together with the search for the common good.

People in the Mennaisian School seek:

- To develop practices and values that generate personal progress, and that transform the environment and society for the common good.
- To promote cooperation and teamwork.
- To provide solutions to the current needs of society and environment, with an ethical sense and a sense of social responsibility, and also in the perspective of sustainable development.

BIBLICAL-MENNAISIAN-ICON

The multiplication of the loaves. - *"Give them yourselves to eat" (Mt 14:16).*

"When I look at these students gathered by Providence, when I consider the immensity of the needs of this vast diocese, and compare them to its resources, my heart is moved and broken, and I am tempted to say to Christ as his apostles, in a similar circumstance ... What is this small number to make fertile again, and again in the distant future, so many countryside places covered with thorns ...? Today, we have this

⁶⁸ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, sur l'éducation religieuse, Saint-Brieuc, de l'Imprimerie de Prud'homme, 1834, S. Tome 1, p. 52

⁶⁹ Benoît XVI, Caritas in veritate, 30

*confidence that this mustard seed will grow rapidly, and that God, touched by your prayers, will soon multiply it a hundred times, as he once did, multiplying the loaves to feed the faithful people who had followed him in the desert. "*⁷⁰

*"These are little children who ask you to teach them the doctrine of salvation: the bread of life, and there is no one to break it. Brother such-and-such, where are you? "*⁷¹

The text of the Multiplication of the loaves invites us to fix our gaze on Jesus Master who allows life to flourish around him:

- First of all, one must consider the way Jesus looks at people, the way he sees the people he meets.
- Then, we must grasp the different questions that Jesus and his disciples ask themselves: Jesus surpasses the practical concerns of his disciples to give priority to the real needs of people.
- Jesus involves the disciples. It teaches them to think differently. He shares with them his way of being and seeing people. He offers them his answers.
- By assuming reality and starting from the seven loaves he has, Jesus goes further. He generously transforms, giving thanks, what he has in hand, and later, he sends his disciples to collect what remains after the meal.
- God's love always goes beyond us. It transforms mercantile logic into the logic of sharing and love.
- Thus, the Mennaisian School of yesterday, today and tomorrow is fruitful to the extent that, every day, the passion for children and young people is being renewed.
- "Give them yourselves something to eat," says Jesus. In his hands, the 'little' is transformed into 'a lot'. We are not unaware of the problems of those around us. But we know with the disciples that with 'little' we can do 'a lot'. What is important is not to lose interest in those who need being helped and welcomed.

Testimonies of Mennaisian educators:

"When I hear again the words of Jesus:" Give them yourselves to eat, "I wonder what is today the multitude that are like sheep without a shepherd, and what is the food they are needing, where and with whom Jesus asks me to share life ".

*"Our mission as educators aims at providing a teaching that makes possible the optimal pupil's development of his intellectual and affective capacities seen from the point of view of faith. It requires a permanent closeness to the student, not only to value and support him in the process of his learning, but also and especially, to accompany him in his emotional growth, his social integration and his inner life. To this we are called, in one way or another, all of us who are entering this educational process. "*⁷²

⁷⁰ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S II, 792

⁷¹ Jean-Marie de la Mennais, S VII, 2205