

THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

FORMATION PROJECT

The text adopted by the General Council on 15 October 2010

The Formation Project below is meant to be complementary to the text of reference on the Mennaisian Family on the principles of formation concerning each one of the modalities of engagement in the Mennaisian Family. Certain Provinces or Vice-provinces will find in it only a confirmation of what they have already undertaken. Others will find themselves encouraged to follow suit.

Key objectives of the formation :

- To establish links of communion and live by them, and thus form the Mennaisian Family, such is the main element of the Mennaisian Family.
- To progressively strive to resemble Christ. To try to be his living images before the youths through education and evangelization.
- To know the Mennaisian Charism better by expressing all its richness through the spirituality, the mission, the pedagogy and the shared life.

- A -

FRAMEWORK

"A layperson can collaborate with an educative work inspired by the Mennaisian charism, participate in a Mennaisian Family or belong to this Mennaisian Family." (n° 28)¹

"We distinguish here the three principal modalities of the engagement of the Laity in the Mennaisian Family: the collaboration with an educative Mennaisian work, the participation in the Mennaisian Family and the membership to the Mennaisian Family." (n° 29)

The Framework-Document deals with different modalities of engagement. It does not evoke different levels. These suppose a way through successive stages. The modalities, on the contrary, show the way how each one wants to situate himself/herself in the Mennaisian Family. The formation in view of the three modalities of engagement must therefore be made jointly and permit each one to situate himself/herself in the Mennaisian Family according to their personal project.

¹ Framework document '*The Mennaisian Family*', Rome April 2009. The following quotations refer to the same document

- B -

MODALITIES

I. COLLABORATION.

"Any person (Teacher, Parent, Old Student, etc.) who intervenes in one way or another in the educative Mennaisian mission and offers a positive and stimulant support collaborates effectively with the educative work." (n° 30).

"In this collaboration, the Laity and the Brothers seek to develop the quality, the simplicity and the conviviality of the human relationships. They strive also, in the framework of the Mennaisian Educative Project, to deepen the meaning and the mission of the educator." (n° 30)

A. Formation at the rational dimension :

1. Interpersonal Relationship:

- Encouraging times of free meetings between Brothers and Laity. Living together, Brothers and Mennaisian Laity, a style of interpersonal relationships characterized by the respect, the service, the proximity of all, the humility, the joy, the trust and the love.
- Taking interest, Brothers and Laity, in the life of one another.
- Inviting the teachers and the non-teaching personnel to participate in the celebration of important events of the year (Opening of the year, Christmas, Lent, Easter, May: month of Mary, Campaigns against famine, etc...)
- Arranging meetings in communities, by groups, to promote sharing and mutual recognition.

2. Relationships with the educational institution.

- Permitting each one to share the life of the school/institution and participating actively in it.
- Giving information on all that is going on in the educative work and in the religious Province to promote the meaning of the Mennaisian Family.
- Publicising the projects of the school/institution in view of sharing what is lived there.
- Arousing periodically, for each one, times of dialogue with those responsible for the school.
- Encouraging formal and informal sharing on the meaning of our task of education according to each one.

B. Formation Itinerary:

1. Knowledge of the specificity of the school/institution:

- Knowledge of the history of the school or educational institution, and of its particular bias.
 - Utilizing the web pages of the Province and of the Congregation.
 - Working on the different images of the Mennaisian School, namely: hospital, hostel, vineyard, temple...
- Knowledge of the Mennaisian Education Project in which the educational institution is rooted.
- Knowledge of the Education Project of the school or of the institution; participation in its elaboration and in its implementation.

2. Deepening of the educator's vocation

- Discovering and deepening of the educator's and teacher's profession as a vocation (education for life).
- Concern for the pedagogical and professional formation.
- Good perception of the educational and social reality. Ability to discern the values of each culture. Development of the sense of criticism.

3. Possible initiatives in every educational institution.

Every educational school or institution organizes workshops for formation and for further development.

We can, for instance, organise:

- 3 meetings on the proper character of the school for new parents and educators.
- 3 other annual meetings on the vocation of the educator for all the personnel after the first year.
- 3 main annual events on the person of Father de La Mennais for the High School students.

II. PARTICIPATION.

"Participating in the mission of education requires the person to engage himself/herself by a voluntary decision, in what connects him/her to the Congregation. The Congregation is disposed to share this mission with the Laity and it calls them to assume responsibilities within the specific mission of the Institute." (n° 31)

"This way implies that the members of the educational community who have chosen this option seek to know, love and incarnate the values of the 'Mennaisian pedagogy', and to express in their work the fundamental traits of the Mennaisian School. They seek to live in conformity with the Gospel in the light of the Mennaisian spirituality that they strive to know." (n° 32)

"Participation implies formation. This formation aims at giving meaning to what one is participating in. It is not merely theoretical. It is supported by concrete engagements, and it aims at making the persons responsible for the project in which they participate." (n° 46)

A. Formation of the relational dimension :

1. Relationships on the level of spirituality.

"They share with a community of Brothers or among themselves the times of prayer and of formation that permit them to incarnate the Mennaisian evangelical face at the heart of the daily life."

- Knowing and interiorising the "charismatic figure" of the Founder and identifying oneself with him.
- Offering to the members of the educational community who are in a given modality regular times of retreat (recollection).
- Organising joint prayer-meetings for Brothers and Laity.
- Invitations to participate in the events of the educational community / school.

2. Relationships at the mission level.

- Engaging oneself to build together with the Brothers an authentic educational community in which the relationships among all the members are founded on the Gospel.
- Participating actively in the life of the educational community: pastoral, catechesis, accompaniment of new educators, sharing of responsibilities, formation...
- Engaging oneself together with the Brothers to make Jesus Christ known and loved by the youths.
- Seeking to implement the Education Project of the School.

B. Formation itinerary.

1. For the spirituality.

- Knowing the life of the Founder and the important stages of the history of the Congregation.
- Knowing oneself as "sent" to the youths is a fundamental dimension of the vocation of the Mennaisian Educator.
- Knowing the Mennaisian spirituality; nourishing oneself on it and living it. To start reading the Word of God in the light of the Mennaisian Charism.

2. For the mission.

- To be acquainted with the specificity of the Catholic Mennaisian School.
- Seeking to know well the strains of the Mennaisian pedagogy as well as its educational implications in view of living them in the school.
- Knowing well the Education Project of the School; working at its elaboration; and engaging oneself personally in its implementation.
- Making oneself available, in view of rendering better service, and for following a professional Mennaisian formation.

III. MEMBERSHIP

A. VOCATIONAL OPTION.

1. VOCATION DISCERNEMENT

"Belonging to the Mennaisian Family corresponds to a vocational option. It is the response to a call to surrender one's life to the service of this mission received in the Church and therefore share the Mennaisian charism in its different dimensions of mission, of spirituality and one form of communitarian engagement." (n°34)

Wanting to enter into this link of "membership with" supposes an itinerary that leads by stages to a discernment through the deepening of profound motivations. This discernment integrates the three dimensions that constitute the fundamental nucleus of "membership" to the Mennaisian Family: the mission, the spirituality and the shared life.

This discernment is made in three stages:

- **A stage of introduction.**

The itinerary in view of the discernment begins with the time of meeting with the Brother Provincial or his representative (Referent-Brother). Thus begins, for the Laity, a period of discernment, accompanied by the Brother designated to be his guide on this way of probation.

- **A stage of discernment.**

The period of discernment is a time of conversion and of reflection enlightened by the Spirit. Its duration may be adapted to each situation.

The Laity is invited to deepen his/her desire of engaging himself/herself,

- By moving along in the bosom of a constituted group of persons desirous of following the same itinerary.
- By participating in the different meetings of the proposed course of formation as well as in the joint retreats for Brothers and Laity.

- By pursuing one's personal reflection through regular meetings with the Referent-Brother.

- **Confirmation and engagement.**

After going through this course of formation and discernment, the laypersons who wish to confirm their desire of belonging to the Mennaisian Family, make a written request of engagement to the Brother Provincial. Enriched by what this time of discernment may have permitted him/her to discover, he/she is invited to express his/her desire and what motivates him/her.

A meeting with the Provincial or with the Referent- Brother will permit an evaluation of the progress made. The Layperson is then admitted to pronounce his/her engagement publicly. It is made for a renewable period of one year according to the modalities established by the Province.

By their engagement the Laity who belong to the Mennaisian Family associate themselves to the Congregation and engage themselves to live the exigencies that are entailed.

For its part the Institute welcomes the Laity and engages itself to share with them its Charism, its spirituality, its mission, in short, all its spiritual goods, and to give them the spiritual assistance they require.

2. FORMATION IN VIEW OF DISCERNMENT.

- **Proposition of an itinerary of discernment entitled: "Towards membership to the Mennaisian Family, *itinerary on humility*".**

Handing out of the document "Itinerary on humility" and the explanation by the Referent Brother..

This itinerary comprises a rhythm of short personal prayers made daily in the light of the Word of God and of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, a type of "exercises in everyday life" that include times of sharing.

The Brothers of the communities who accompany the Laity in the process of discernment are also invited to follow this itinerary so as to be able to share with them during the monthly meetings or on the occasion of the time of prayer.

- **Reading one's life and relationships in the light of Jean-Marie de La Mennais**

The layperson in the course of discernment is invited to make a re-reading of his/her life in the light of Father de la Mennais' own life. The Brothers who accompany them are invited to do likewise in view of sharing with them.

- **Charter of life ²**

The layperson in the course of discernment reads and meditates the document on the Charter of life to put his/her life in line with what is written, and shares his/her reflections and questions with other Lay Mennaisians and the Referent-Brother.

- **Gethsemane as a place of discernment.**

The Laity in the course of discernment deepen their knowledge of the mystery of Gethsemane in liaison with Jean-Marie de La Mennais' thought. They apply this discernment to their choice of vocation.

- **Times**

- Spending time for personal prayer as it is proposed in the "Itinerary on humility".
- Time for sharing on the progress made on the Itinerary on humility, be it with other Laypersons who follow the same way, or with the Brothers of the Community, and with the Referent-Brother.
- Time for monthly local meetings with the Brothers of the Community of reference.
- For Provincial meetings (three times) of the Laity and the Brothers concerned with this itinerary.
- For participation in the assemblies of the Province that the Provincial thinks opportune.

² There are actually different texts, according to the Provinces. Perhaps it would be desirable to write one proposition of a text that would interest all the Provinces.

- For formal or informal participation in the life of the schools and of the Communities of the Brothers (celebrations, visits, interest in the "family affairs ", leisure, projects, pastoral...)
- For participation in the Annual Assembly and in the Brothers' retreats (at least 3 days during one of the annual retreat of the Brothers).

B. THE ONGOING FORMATION– MODALITY OF MEMBERSHIP.

1. GENERALITIES

Objectives of the formation :

1. In the Ratio (n°4), in reference to the Brothers, it is written: "The principal objective of any itinerary of formation is to promote the growth of a Brother in connection with his resemblance to Christ, by means of an itinerary that will permit him to interiorize little by little the sentiments of Christ towards his Father; this itinerary is made according to the Mennaisian Charism which is proper to him, in a process of personalization."
2. In the same way the layperson who wants to belong to the Mennaisian Family, the formation seeks to deepen his identity which consists in being an image of Christ amidst the youths. He/She thus discovers this Mennaisian itinerary as a way of living his/her Christian vocation in the Church.
3. We can belong to the Mennaisian Family by being a lay associate, by being part of a missionary Community or of a Fraternity. The Spirit will make us discover many other forms...

Dimensions of the formation. (cf. Framework Document of the Mennaisian Family, p. 34 – 35)

1. The human dimension.

Taking care constantly to integrate with the harmonious growth of the person the riches of intelligence, of affectivity and of experience.

- Reading one's own life in the light of the word and the experience of Jean-Marie de la Mennais and of Gabriel Deshayes.
- Reading one's own history as a history of salvation.
- To start re-reading one's own life (Lectio vitae).

2. The Christian dimension.

Responding to the gift of vocation by a strong desire of constant growth and of faithfulness.

- Discerning the personal and the communitarian calls in the heart of the universal call to holiness.
- Feeding on the Word of God and on the Sacraments.
- To start making Lectio Divina and personal prayer.

3. **The Mennaisian dimension.**

Living in an attitude of constant renewal, conscious that faithfulness to the Charism demands of everybody a disposition of creative faithfulness.

- Discovering the dimensions of the Mennaisian spirituality and living it.
- Making the Mennaisian pedagogy one's own in view of the mission.
- Sharing a communitarian life centered on Christ.

Methodology of the formation. (cf. Framework Document of the Mennaisian Family p. 35 – 36)

1. The methodology must express that the whole process is thought of in the framework of the Mennaisian Family and supposes the presence of Brothers and Laity in the organisation and in the participation.

2. The methodology used is that of workshops. This formation is therefore not simply intellectual, but envisages the whole person and transforms one's life. This methodology :

- Touches the diverse dimensions of the person based on experience,
- Unites theory and practice,
- Makes one enter into a process that lasts.
- Frees the dynamics of life,
- Helps to discern these dynamisms.

3. The methodology of workshops includes the following elements:

Based on a central theme which integrates at once with Mission, Spirituality and Communion, the methodology used comprises :

- A periodic communitarian deepening of the themes (for instance, once a month).
- The appropriate personal study of these themes.
- Practical exercises in view of putting into application what has been studied personally or groups to which each participant belongs, in the framework of their mission .
- Sharing in groups that permit the evaluation of the personal and communitarian progress that has been made.

It is the responsibility of each Province to organise this formation, in liaison with the General Council.

2. PROPOSITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

Formation for relational life.

The Laypersons who have chosen the MEMBERSHIP have a specific link to the Congregation. With the Brothers, they share the Mennaisian Charism in its different dimensions: the mission, the spirituality and the shared life.

1. Spirituality

- They pray in community in a regular fashion. They participate in recollections (days of re-reading life, of formation, of prayer) and in retreats with a community of Brothers and within the framework of the Province.
- They cultivate the spirituality of communion between Brothers and Laity.
- They gather periodically for sharing and discerning, accompanied by Brother Provincial or by the Referent-Brother.
- They are invited to clarify in their personal project the modalities of their engagement.

2. Mission.

- They participate in the Mennaisian mission of the Community.
- They put themselves at the service of the mission, according to their abilities and their availability.

3. **Shared life.**

- They share times of prayer, of life, and of leisure with the Community of Brothers.
- They participate in the local and Provincial Mennaisian celebrations.
- They establish links with Fraternities or Groups of Mennaisian Laity in other countries.

Itineraries of ongoing formation.

Proposition of five themes of formation considering a theme per year.

This formation aims directly at the mission and the vital growth of the individual person and of the group.

Mennaisian Axis	CONTENTS	Initial experience	BIBLICAL ICON	DIMENSIONS
humility	Passing from "for me" to "for you". The important is the other, the service, the sharing, the empathy, a true self-esteem.	This attitude born of knowing oneself as son of God	Incarnation (see God)	Human
Peace	Vital tonality of joy, background of personal maturity according to age, autonomy, freedom, discernment.	This attitude born of the desire of doing the will of God.	GETHSEMANE (God alone)	Human
Loving Disciples	Experience of God. Theological formation Experience of meeting, of silence, of deepening as opposed to dispersion and all that is superficial. Word of God listened to, prayer, faith, celebration, sacraments.	Welcoming the Father's gifts of life and of love	CROSS (Providence, experience of God)	Theological Believing : experience of God (Liturgy)
Committed Disciples	His options, his sensibility, his fashion of seeing, his style of relationship with persons, the poor... Pedagogical formation. Catechetical and pastoral formation ...	Desire of carrying this gift and this love to others	CROSS (pedagogy, fecundity)	Missionary: Pedagogical and Pastoral (Diaconia – martiria)
Brothers	Group towards the Community, friendly evangelical relations, not by sympathy or good manners but by choice. Brothers in the Church	Knowing that the other is son of the Father	Meeting with the Risen Lord First communities (links-union)	Missionary: community that evangelizes (Koinonia – martiria)

MATERIALS

MENNAISIAN SOURCES

- Texts of Jean-Marie de La Mennais
 - Letters
 - Sermons
 - Memorial
 - Texts on the teaching of religion
 - Biblical exegesis

- General and Provincial Chapters

- Framework reference document "The Mennaisian Family ".

- Icons of the Mennaisian spirituality
- "The spirituality of a man of action"
- "The Mennaisian spirituality "
- "15 Days of Prayer with Jean-Marie de la Mennais.

- History of the Congregation: History of the Congregation of Rulon and works of Bro. Philippe Friot.

- History of missions

- Mennaisian texts of other writers
 - Gabriel Deshayes
 - Féli Lamennais
 - The first Superiors Generals and the first Chapters.

- Mennaisian places and their meaning (Pilgrimage Guide)

- Mennaisian Network (realizations of other places in the world)
 - Materials collected from the Internet.
 - Sharing of experiences of different Provinces.