**MEMORY OF THE EVENTS THAT PRECEDED**

**THE FIRST PAGE**

**BICENTENARY OF THE FIRST MEETING OF JOHN-MARY**

**DE LA MENNAIS AND GABRIEL DESHAYES**

**10th MAY 1817 – 2017**

We are preparing to make a happy memory of the events that led Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes to unite their forces and intuitions in order to advance the Kingdom through the Christian education of the children of the Breton villages of their time .

(Different readers read aloud the following texts. We can accompany the reading with some photos or images of: Saint-Brieuc, Jean-Marie de la Mennais, the signature, Gabriel Deshayes, symbol of the Founder JB de la Salle, Auray, the Father Tresvaux) –

(cf Website : <http://www.lamennais.org/animations/?lang=en> )

**• READER 1** - In its meeting of 10th April, 1817, the Municipal Council of Saint-Brieuc voted for the re-establishment of the school of the Brothers of Father. de la Salle and the mayor Prudhomme instructed Father de la Mennais to take the necessary steps to obtain it.

**• READER 2** - We remember the first encounter between Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes during which they wrote a letter to Brother Gerbaud, Superior General of the Brothers of Christian Schools.

**Jean-Marie DE LA MENNAIS**

*St. Brieuc 10th May 1817.*

*Very Reverend Brother,*

*The people of St. Brieuc, after a mission they had last year, having expressed a great desire to see the school that your Congregation once led in this city reborn, the Municipal Council, by its deliberation, dated 10thApril, decided that a sum of 1200 Francs would be charged to the budget of 1817 for this purpose, and it undertook to vote, for the next and subsequent years, that of 1800 Francs, which the Mayor announced to be necessary for the pension of three Brothers. It was further decided that the house which they formerly occupied, and which the hospice now enjoys, would be restored to its original destination in conformity with the intentions of the donors.*

*It is in the name of the Mayor that I have the honour to write to you to ask you to send us three of your Brothers on the 1st of November next; We fix this period because the house will not be free until the end of September, and we need a month to furnish it, repair it, and put it into the state in which it ought to be. I have taken care of this expense, as well as my travelling expenses, and I remain personally liable to you.*

*I conjure you with the most earnest entreaties, Reverend Father, to grant our request. If you refused it, I would be inconsolable, for I foresee that sooner or later they would establish here, as elsewhere, a Lancaster school, and thereafter we would have no hope of possessing a Christian school in this city.*

*You have had reason to applaud yourself for having formed an establishment at Auray, since already several subjects have emerged for your Novitiate. I dare to flatter myself that in the future your establishment at St. Brieuc will also furnish you with some, for faith is still alive in this country, and the mission has revived it and strengthened it even beyond our hopes.*

*Our Prefect, our Mayor and his deputies, are sincerely attached to religion and practise it. You are therefore sure to find in them protection and support. I do not think it necessary to tell you how much the administrators of the diocese and the parish priests will be pleased to assist the work of your Brothers and to show them on every occasion the sentiments which these venerable Brothers know so well to inspire to all those who have the happiness of knowing them.*

*I am with deep respect, Reverend Father,*

*Your very humble and obedient servant*

*J. M. Robert de la Mennais*

*Vicar. General of St. Brieuc*

**GABRIEL DESHAYES –**

*Father de la Mennais begs of me to join him in order to induce you to grant to the town of St. Brieuc an establishment of your Brothers. It is with great pleasure that I accept his invitation and go. You cannot oblige a more zealous and respectable clergyman, and I hope you will congratulate yourself on your acquiescence. " I take this opportunity to offer you my respect which always goes hand in hand with the gratitude I owe you for our precious establishment of Brothers.*

*Deshayes Parish priest of Auray.*

**• READER 1** - Response of the Superior General of the Brothers of Christian Schools. Brother Gerbaud, subordinated the opening of a new school to the sending of three Postulants, and the payment of their pension to the Novitiate.

**• READER 2 -** Father de la Mennais considered it an almost insurmountable obstacle to find Novices in a country where the Brothers were not known. Now Auray was still the only city of Brittany which possessed a school of the Congregation of the FEC; There was also a Novitiate and the Visitor of the Province.

**READER 1** - A letter from Father Tresvaux makes a clear allusion to a trip made by Father de la Mennais to Auray shortly before 15th June, 1817, the date of the letter. One might think that this trip to Auray was made **at the end of May,** as soon as the letter of F. Gerbaud was received, subordinating the opening of a school at St. Brieuc to the prior sending of the three subjects to the Novitiate.

**TRESVAUX** *- "I made the trip to Ste-Anne and Vannes. I was delighted with all the fine establishments and the charity of the ecclesiastics I found there.* ***They have not forgotten you****, and the Superior of St. Anne has charged me to tell you that it would be very easy for you to reiterate your visits.* ***The Rector of Auray*** *(F. Gabriel Deshayes) assured me that the affairs of the Church were finished and that bishops were to be appointed. "*

**SONG – Standing on the Shoulders by Joyce Johnson Rouse**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCM4d_kxA4o>

I am standing on the shoulders

of the ones who came before me.

I am stronger for their courage.

I am wiser for their words.

I am lifted up by their longing

for a fair and brighter future.

I am grateful for their vision

for their toiling on this earth.

We are standing on the shoulders

of the ones who came before us.

They are saints and they are humans,

they are angels, they are friends.

We can see beyond the struggles

and the troubles and the challenge

When we know that by our efforts

that things will be better in the end.

They lift me higher than I could ever fly;

carrying my burdens away.

I imagine a world if they hadn’t tried,

we wouldn’t be here celebrating today.

I am standing on the shoulders

of the ones who came before me.

I am honoured by their passion for our liberty.

I will stand a little taller

I will work a little longer

and my shoulders will be there to hold

the ones who follow me.

They lift me higher than I could ever fly,

carrying my burden away.

I imagine a world if they hadn’t tried

we wouldn’t be so very blessed today.

I am standing on the shoulders

of the ones who came before me.

I am honoured by their passion for our liberty.

I will stand a little taller I will work a little longer

and my shoulders will be there to hold

the ones who follow me.

My shoulders will be there to hold

the ones who follow me.

**INTRODUCTION -**

Our Founders, like our fathers in the faith, knew how to emerge from their comfort and risk by seeking new horizons for the Kingdom. Gabriel Deshayes leaves Auray to meet the Vicar General of Saint-Brieuc and a few days later, Jean-Marie de la Mennais will be touched by the work and sensitivity of the Apostle of Auray. Far from being enclosed in a world already known, each one lets himself be challenged by the experience, the speech and the intuitions of the other

**READING Genesis 12, 1-5**

*Now the Lord said to Abram: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

*So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.*

**COMMENTARY - EXIT**

Nomad, pilgrim, wanderer ... in search of the homeland, the promised land of God, Abram leaves his home and sets out for an unknown place, putting his faith in God.

Abraham shows us that to have faith is to dare to GO OUT by putting his faith only in Him. It is not knowing or reciting truths, but expending your life for one or the ones you love. To have faith is a way of life, a way of being in life. And we grow when, at crucial moments, we venture out of our land, from our father's house, that is to say, from our paralysing security, to anchor ourselves in the only security that will be able to lead us into the high seas, that of the poor of Yahweh who expect only from Him, health and fullness.

By abandoning our nests of security and taking flight, we trust his Word: "Do not be afraid, I will be with you". His fidelity and his promise are our unique security.

(Moment of Silence)

**Means to better represent to ourselves what happened ...**

*(On a table are the objects that recall the meeting of the two Vicars gathered in Saint-Brieuc: table, tablecloth, ancient books, inkwell, feather, parchment paper, ... background music)*

*The members present are invited to imagine the different moments of these meetings, placing themselves in the skin of the actors to again experience their thoughts, their feelings. A facilitator can guide this exercise by reading the following sentences:*

* "We are at Auray, in the presbytery." Before leaving, Gabriel Deshayes stops to contemplate in silence the young people who are being formed to become teachers with the help of the Brothers of Christian Schools.
* We accompany Gabriel Deshayes on his journey from Auray to Saint-Brieuc. As we move forward, we imagine the questions that arise in his heart. How will Father de la Mennais be? What will he want of me? Why should I interfere with his plans, have I not enough of mine? Already with all that I have in my hands!
* We imagine Jean-Marie de la Mennais in Saint-Brieuc waiting for Gabriel Deshayes. We communicate with his thoughts, remembering all that he has read about the Vicar of Auray. "He's an exciting man." "He has great sensitivity to the suffering of the poorest." "He already has young people in formation". "He knows the Brothers of Christian Schools well". Provided he could help me to ask the Brothers to reopen the school at Saint-Brieuc. "
* Gabriel Deshayes's carriage stops in front of the door of Jean-Marie de la Mennais's house. Three shots are heard. A door that opens and a vigorous clenching of hands that unites the hearts of the two passionate apostles who will remain entwined forever in the service of children and youth in the name of Christ.

**TIME FOR PRAYER**

After this time of "visualisation", we leave a time for prayers to be born and shared spontaneously. Participants are invited to express their prayers freely: prayers of thanksgiving, prayers of intercession ...

***One can take a refrain all three prayers. For example:***

***God alone in time, God alone in eternity***

***Dios solo en el tiempo, Dios solo en la eternidad.***

***Dieu seul dans le temps, Dieu seul dans l’éternité***

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**CLOSING PRAYER**

*(The meeting ends with the Bicentenary prayer said together)*

*(A page mark could be prepared and distributed with the inscription:*

*"Saint-Brieuc, May 10, 1817" and the signature of the two Vicars general.*

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