

A new page



ECHOES OF THE General Council

Number **100** – February-March 2020

*«In response to a request from the recent General Chapter (1988), already formulated at the General Conference in 1985, the General Council inaugurated a bulletin of liaison with the Provincial Brothers entitled **ECHOES of the General Council**.*



At the end of each Council, this modest bulletin will quickly bring back to each Province a certain amount of information likely to interest the Brothers. It will be up to each Provincial to ensure the dissemination of the news by bringing it verbally to the knowledge of the communities or by inserting it into his Provincial bulletin.

This is the only ambition of this new liaison body in the Congregation, whose headings will vary according to the news. » (Bro. Bernard Gaudeul, Superior General - News from the General Council N ° 1 – 7th May, 1988)

32 years later, during which 5 General Chapters followed one another, the bulletins of the General Council continue to share the life of the Brothers, the communities, the Provinces and the Districts with the whole Congregation. Information, communication, nomination, animation are still the main lines of the Echoes of the General Council today. This N ° 100 is no exception to the rule.

The N ° 1, in addition to the communication and information part, shared with the Brothers, the exchange in the form of questions and answers, which had taken place during the General Chapter of 1988 between the Capitulants and Cardinal Jean-Jérôme HAMER, Prefect of the CIVCSVA at the time. This exchange on the Christian animation of schools, community apostolate, the future of religious life, the commitment of lay people to Congregations, etc. has not lost its relevance for today, and tells us the news of religious life at all times, because «it belongs to the Church! » (Cardinal HAMER) You can find the text of N ° 1 of the Echoes of the General Council on the site: <http://www.lamennais.org/document/documents-du-conseil-general/>

1. Animation of the Congregation

1.1 Visits to the Provinces and Districts

In recent months, the Brothers of the General Council have visited various sectors of the congregation, where the Assistant Brothers have presided over several Provincial or District Chapters. Here are some highlights of these tours:

- **Brother Hervé Zamor** last October visited the District of **Polynesia**. Without doubt this District is the smallest of the Congregation in number, with three communities and eight works, but it is also very extensive since the Marquesas Islands are more than 1400 km from Tahiti. A District which is also marked by the scarcity of vocations, which remains a real challenge for the future.

In November 2019, the Superior General went to **Congo DRC** to celebrate the bicentenary of the Congregation, the 50 years of presence of the FIC in the DRC and the perpetual vows of Brothers Justin Lokana and Bruno Djukalema. The grain of wheat thrown to the ground by the pioneers in the DRC has germinated and borne good fruit and still promises many more. With its average age of 33.10 years, it is the youngest District in the Congregation!

During his stays in Rome, Brother Hervé Zamor also made the canonical visit of the *two communities of Rome*, the Casa Generalizia and the community of Sant'Ivo.

The Superior General also devoted a long month and a half to visiting the **Saint-Paul District (Senegal, Benin, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire)**. Twelve communities, eight works and forty-five Brothers, but also many young people in formation houses (pre-Postulate in Ogaro, Postulate in Thian, Novitiate in Dapaong and two Scholasticate communities in Abidjan. Brother Hervé witnessed the involvement of the Brothers in the missions, mainly present in the various «peripheries», but also witness to the fragility in holding all the works with a relatively small number of Brothers.

- **Brother Jean-Paul Peuzé** visited **Uganda** and **South Sudan** in October 2019. He first visited the Community of Riimenze (**South Sudan**). He was accompanied by Br. Peter Kazekulya, Provincial of Uganda, and by Br. Joseph Zziwa, in charge of projects in the Province. Due to the civil war, Our Lady of Assumption School took time to take off. Today, with its 618 students, 544 of whom are boarders, the school is booming, despite the many challenges to be met: lack of space, construction to be planned, teachers to find and train and still a very fragile political situation. We must emphasise the missionary dedication of the two Brothers present: Brothers Achilleo Kiwanuka and Delto Bigezo.

Brother Jean-Paul continued by visiting the Formation Houses in **Uganda**, whose Postulate had then some twenty young people over 2 years, the Novitiate with nine Novices and the Scholasticate with 26 Scholastics over 3 years. These last two formation houses are international; the Formators dedicate themselves generously to it, recognising that accompaniment, formation in consecrated life, community life, mission are important "stones" to be sealed in the hearts of young people for tomorrow, sometimes despite low means.

In January and February, Bro. Jean-Paul returned to Uganda for the formation of community Superiors (with Brother Vincent Ssekate). He then continued to visit the Communities of the Province.

Previously in November and December, he had visited the Saint-Jean-Paul II District (**Congo DRC and Rwanda**): visiting the four Communities of Congo and the three Communities of Rwanda. This visit was marked by the celebrations of the Fiftieth Anniversary in Congo, then by the District Chapter which was held in Rwanda, at the end of December 2019. This Chapter - the first of the District - well prepared in advance in the communities, put well in relief the riches of the District (youth, missionary dedication, fraternal life, etc.) but also the challenges to be met, including that of the very different cultural, economic and political situations between the two countries.

- **Brother Vincent Ssekate** first visited a number of communities in **France** last November. He witnessed that all the communities put their community project into action on a daily basis. Beyond the age and health of the Brothers, there is a great deal of commitment, multiple services, fraternal joy in community and "youthful apostolate". Then last February, Bro. Vincent presided over the Provincial Chapter in Ploërmel: a Chapter which comes as a culmination of many preparatory steps, including that of the Capitular Assembly Brothers and Laity of last year at the same time.

Between his two moments in France, Brother Vincent went to Asia, visited each of the communities of the 3 countries: **Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines** and presided over the first Chapter of the Saint-François-Xavier District, in the Philippines. It took place in Manila, from 27th to 29th December, 2019, in the presence of 16 participants, including 3 lay people, who represented the rich diversity of the District. Three days of intense work and reflection, despite the presence of the

typhoon which disrupted the arrival of some Capitulants. The Asian District, while remaining fragile, remains in a good dynamic of development.

- **Brother Miguel Aristondo**, devoted a long time to visiting communities in **Canada**. It was for him the first systematic visit to this part of the Jean de la Mennais Province. Beyond the age and fragile health of the Brothers, Br Miguel felt great joy in listening, in dialogue with the Brothers, to beautiful pages from a long Mennaisian history on this continent. Like the Cap Espérance Assembly, in May 2019, the Provincial Chapter, last November, was a happy event, charged with life and resulted in invigorating and fully achievable decisions, as far as the commitment of all towards new paths of fraternity.

Then Bro. Miguel visited the **communities of Spain**, before the Christmas holidays last and then after the Provincial Chapter which took place in Bilbao, from 27th – 30th December: four days of intense work, listening, research, dream, and questioning on new paths in the *Nuestra Señora del Pilar Province*, for the next 6 years.

1.2 Theme of the year

During the Council, the 3rd stage of this year's theme **«Sent for the mission»** was finalised and will be sent very soon to the Provinces and Districts.

Following the reflection carried out in April 2019 at Portugalete, by the Major Superiors of the «Permanent Formation Commission», the General Council retained the themes for the next three years: 2020-2021, **«Sowing joy»**; 2021-2022, **«Serving Life»**; 2022-2023, **«Witnessing to Hope»**.

The first elements of animation will reach the Provinces and Districts next June.

1.3 Approval of animation texts for the Brothers and the Laity

The General Chapter had given a mission to the General Council, *«in conjunction with the Lay members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, to pursue research with a view to ever more dynamic and life-giving structuring of being together, Brothers and Lay people »* (General Chapter 2018, N ° 17c). During this session the General Council adopted the new **Reference Text of the Mennaisian Family**, of which chapters 4 and 5 have been enriched and amended in the Provinces and Districts in recent months. Likewise, the General Council adopted the **Statutes of the Association «Lay Mennaisian Associates »**. This text will be sent to the CIVCSVA, for the official recognition of this Association by the Church, according to article 111 of Pastor Bonus and N ° 303 of Canon Law. It should take a few months.

The General Council also adopted the new **Protocol of the Congregation for the Protection of Children**. It will be sent to the recent Taskforce Commission set up by the Vatican to see if it is indeed in conformity with the directives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and of the Motu Proprio **«Vos estis lux mundi»**, from 7th May 2019. Then it will be sent to Provinces and Districts.

Finally, the General Chapter asked for a **Guide to the application of the charism**. The General Council adopted the presentation work carried out by Brother Porfirio Blanco. It is currently being translated. It will reach the Major Superiors, attached to the text «Mennaisian Education» (February 2018) for the formation and animation of sessions of mission teams, heads of establishments, teaching teams, etc.

1.4 International Commission of the Mennaisian Family

The mandate of the 6 laity who belonged to the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family ended in February 2020. In consultation with the Major Superiors, the General Council asked the Provinces and Districts concerned to submit the names of the persons designated in order to constitute the new International Commission of the Mennaisian Family. The next Echoes will make the names known, because not all of them are known at the time of the publication of the current issue of the Echoes.

1.5 Animation Commission « Young Mennaisian Adults »

The General Chapter had asked to work on the creation of ***an International Commission of Young Mennaisian Adults*** (21.e). The appointment of young adults and some Brothers is under way. Once the Commission has been established, a message with a video link will reach the members of the Commission as well as the Major Superiors.

1.6 Formation of Community Superiors

The first formation meeting of Community Superiors took place in Kisubi, for ***the Province of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus*** (Uganda-South Sudan). Brothers Vincent and Jean-Paul, as well as the participants, recognised both the need and the benefits of such a session. The evaluation of the brothers is very positive with regard to the organization, content, fraternal life and prayer of this meeting. This first initiative will be followed by that in West Africa next April and in Central Africa next December.

1.7 Ad Gentes Commission

The last Echoes of the General Council mentioned the «Ad Gentes» Commission which aims at helping the General Council to discern the new missionary pages. Since then, surveys have been carried out in ***Ghana***, in ***Timor Leste***. Others are scheduled in the coming months.

On the other hand, a first missionary experience is underway in Cap-Haitien (Haiti) with the arrival of ***Brother Jean-Marie Vianney Mbarushimana from Rwanda***. The General Council wishes that this experience be followed by many others, in the different sectors of the Congregation.

2. Decisions of Brother Superior general and his Council

a. Approval of the texts of the Provincial or District Chapters

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, approves the texts:

- of the **Chapter of the Saint-François-Xavier District** (Indonesia-Japan-Philippines)
- of the **Chapter of the Saint-Jean-Paul II District** (Congo DRC - Rwanda)
- of the **Chapter of the Jean de la Mennais Province** (Canada-Mexico-USA)
- of the **Chapter of the Province Nuestra Señora del Pilar** (Spain)
- of the **Chapter of the Province of Saint-Jean-Baptiste** (France-England)

b. Opening of a new community

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, authorised the opening of a new community in **Atyak-Zombo**, in the diocese of **Nebbi**, in northern Uganda.

c. Estimated Budget 2020

The Council studied the accounts of the General Administration presented by the General Treasurer. It adopted the **provisional budget** and decided on the **fee** for the year 2020.

3. Upcoming events

3.1 Session of Community Superiors in West Africa

It will take place at the Canossian Sisters in Lomé, from the 5th -8th April, 2020.

3.2 European Conference

It will take place at the Casa Generalizia in Rome, from the 21st -23rd May, 2020. It will bring together the Major Superiors of the two Provinces (St John the Baptist and Nuestra Señora del Pilar) and their Councils.

3.3 Session for the Brothers preparing for perpetual profession

It will take place next Summer from the 10th July to the 13th August at the Mother House of Ploërmel. **25 Brothers** are expected: 3 from Congo DRC, 5 from Rwanda, 1 from Benin, 1 from Senegal, 3 from Togo, 1 from Indonesia, 2 from the Philippines, 6 from Haiti, 3 from Uganda.

3.4 Formation session for Formators

It will take place at the Abidjan Scholasticate, from the 4th to the 19th September, 2020. It will bring together 17 active Formators or future Formators.

3.5 Closing of the Bicentenary

As already announced, it will take place in Kisubi on the 4th October, 2020. It will be preceded by the 2nd **African Conference** in Kisubi from 29th September to 2nd October, 2020. It will bring together the Major Superiors and their Councils from the 4 sectors of Africa.

The closing of the Bicentenary will be followed by the **Session of Major Superiors** of the Congregation from 5th – 10th October.

4. Communication

During this session the General Council met with Mr. Michel Tanguy, on all matters related to information in the Congregation. It was an opportunity to decide on the content of future **La Mennais Magazine** reviews.

The General Council took stock of the progress of the **next pocket book on Jean-Marie de la Mennais**. The General Council wishes that the publication (at least in French) be able to coincide with the closing of the Bicentenary.

The General Council had asked to reflect on the project of a poster to distribute in the schools of the International Mennaisian Network in order to raise awareness on **children's rights**: two posters, one more neutral, the other with faces and the 3 titles : RESPECT, PROTECTION, BROTHERHOOD were adopted during the council. They will reach the Major Superiors who will make them known in their educational networks of establishments.

Calendar of members of the General Council

Bro. Hervé ZAMOR

07 th – 14 th March	Rome
15 th March – 30 th April	Uganda
01 st – 17 th May	Rome
18 th May – 12 th June	General Council (21-23 May: European Conference)

Bro. Jean-Paul PEUZE

09 th – 30 th March	Rome
01 st – 05 th April	Togo (formation of Community Superiors and visit to the Novitiate)
16 th April – 22 nd April	France
23 rd April	Rome
18 th May – 12 th June	General Council (21-23 May: European Conference)

Bro. Vincent SSEKATE

07 th March – 12 th March	Rome
13 th March – 17 th March	Liverpool
18 th March – 31 st March	Rome
01 st April – 14 th April	Togo (formation of Community Superiors and visiting the Novitiate)
15 th April – 23 rd April	Rome
24 th April – 14 th May	France
18 th May – 12 th June	General Council (21-23 May: European Conference)

Bro. Miguel ARISTONDO

06 th – 11 th March	Rome
11 th March	Spain
13 th May	Rome
18 th May – 12 th June	General Council (21-23 May: European Conference)

*Because of Covid-19, some trips have already been postponed,
others are subject to change or cancellation.*

**The next session of the General Council will take place
from May 18 to June 12, 2020 in Rome.**