



The General Council held its regular session from 15th February to 8th March, 2021 at the Casa Generalizia in Rome, during which the African Conference took place online. This brought together the 4 Major Superiors of Africa and their Councils. It made it possible to take stock since the first Africa Conference, which was held in 2016, and to consider new horizons.

This issue of Echoes brings to the attention of the entire Congregation the topics that were discussed during this online meeting, as well as the information and decisions in this Council.

1. Animation of the Congregation

a. Echoes from Provinces and Districts :

- The health situation did not allow visits to the Provinces and Districts by the various members of the General Council. Over the past few months, only zoom meetings have made it possible to meet Brothers and Communities, beyond the limits and the technical difficulties of these remote meetings.
- A more systematic meeting of the Brothers and the communities of two Provinces - Spain and Tanzania-Kenya - was carried out in order to help the General Council in the nomination of new Major Superiors.
- However, other online meetings have taken place, partially or with all the Brothers in a given sector.

b. Closing of the Bicentenary

- The world health situation has also upset the programme for the closing of the Bicentenary as it had been envisaged by the General Council for the beginning of February, with in particular, the holding of the General Council and the African Conference on site in Kisubi. Only Brother Vincent Ssekate represented the General Council for the official closing of the Bicentenary.
- The site of the Congregation made a large echo of this celebration. The Brothers of Uganda took up the challenge of this beautiful celebration and allowed many Brothers and Laity of the Mennaisian Family the world over, to follow throughout the day of February 7, the various highlights. which marked the closing of the Bicentenary. The General Council warmly thanks the Province of Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus, for the successful organisation of this historic event which came in to close a long moment of memory, which began in May 2017.

c. Africa Conference Online

- The General Council organised this meeting online with the 4 Major Superiors of Africa and the 23 members of the Councils of the four Provinces and Districts of Africa. This session took place over 4 afternoons, from 24th to 27th February.



- The work of the Conference alternated time together and time in groups, around the following themes: consecrated life; vocation ministry and accompaniment of the Brothers; self-financing of the Provinces and Districts; initiatives for Africa; formation of community Superiors and missionary experiences; sharing of formation resources.
- The discussions made it possible to review and evaluate the work of the First Africa Conference (2016). The participants held their discussions in the light of the calls of the last General Chapter. Together they discerned and took new directions, and looked for ways to help each other and pool resources to write new pages on African soil.
- A committee (the major Superiors and the Brother Assistant in charge of Africa) has been set up to publish all the orientations of this meeting and to ensure that they are implemented.

d. Accompaniment of young Brothers

- During this session, the General Council met with **Brother Joseph Bellanger** in-charge of accompanying young Brothers and the formation of Formators. Here again, the health situation disrupts the programmes and will not allow the holding of the session of young Brothers who are preparing for perpetual profession, scheduled to take place at Ploërmel. These will be invited to gather in their sectors, over the course of a week, at the end of July-beginning of August. During this week, the animation team will offer several zoom meetings, in order to help them on the road to their final commitment, or as an extension of the celebration of their commitment, since several of them, 10 out of 22 , have already taken their final vows. Even if it remains virtual, it will also allow a better knowledge between the young Brothers of Asia, Africa and Haiti.

e. Rule of Life

- The current Rule of Life was the culmination of a long process, following the Second Vatican Council. It was not until after the 1982 Chapter that it was finally approved by the CIVCSVA on October 18, 1983.
- Since that date, the Rule of Life has been our companion and has only undergone slight modifications. In the meantime, important documents on consecrated life and fraternal life in community have been published, among others: "Vita Consecrata" (1996), "Identity and mission of the Religious Brother" or "To New wine, new wineskins" (2017).

- A commission has been set up, with the mission of updating our Rule of Life which is 50 years old this year if we count the period “ad experimentum” (1970-1982). She is invited to reread our entire Rule of Life and update it in its form and content.
- All the Brothers will be associated with the reflection. The fruit of this work will be submitted to Chapter 2024 for ratification, then to the CIVCSVA for approval if any changes are made to the Constitutions.

f. Year theme

- In most Provinces and Districts, the theme of the year "**Sowing joy**" continues to punctuate the life of the Brothers and the communities. The General Council decided to involve the "Rule of Life" Commission in developing the theme for the next year "**Serving life**", with the objective of helping each community to rediscover our Rule as a source of life. The first elements of this theme will reach the major Superiors in April.

2. Decisions of the Brother Superior general and his Council

a. Appointments

The Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, made the following decisions:

- **Province Nuestra Señora del Pilar (Spain):**

Brother Carlos CAPELLÁN REPES, Provincial of the Province of Nuestra Señora del Pilar (Spain), for a mandate of 3 years.

Brother Andrés HUIDOBRO MATA, Deputy Provincial of the Province of Nuestra Señora del Pilar (Spain), for a mandate of 3 years.

- **Province of Saint Michael the Archangel (Tanzania-Kenya):**

Brother Vincent SSEKATE, Assistant General, is appointed Provincial, for a mandate of 3 years.

Brother Anthony KAMUHANDA, is appointed Deputy Provincial for a mandate of 3 years. He will be his representative for the Tanzania sector.

Brother Eric MWITHIGA, is appointed Deputy Provincial for a mandate of 3 years. He will be his representative for the Kenya sector.

b. General Council

Due to the new mission of **Brother Vincent SSEKATE**, the accompaniment of the Asia District is now entrusted to **Brother Miguel ARISTONDO**, Assistant General.

c. Opening of a new community in Indonesia

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, agrees to open a new community at **Kupang**, in the Indonesian part of the island of Timor.



This new community will open in June 2021.

d. Provisional budget 2021

The Council studied the accounts of the General Administration, presented by the Treasurer General. It adopted the **provisional budget** and decided on **the fee** for the year **2021**.

3. Communication

During this session, the General Council had a close-up meeting with Mr. Michel Tanguy, on all subjects related to information in the Congregation.

For more than a year, the General Council began a discernment on the subject of communication in the Congregation. There is no doubt that this is an important tool if we are to strengthen in the Mennaisian Family the sense of belonging to a body. While pursuing discernment, the General Council has retained for the moment the following:

- * the end of the paper version of La Mennais Magazine
- * a regular digital tool to communicate and inform. The form, content and frequency have yet to be specified.
- * an annual album for the general public scheduled for release in November-December. It will probably have at least three main sections: a retrospective on the highlights of the year, a theme-report and elements of spiritual nourishment.

On December 17, 1820, in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, Father Gabriel Deshayes became a missionary of the Holy Spirit and on the following January 17, he was elected the 7th Superior General of the Montfortian family. Thus, to remember this important figure for the Montfort Missionaries, the Daughters of Wisdom, the Brothers of Saint Gabriel, the Sisters of Saint Gildas and the Brothers of Christian Instruction, an illustrated album is being produced by an ad hoc committee. As a guide, it will have 72 pages and cost around 3 euros, depending on the number of copies. An order form will be sent very soon. The release is scheduled for September 2021.

On the other hand, after the publication in French and Spanish of **the pocket book on Jean-Marie de la Mennais**, "a Founder's journal", by Brother Jean-Pierre Le Rest, the English and Spanish versions (Latin America) are currently in print.

Calendar of the members of the General Council

Due to the many uncertainties of intercontinental travel, it was impossible for the Brothers of the General Council to establish a calendar of visits for the coming months.

Next meeting of the General Council in Rome: **17th May to 12th June, 2021**.