



The General Council held its ordinary session from 14 February to 5 March 2022 at the Casa Generalizia in Rome. Before that, the Superior General and the Brothers Assistants were able to resume their pilgrimage to meet the Provinces and Districts. This issue will give a wide echo to these visits, which have been interrupted for almost two years.

These echoes will also bring to the attention of the whole Congregation the subjects that were worked on during this Council, as well as the information and decisions that were taken.

1. Animation of the Congregation

a. Echoes from the Provinces and Districts

* **Canada – USA:** The Superior General visited all the communities in Canada and the USA in October-November 2021. He underlined the good climate of fraternal mutual aid that exists in the different communities of the Province. Each Brother contributes his stone to the construction of community life. The setting up of leadership teams is helping those in charge to learn to join hands in order to build up life together. This constitutes a beautiful experience of synodality. In the Province, the senior Brothers feel that they are well looked after and well accompanied. This allows them to live their consecrated life in peace and joy. The highlight of the Province was the move of the Infirmary from La Prairie to the De-La-Salle Residence in Laval (Montreal). This was widely reported on the Congregation's website.

In the United States, the Brothers of the Alfred Community (Maine) live with an association called the Shelters, which helps the poor and the homeless. As for Brother Ernest Pâquet, 96 years old, he lives in a residence for senior citizens called the Bethanie Nursing Home in Canton. Each Brother, according to his capacities, continues his activities and commitments.

Some Brothers of the Province caught the Covid 19 virus. But were well taken care of by the health services, they were able to overcome this ordeal. Brother Hervé, during his stay, was able to participate, with the whole Province, in the funeral of his predecessor, Brother Albert Tremblay, who died in his 99th year. This was a peak moment of his visit.

On his return from Canada, Brother Hervé Zamor spent a week in Rome in order to be able to participate in the **Assembly of General Superiors** this year. This 96th General Assembly of the USG took place around the theme of the next synod: "*For a more synodal Church: the contribution of consecrated life*". It was a beautiful experience of meetings, exchanges and mutual listening in a very fraternal climate. A beautiful example of synodality. During this assembly, Brother Hervé Zamor was elected member of the Council of the "18". This is a council that brings together some Superiors General and members of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. There are two or three meetings scheduled during the year.

* **Congo – Rwanda:** The District of Saint John Paul II is made up of 7 communities (3 in Rwanda and 4 in Congo), with 62 Brothers, including 3 novices and 12 scholastics. The average age is 35 years. The Brothers work in 9 educational institutions and one NGO (Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle). They give themselves body and soul to the mission that the Congregation has entrusted to them, giving the best

of themselves to care for those in their care. This is admired by the local clergy, their close collaborators, teachers and parents.

The Brother Superior General was impressed by the sense of fraternity that exists among the Brothers, the concern for the peripheries by being involved with the poorest, the good insertion of the communities in the milieu and in the life of the local Church. But the challenges remain important. Many young people come knocking at the door of the Postulancy. The District will have to think of better organising this stage of initial formation. Moreover, the Brothers were invited to take more care of their spiritual life, without which perseverance in religious life is compromised

In Rwanda, Brother Hervé received the perpetual vows of Brother Olivier Igiraneza. The Eucharist was presided over by the Bishop of Nyundo (see www.lamennais.org). This beautiful fraternal event had a "negative" side, that of being "positive" in Covid 19. As a result, Brother Hervé had to extend his stay in Congo by a week before returning to Rome.

*** Uganda:** Brother Jean-Paul's stay in Uganda in October-November 2021 took place at a time when the Province had just experienced long periods of confinement: isolation of the Brothers in the communities and impossible communal liturgical celebrations for many. The schools remained closed for almost two years. This closure had negative consequences, certainly very serious for the children and youth, but also for the Brothers, for the economic situation of the schools, the communities and the Province, having been deprived of an important part of their income.

In this context, Brother Jean-Paul took some time to accompany the new Provincial team. Then he visited the houses of formation: Postulate (18 young men), Novitiate (9 novices in 2022), Scholasticate (30 young Brothers, 21 of whom are from Uganda in 2022). These young Brothers in formation demonstrate that they are happy to follow Christ in our Congregation. The formators are well engaged in their mission. The Province must continue to find formators for formation in the future.

Brother Miguel Aristondo went to explore Uganda in his first visit. He was able to discover the diversity of the works (teaching, boarding school, large number of students) but also the great involvement of the Brothers in the institutions. During this period, Brother Miguel shared in many festive moments and in the religious commitments in the Province: new entrants to the novitiate, first vows of 12 novices, renewal of vows of many Brothers, 6 Brothers celebrated their jubilees; particularly, Brother Arseni Kwebiha, who had celebrated 75 years of religious life on January 1st, Bro. Miguel gave thanks, along with the whole Province, for all that this Brother had sowed during his long life. Unfortunately, this same Brother died on 13 January. Brother Miguel participated at the funeral.

*** Togo-Benin:** Brother Jean-Paul Peuzé spent five weeks in Togo, but was unable to visit Benin. However, he was able to meet most of the Brothers of Benin at Dapaong, at the time of the perpetual vows of Brother Augustin Boudan.

In Togo, the visit to the communities and schools went on normally, as did the meeting with the young men in formation (5 in the pre-postulancy, 5 in the novitiate). But the visit to the District is not complete, since it will be continued in March and April, in the Ivory Coast and in Senegal.

Brother Jean-Paul witnessed the generous apostolic commitment of the Brothers in the various establishments, the animation of the communities of the District, despite the pandemic. Initial and ongoing formation and vocation ministry remain priorities for the District.

*** France :** Brother Vincent took some time last October-November to visit a dozen communities in France. In spite of their age, the Brothers are still very much involved in the network schools, parishes and Mennaisian fraternities. They are also present in the various associations run by the Mennaisian Family: La Mennais Jeunesse and Estival (summer camps), Peps La Mennais (formerly *Foi et Prière* – Faith and Prayer), l'Escale (a facility that receives young people who have dropped out of school or are experiencing difficulties at school). The Brothers continue to live a very strong commitment to the community and prayer life.

*** Tanzania-Kenya :** Brother Vincent Ssekate visited this Province at the end of 2021; and is also its Major Superior. The Province is made up of 3 communities in Kenya - including the new one in Timau - and 7 communities in Tanzania.

Ten communities for 36 Brothers present in the two countries: this constitutes an important challenge for the animation of the apostolate and of community life. Six other Brothers are in formation in Uganda. The major concern of the Province, especially on the Tanzania side, remains the financial sustenance of and support for the school activities arising from the dwindling number of students due to the new government policies. These have inevitably put a strain on the finances of the communities and the Province.

However, the Brothers of the Province are happy to receive 7 postulants in the 2nd year and so far 2 in the 1st year, others are yet to report including an expected first Nigerian postulant. The fraternal life, the commitment of the Brothers in the schools, the relatively young age of the Brothers, , remain important assets for the Province. The Province must continue to pay attention to the ongoing formation of the Brothers and the communities, the finances, initial formation and vocation ministry and the accompaniment of youth.

Unfortunately, during Brother Vincent's visit to the Province, Brother Martin Sima (61 years old) died suddenly while working as an examiner at Morogoro examination centre. His body was transported to Moshi where the Brothers were already gathered for their annual retreat.

b. Formation of Formators

Three online sessions have already taken place, led by the General Council, with Brother Yannick Houssay as the main presenter on the theme of Mennaisian Spirituality. It has brought together more than 20 Brothers, the majority of whom are young Brothers already working in houses of formation.

To continue this formation, a session will be organised in Abidjan from 18 to 28 July. Three themes will be addressed: ***Inculturation of the consecrated life and the vows - Protection of minors and vulnerable persons*** and ***Training in personal and community prayer***. Another session will conclude this cycle of formation proper to the Congregation in the summer of 2023.

Trois sessions en ligne ont déjà eu lieu, animées par le Conseil général, avec comme intervenant principal le Frère Yannick Houssay, autour du thème de la Spiritualité mennaisienne. Elle a rassemblé plus de 20 Frères, dont la majorité sont des jeunes Frères qui travaillent déjà dans des maisons de formation.

c. Session of the young Brothers preparing for Perpetual profession

Since 2018, no face-to-face session for the preparation for Perpetual profession has been possible due to the health situation due to covid-19 pandemic. An online session was held in July 2021, over one week, to make up for this lack. During the coming summer, from **13 July to 13 August 2022**, a new session will take place in Ploërmel, for about twenty young Brothers of the Congregation. It will take place at **the Lycée La Touche**, since the Mother House will not be able to accommodate them due to the works. Brothers Joseph Bellanger, Vincent Ssekate and Hervé Asse will form the animation and formation team.

d. Theme of the Year and Rule of Life

The theme of the year, "Serving Life", helps each community to rediscover the Rule as a source of life. From now on, each Province and District must prepare and send a report to the General Council the fruit of the communities' reflection. Concretely, the Commission working on the Rule will see what needs to be removed, completed, reformulated, added... and also reflect on the general organisation of the Rule. The contributions coming from the communities through the Provinces and Districts will be able to enrich this work which concerns each and everyone.

The General Council has already begun to reflect on the next year's theme "**Witnessing to Hope**". Additional information will be sent to you later.

e. Postulation and the Cause of Jean-Marie de la Mennais

During this session, the General Council met with Brother Dino De Carolis, Postulator of the Cause. He gave an update on the progress of the Founder's cause of beatification. The **Summarium**, which presents the cure of Josette Poulain, is in the hands of two doctors. One of them must be favourable for the case to be presented to the Commission of 7 doctors. If 5 of the members recognise the inexplicable nature of Josette Poulain's healing by science, the miracle will be recognised.

f. Conference of Major Superiors at Rome and meeting of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, the last meetings of major superiors were held online. The General Council is looking forward to holding the General Conference in attendance in Rome from **26 to 30 September 2022**. This new meeting will aim at reviewing the 2018 General Chapter and the Provincial and District Chapters. It will also begin the preparation of the General Chapter of 2024.

The General Conference will be followed, still in Rome, by the meeting of the **International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, from 5 to 7 October 2022**.

g. Formation of formators for the Mennaisian Family

The General Chapter of 2018 recommended that a formation of formators (Brothers and lay people) for the Mennaisian Family be organized, both in Spirituality and in Mennaisian Pedagogy.

In order to follow up this orientation, a steering team was constituted by the General Council; it was given the mission of drawing up the formation programme and specifying its duration.

The members of this team are Brother Thierry Beauplet (JB), Brother Valmyr-Jacques Dabel (H), Mr. Jean-Jacques Erceau (JB), Mrs. Michèle Hetu (J), Brother Josu Olabarrieta (NSP). The General Council has already had a meeting with them.

2. Decisions of the Superior General and his Council

a. Nominations

The Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, decides on the following appointments:

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY, Provincial of the Province of St. John the Baptist (France-England) for a new mandate of 3 years.

Brother Carlos LOVATTO, Visitor of the District Divina Providencia (Argentina-Bolivia-Chile-Uruguay), for a mandate of 3 years.

Frère Felix CORADA, Assistant Visitor of the District Divina Providencia (Argentina-Bolivia-Chile-Uruguay), for a mandate of 3 years

b. Other nominations

The Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, decides on the following appointments:

Brother Claude GRÉGOIRE, Treasurer General of the Congregation, for a mandate of 3 years. He will be assisted in his mission by an Economic Affairs Council, which will soon be set up.

The General Council will have the opportunity to warmly thank Brother Daniel Briant, who has fulfilled this mission with competence for 9 years.

Brother Gildas PRIGENT, responsible for the Accompaniment of the Young Brothers of the Congregation, for a mandate of 3 years.

c. Initial Formation in the District of Saint-Francis-Xavier

Brother Gildas Prigent, Visitor of the SFX District, presented the re-organisation of the initial formation (Aspirancy - Postulancy - Novitiate - Scholasticate) between the Philippines and Indonesia. This new formula allows a better learning of English for the Indonesians, and a greater conformity to the Ratio Institutionis.

Consequently, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council:

1) has validated the plan of Initial Formation:

- a. Aspirancy: at Larantuka (Indonesia) and San José (Philippines)
- b. Postulancy 1st year: at San José (Philippines) and in Yogyakarta (Indonesia)
- c. Postulancy 2nd year: in Manila (Philippines)
- d. Novitiate: in English at San José (Philippines) from 2024.
- e. Scholasticate: in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) for Indonesian Brothers from 2023.

2) For the period of transition, he appointed:

Brother Michel GOUGEON, Director of the Scholasticate in Manila for one year.

Brother Stéphane LE PAPE, Novice Master at the Novitiate of Yogyakarta for one year.

d. Admission to Perpetual profession

The Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has admitted to perpetual profession 3 Brothers from the District of St. Francis Xavier:

Brothers Israel De Ocampo and **Mamerto Gaugano**, originally from the Philippines, and **Brother Blasius Neno**, originally from Indonesia.

e. Provisional Budget 2022, audit and accompaniment of the General Treasurer

The Council studied the accounts of the General Administration, presented by the Treasurer General. It adopted the **provisional budget** and decided on **the contributions for the year 2022**.

The General Council decided to entrust the FIC Expertise society with the audit of the economic situation of the Congregation as well as the professional accompaniment of the Treasurer General's Office.

Calendar of the member of the General Council

Brother Hervé ZAMOR :

- Rome Casa Generalizia
- End of April: Mexico.
- 15 May: General Council

Brother Jean-Paul PEUZE :

- 8 March to 21 March: Ivory Coast
- 22 March to 4 April: Senegal
- 9 April to 23 April: Rwanda
- Beginning of May: Burkina Faso
- 15 May: General Council

Brother Vincent SSEKATE:

- 14 March to 14 April: Kenya – Tanzania
- 15 April to 15 May: Casa Generalizia
- 15 May: General Council

Brother Miguel ARISTONDO:

- 8 March to 13 May: Spain then Bolivia – Chili – Argentine – Uruguay
- 15 May: General Council

Next General Council meeting in Rome: **16 May to 10 June 2022.**