



Number 108 - September-October 2022

The General Council held its ordinary session from 15 September to 14 October 2022 at the Casa Generalizia in Rome. It was during this period that the meeting of the Major Superiors of the Congregation took place in face-to-face mode to the joy of all. Unfortunately, Brother Jean-Baptiste Ndiaye, Visitor of the District of Saint Paul (West Africa) was unable to obtain his visa. However, he was able to participate in the whole Conference online.

The General Conference was lived in a very fraternal atmosphere, marked by mutual listening and communion in diversity. The discernment in workshops and in assembly allowed for the identification of challenges that the Congregation must face on the road leading to the next General Chapter of 2024. Each member of the Mennaisian Family was able to read the General Conference message written by the Major Superiors and the members of the General Council.

This issue of Voices brings to the attention of the whole Congregation the topics that were discussed during this meeting, as well as the information and decisions of this Council.

1. Animation of the Congregation

a. Echoes from the Provinces and Districts:

Here are some echoes of the trips made or news received by the members of the General Council.

- **Brother Hervé Zamor:** The Superior General went first of all to **Abidjan** from 17 to 28 July to lead a formation session for 15 current or future formators. The animation team also included 3 other Brothers: Yannick Houssay, Gerard Byaruhanga, and Miguel Aristondo. Other speakers animated the themes on "*inculturation of the consecrated life and the vows*" and "*child protection*" respectively. The participants left the session happy. The follow-up of the achievements will be done online during two evaluation sessions before the next session which will take place again in Abidjan from 21 to 31 August 2023.

Brother Hervé then stayed in **Haiti** from 3 August to 5 September. With the Brothers of the Province, he was able to attend the annual retreat on the theme "*Witnessing to Hope*". This spiritual renewal was lived in a good climate of recollection. After the retreat, he took part in various formation sessions and led a morning of exchanges with the Brothers.

The Province had the joy of receiving 4 new novices on 14 August and of celebrating the first profession of 3 novices on 15 August. After a period with his family, Brother Hervé Zamor visited the communities of Cap-Haitian and Ouanaminthe. The country remains deeply shaken by political instability and the permanent climate of insecurity. Despite this difficult situation, the Brothers continue their mission of education. The question remains: when will the schools be able to start the new school year?

- **Brother Jean-Paul Peuzé:** After the Council of May-June last year, Brother Jean-Paul remained in Rome in order to better coordinate the work of updating the Rule of Life and to follow up certain dossiers. However, numerous online contacts with the major superiors made it possible to review the sectors, the communities and the challenges.

In **Uganda**, the economic situation of the Brothers seems to be improving after the two years of stagnation that the country experienced following the pandemic. The challenge of formation of formators still prevails. The mission in **South Sudan**, which the Provincial visited last July, requires special attention to ensure its development.

In **West Africa**, the growing insecurity which seems to be gaining ground could seriously disrupt the life of the communities and apostolate, especially in northern Togo, and compromise future developments. The District was delighted with the recent perpetual commitment of 2 young Brothers and the first vows of 3 novices. Vocation ministry has been greatly hampered by Covid-19. This has resulted in small numbers of young people in formation (pre-postulancy, postulancy and novitiate).

In **Central Africa**, positive points can be noted in the area of formation: participation of 3 young Brothers in the preparation for perpetual vows in Ploërmel, start of the novitiate for 2 novices and sending of a student Brother to Abidjan. However, the difficulties of digital or terrestrial communication, weaken a good animation of the District.

- **Brother Vincent Senate:** He mainly remained in France for the **preparation and animation of the session for perpetual vows** which took place from 14 July to 14 August. Initially planned at the Lycée La Touche, it was instead held at the Mother House. A blessing! The one regret was the absence of the five young Brothers from Uganda who were unable to obtain their visas. Together with the other members of the animation team, they greatly appreciated this time of formation: they met 10 young people who were happy to be Brothers! Their motivation, their radiance, their joy of living left a great impression on the Brothers and the staff of the Mother House.

The General Council thanks Brother Josu Olabarrieta who led the retreat during this session, as well as Brothers Joseph Bellanger, Hervé Asse and Vincent Ssekate who prepared and accompanied this important time for the young Brothers.

- **Brother Miguel Aristondo:** At the beginning of September, he visited the **Philippines** for the first time. He first visited the community in Manila, which this year is accommodating 4 scholastics. He then went to the island of Antique and visited the two communities of Pandan and San José. It was in San José that the final commitment of Brothers Mamerto Gaugano and Israel De Ocampo, the first two Filipino Brothers to make perpetual vows, took place. The celebration of these vows allowed the Brothers of this sector to live an exceptional fraternal moment. This ceremony took place in the presence of all the members of the District Council. Brother Miguel will resume his visit to the District, Japan and Indonesia, at the beginning of next year.

b. Theme of the Year

Dans In most Provinces and Districts, at least those in the northern hemisphere, the theme of the year "**Witnessing to Hope**" was presented at the launch of the new year and the writing of the community project. This approach will be implemented in the other sectors in the coming months.

c. General Conference

The following is a summary of the main themes discussed during the General Conference:

1- Rule of Life

During the General Conference, the Major Superiors acknowledged the work of the **revision of the Rule of Life** carried out by the Commission set up. By the end of the year, all the chapters of the Rule should be revised and translated. The Major Superiors will receive the texts after mid-December. Each Province/District will then see how to involve the Brothers and communities in this process of updating our Rule of Life. Some sectors have already scheduled meetings or sessions before the end of the year or early in 2023. *"The objective is not only to work on the texts before their adoption, but to allow the Brothers to " re-examine their life " in the light of the revised text of the Rule. This consultation should provide a breath of life and at the same time allow each one to participate in the updating of the Rule for a better life. The Brothers will be able to share what touches them and brings them closer or also what they find frustrating".* (Brother Jean-Paul Peuzé)

2- Orientations and lines of action until the next General Chapter

The Major Superiors and the General Council took an opportunity to re-read the journey so far made since 2018 and to discern the future. This allowed them to adopt some orientations and lines of action to focus on until the next General Chapter :

To open new pathways of fraternity by means of formation: To form community superiors (see below, the future programmed session); To form formators for initial formation (continuation of the formation already initiated in Abidjan); To form Brothers and lay people to animate and to accompany the Mennaisian groups of the Provinces and Districts (see below, the future programmed formation).

Develop a real missionary spirit in Brothers and lay people: at the local level, propose times of service, solidarity and volunteering to the older youth, encourage communities and networks of Mennaisian schools to welcome young people, especially the poorest; and at the international level, propose missionary experiences to the young Brothers and young adult Mennaisians (YAM).

3- Financing of the General Administration

The Major Superiors and the General Council, confronted with today's financial difficulties, agreed to engage in a reflection on the financing of the General Administration. This is already underway, with the setting up of the Economic Affairs Council (EAC) - see Echoes of May-June 2022. This reflection will continue and should lead to some concrete recommendations which will be submitted to the next General Chapter.

4- Initial Formation

The Congregation is delighted with the many houses of initial formation: postulate, novitiate, scholasticate, currently totalling 19 houses! But it also has to face the fact that there are too few formation Directors and formators for these houses. A reflection is necessary on a new distribution of these houses if we want to offer a quality formation in the whole Congregation. The General Council will make a proposal in this sense at the next chapter.

5- Mennaisian Family

The Conference reaffirmed the importance of the Mennaisian Family. The Major Superiors and the General Council have committed themselves to develop the formation of Formators (Brothers and Lay people) for the Mennaisian Family. The discernment on the role of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family will continue with the members of the said Commission.

6- Postulation

During the Conference, Brother Dino, the Postulator, explained the situation of the cause of beatification of Jean-Marie de la Mennais. At present, the case of Josette Poulain has been abandoned, and the Postulator is studying the possibility of taking up again the case of Enzo Carollo, the young Argentinean from the Cardenal Copello College in Buenos Aires. Brother Dino encourages the appointment of a relay animator of the cause per country, for a better animation of the devotion to our Venerable Father.

d. Formation of Formators for the Mennaisian Family

The last Echoes of the General Council had already mentioned the preparation of the formation of formators for the Mennaisian Family, with the constitution of a team. This team already completed a week of work in Ploërmel last July. The aim of this formation is to prepare Brothers and Lay people as formators for the Mennaisian Family. The first session of 5 days will take place at ***Kisubi next February***. The formation will then continue in a distance format, via an online forum that the participants will have had the opportunity to experience in the opening session, and will conclude with another face-to-face formation session in Ploërmel in July 2025. Each sector of the Congregation will be invited to send 2 participants, one Brother and one Lay person.

e. Formation of Superiors of Community

Postponed by the pandemic, ***the Formation of Community Superiors will take place at the Lycée La Touche in Ploërmel next summer***. The animation team was set up during the General Conference. This formation will bring together between 25 and 30 participants, current or future community Superiors. Let us recall that this is a response to a request from the last General Chapter 2018 (No. 11h). Each Province/District will be invited to send Brothers. The latter will also become formators for the confreres of their Province and District.

f. General Chapter 2024

A lengthy amount of time was spent during the General Conference on the preparation of the next General Chapter 2024. The dates are now decided: ***from 26 March to 24 April 2024***. The Major Superiors are conscious of the difficulty of obtaining visas to travel to France, and therefore the final choice of venue has not yet been made. In March, the Superior General will send to the whole Congregation the ***Circular which will present the Chapter***, the place, the dates, the elections of delegates and the theme of preparation. The revision of the Rule of Life, in which everyone is invited to participate, is already a direct preparation for the Chapter. The approval of our new Fundamental Charter (Rule of Life) will take up a good part of the time of this special moment of the Congregation.

g. Communication

Each one has received **Click Info N°4**, which was published at the beginning of October. It is sent to more than 1345 e-mail addresses.

As already announced, the next **paper La Mennais Magazine N° 48** will be published in December. It will echo the great moments of the year 2022, through various reports and testimonies.

A project for a **statuette of Jean-Marie de la Mennais**, colour 'earth', height 25 cm, was also presented during the General Conference. This statuette is intended to represent a more expressive attitude of the Founder, with a smiling face and gestures of welcome. Each major superior will soon receive an order form. It can be suggested to communities, schools, Mennaisian groups and families.

2. Decisions of Brother Superior General and his Council

a. Admissions to perpetual profession

The Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has admitted to perpetual profession :

Ugandan Brothers: Ronald KYAMANYWA, Edward KYOBE, Costantino MATOVU, Vincent MUTEBI, Deogratias NUWAGABA and Aiden RUKUNDU, of the Province of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus.

Congolese Brothers: Robert KAKULE MASHAURI, Benjamin MBOLIKINO MADJIRI and Clément ABELI TSHENANE of the District of Saint John-Paul II (Congo DRC – Rwanda)

Calendar of the members of the General Council

Brother Hervé ZAMOR

25 October– 21 November:	Spain
23 November - 25 November:	USG (Rome)
22 December – 31 January:	Tanzania, Kenya
13 February:	Rome, General Council

Brother Jean-Paul PEUZÉ

10 November – 10 December:	Uganda
11 December – 20 December:	Rwanda
20 December – 18 January:	Congo DRC
19 January - February:	Rome, General Council

Brother Vincent SSEKATE

November – December - January :	Kenya – Tanzania
13 February:	Rome, General Council

Brother Miguel ARISTONDO

18 October:	Spain
January:	Japan - Indonesia
9 February:	Rome, General Council

**The next session of the General Council will take place
13 February - 3 March 2023 in Rome.**