



Number 110 – May-June 2023

*The General Council held its ordinary session from 15 May to 9 June 2023 at the Casa Generalizia in Rome. Brother Jean-Paul Peuzé took part in the work of the Council online, from the Community of Les Tilleuls in Nantes.*

*During this Council, the Superior General took part in the 99th Assembly of the USG (Union of Superiors General). On Wednesday 31 afternoon, there was also an online meeting with the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family.*

*This issue of Echoes from the General Council looks back on these two meetings, and informs the whole Congregation of the subjects that were discussed, as well as the information and decisions taken.*

## 1. Animation of the Congregation

### A. ECHOES FROM THE PROVINCES AND DISTRICTS:

Here are a few echoes of the trips made:

- **Brother Hervé Zamor:** The Superior General visited the Divina Providencia (Divine Providence) District (Argentina-Bolivia-Chile-Uruguay) from 15 March to 30 April. He was accompanied throughout the visit by Brother **Miguel Aristondo**, Assistant General, and Brother **Carlos Lovatto**, Visitor.

The District has recently been marked by two deaths, that of Brother Benjamin Fernandez, during the visit of the Brother Superior General, and more recently that of Brother Alfredo Aparicio. The District now has 21 Brothers in 7 communities in 4 countries. The oldest Brother is 87 and the youngest 34.

The dedication and care shown by the Brothers to the elderly and sick Brothers is remarkable. The District is also delighted with the presence of a novice in El Alto. Even though Ángel de Gabriel, who is a Mexican, does not belong to the District, his presence is a great asset for the vocations ministry. A Bolivian postulant could begin his novitiate in 2024. In this area, every community in the District is called to promote a strong and dynamic vocations ministry and to dare to go out and call new disciples.

Brother Hervé was impressed by the quality of the Brothers' community and spiritual life. They live simply, like people of modest means. This allows them to be available to the Lord, to the children, to the lay members of the Mennaisian Family and to their collaborators. Faithful to the intuition of our Founders Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, the Mennaisian Family of the District has developed a special concern for the poorest. This translates into an effective presence in works such as the Escuelita (Little school) "Las Margueritas" in Luyan de Cuyo, San Damian in Villa Gobernador Calvez, the "Dionisio Díaz" centre in Maldonado, "Antawara" (for educational support) and "Aynjaniñani" (giving training and support for mothers) in El Alto.

- Brother **Vincent Ssekate**, At the end of the February-March Council, Brother Vincent Ssekate returned to the Province (Tanzania-Kenya) to continue the implementation of the action lines resulting from the last visit to the Province by the Superior General last December-January. He visited 7 of the 9 communities in the Province. It was an opportunity for him to present the latest Circular from the Superior General, to take part in the re-reading of the revised texts of the Rule of Life and to launch preparations for our next General Chapter.

The Province has 7 novices and 4 scholastics in formation at Kasasa and Kisubi. But this should not cover up the small number of young people currently in Postulate given that this year there is no one in the second year Postulate.

The challenges, both at community and apostolic level, are great. The Province plans to hold a Province Assembly at the end of the year to identify priorities for the coming years. One of these is the quality of the formation team at the Moshi postulancy, if we want young people to be received, accompanied and supported in their vocational journey.

- **Frère Miguel Aristondo**: After accompanying the Superior General on his visit to the Divina Providencia District, Brother Miguel travelled to Mexico to meet the Brothers of the Huatusco community. The mission of Huatusco has several areas of strengths: a strong social presence at the John Paul II Centre; the participation of many lay people in the project; the real involvement of the Provinces and Districts (Canada, Haiti, Divina Providencia); the birth of a group of Lay Mennaisian Associates; a novice in formation in El Alto.

However, the existing mission structure remains fragile: small number of permanent Brothers; necessity of developing a broader horizon for the mission; economic fragilities.

## B. FORMATION :

### 1. Formation of Community Superiors

This session will take place at the Lycée La Touche in Ploërmel, **from 15 July to 14 August 2023**. To date, 22 Brothers will be taking part in this session (from 14 different countries, from all continents), as well as 5 members of the leadership team and 2 interpreters.

Four objectives have been defined:

- to **form a community of formation**, and to allow themselves to be converted to God,
- **to learn by listening to each other** (sharing experiences),
- to take time **to reflect on the mission of community superior**
- to **listen to the Founders** (and follow in their footsteps).

### 2. Formation of Brother Formators in Abidjan

Already announced in the last Echoes of the General Council, this session will be held from 21 to 31 August 2023 in Abidjan. Two main themes are on the agenda: **Study of the presentation of the Rule of Life and Individual accompaniment and spiritual growth**. 15 formators or future formators are expected to attend.

### 3. Tutti Fratelli session: Formation of those responsible for accompanying young Brothers

The Tutti Fratelli organisation, which has already organised several training sessions for Brothers' Congregations, has set up a session for those responsible for accompanying young Brothers. The General Council has asked **Brothers Gildas Prigent and Gerard Byaruhanga** to take part in the next session, which will take place in **Rome** from 9 September to 6 October 2023.

## c. GENERAL CHAPTER 2024

### 1. Theme of the Year and General Chapter 2024

The Provinces and Districts have now received the latest circular (No. 319) from Brother Superior General, and on the day of Pentecost they officially began preparations for the General Chapter. From next September, the communities are invited to take part in the process proposed in the circular around the **text of the wedding at Cana**. The various contributions will be used to draft the "**Instrumentum Laboris**" of the General Chapter.

The Major Superiors have received the booklet on the theme for the year 2023-2024, which sets out the events and highlights that will accompany us on the road to the General Chapter.

The current stage is the ***election of the Capitulants, which ends on 31 July***.

### 2. Rule of Life

The General Council was delighted with the involvement of all sectors of the Congregation in the rereading of the revised texts of the Rule of Life. Chapters 9 to 15 are currently being reread. From now on, the "Rule of Life" Commission will take up the challenge of integrating the various contributions in order to draw up a new presentation and organisation of the Rule of Life. The new text should be available to the Capitulants by the end of the year. From November 2023 to February 2024, a number of online meetings are planned with the Delegates. The aim is to present the new version of the Rule of Life, gather their opinions and explain the working methodology, in order to reach a general consensus on the new text.

### 3. Online meeting of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family

This meeting took place online on Wednesday 31 April. The 6 lay members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family are: **Françoise Lebreton** (Province of St Jean-Baptiste); **Belén Coruña Mozo** (Province of Nuestra Señora del Pilar); **John Bosco Ddungu** (Province of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus); **Yvette Méus** (Province of St Louis-de-Gonzague); **Ana Victoria Draper** (District of Divina Providencia) and Martha de la Cruz (Province of Jean de la Mennais). For Martha, it was her first participation.

Three objectives were set for this meeting: to get to know the diversity of the reality of the Mennaisian Family and its organisation according to sectors, then to review what has been experienced by the International Commission over the last 5 years, and finally to define the objectives for the next 6 years.

A "sub-committee" has been set up to continue the reflection. A further online meeting will be held at the next General Council meeting in September. The aim of this process is to clarify the vocation, mission and functioning of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family. The results of this work will be submitted to the next General Chapter.

### 4. Online meeting of Major Superiors

This meeting will take place from **9 to 12 October 2023**. It will be a further step towards the General Chapter. Discussions will focus on themes already addressed at the last face-to-face meeting of Major Superiors in Rome in October 2022:

- Updating the Rule of Life;
- Casa Generalizia and general administration;
- Preparation for the 2024 General Chapter;
- Mennaisian Family, its challenges of organisation and animation.

## D. MISSION

### 1. Missionary Experiences

Following the call of the last General Chapter, several experiences have taken place or are still taking place:

- **Brother Andreas Pito** (Indonesian) in Thian (Benin);
- **Brother Frantz-Caleb Museau** (Haiti) in Huatusco (Mexico);
- **Brother Louis Natukunda** (Uganda) in Luján de Cuyo (Argentina).
- **Brothers Noah Tusasirwe** and **Matthias Mulumba** (Uganda) in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) These two brothers are learning French and living their experience in a house of formation.

It will be important to review these experiences with a view to the next General Chapter. Mission places are calling for new candidates.

### 2. New mission in Timor Leste

A year ago, in May-June 2022, Echoes from the General Council presented the future mission of Timor Leste, in the **Diocese of Baucau**. Following the death of the bishop, the whole process of setting up the new mission was put on hold, pending the appointment of a new bishop.

**Mgr Leandro Maria Alves** was appointed Bishop of Baucau by Pope Francis on 26 April, and will be consecrated on 21 July. Brother Stéphane Le Pape (Yogyakarta) will be visiting Baucau in July or early September to present the Congregation's project, draw up a timetable and, above all, obtain the bishop's agreement for us to be established in his diocese.

## 2. In the Church

### A. Synod 2023

Preparations for the Synod on Synodality began in October 2020, in every parish, every diocese, and in the various bodies of the universal Church on every continent. **The Ordinary Assembly will take place in two sessions: the first, from 4 to 29 October 2023, and the second, in October 2024.** Various Church websites report on the progress of preparations for this important event. Five men and five women religious will take part as delegates of the USG and the IUSG.<sup>1</sup>

The Synodal Assembly will be preceded by **an ecumenical prayer vigil for young people on Saturday 30 September in St Peter's Square in Rome.** Pope Francis and representatives of various Christian confessions will be present, and the meeting is open to all the people of God. **The idea was launched by Brother Aloïs, prior of the Taizé Community, founded by Brother Roger Schutz.**

All the communities present in Rome are invited to welcome and accommodate all these young people who will come from **Friday 29 September to Sunday 1 October** to pray for the Synod. There's no doubt that our Generalate will open its doors!

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<sup>1</sup> USG : Union of Superiors General – IUSG : International Union of Superiors general

## B. 99th meeting of the USG (Union of Superiors General) in Rome: 24-26 May

The theme of the first day of the meeting was "Reviving the charism of consecrated life in today's context", with contributions from various speakers. The exchanges between the participants were very powerful and rich.

On the 2nd day, the USG welcomed the two Under-Secretaries of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DICALS), who shared 6 of their major concerns:

On the 2nd day, the USG welcomed the two Under-Secretaries of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DIVCSVA), who shared 6 of their major concerns:

. 1) **Leaving the consecrated life**: on this subject, they recalled the importance of vocational discernment and formation. Departures from Consecrated Life affect all continents.

. 2) **Emergence of new institutes**: in some of these institutes, the Founder or Foundress seems to be above the Church. A document in preparation will insist on the ecclesial meaning of Consecrated Life.

. 3) **The service of authority**: Superiors at all levels are invited to assume their responsibilities. A balance must be struck between authoritarianism and complacency.

. 4) **Sexual abuse**: much sexual abuse is rooted in the abuse of power and conscience. The theme of the first day of the meeting was "Reviving the charism of consecrated life in today's context", with contributions from various speakers. The exchanges between the participants were very intense and rich.

5) **Appeals to the DIVCSVA**: many appeals for dismissal have been annulled by the Dicastery on the grounds of formal defects and failure to follow procedures. Lost appeals weaken the authority of Superiors.

6) **Small Institutes and their future**: the Dicastery is encouraging them to merge. But there was considerable resistance.

**The 100th meeting of the USG** (22-24 November 2023) will be common to the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) and the USG (Union of Superiors General). The modalities of representation remain to be defined in order to take into account the great difference in numbers between the members of the USG and the UISG. This meeting will certainly mark the start of greater collaboration between these two bodies.

## 3. Information

### A. Accounts of the Congregation

The General Council met the General Treasurer and (online) Mr Yves Delarra (President of FIC Expertise). For the past year, this accounting firm has been tasked with supporting the General Treasurer and carrying out an Audit of the Congregation.

This first presentation showed the beginnings of a consolidation of the accounts of the Communities of the entire Congregation, and of some of the works. But there is still a major challenge ahead, to harmonise the accounts from the various entities of the Institute. Another major difficulty is receiving the information requested.

The coming months are important for the General Treasurer and FIC Expertise. They must gather all the economic data for the Congregation if they want to present the next General Chapter with clear and relevant perspectives for the next 5, 10, 20 years... To achieve this, they are counting on the collaboration of the Brother Treasurer and the Major Superiors.

## B. Communication

The General Council had an online meeting with Michel Tanguy, on all subjects related to information in the Congregation. Together they reviewed current projects: **the annual album La Mennais Magazine No. 49, which will be published in November-December 2023**; and future issues of **La Mennais Click Infos**.

**A Directory of the establishment of FIC communities and works around the world, from their origins to the present day, is in progress.** A team of 15 inter-Provinces and Districts collaborators is working on it. It should be available at the time of the 2024 General Chapter.

150 copies of a **statuette of Jean-Marie de la Mennais** (25 cm high) have been ordered by the Districts and Provinces. An initial sketch is underway. These statuettes will also be available at the time of the General Chapter.

## C. Postulation – the Case of Josette Poulain

On June 1, the Medical Commission of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints delivered its verdict. This is what Brother Dino, Postulator General, had to say: *"We still have to pray and get back on the road. Josette Poulain's cure has not been recognised as inexplicable. The written report will come in the next few weeks and the Dicastery will tell us how to proceed for new cases"*.

# 4. Decisions of the Brother Superior General and his Council

## A. Nominations

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

- **Brother Hervé ASSE**, Superior of the Casa Generalizia for a mandate of three years.
- **Brother Israel De OCAMPO**, Director of the Yogyakarta Scholasticate, for a term of one year.
- **Brother Joseph BELLANGER**, Master of Novices at the Dapaong Novitiate, for a term of three years.
- **Brother Enceau LAGUERRE**, Deputy Director of the Scholasticate and Superior of the Gabriel Deshayes Community, for a term of 3 years.
- **Brother Nicolas LE MEILLEUR**, Accountant to the Treasurer General in Rome, for a term of 3 years.

## B. Admission to Perpetual Vows

The Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has admitted to perpetual profession Brother **Marcsondez DESRIVIERES**, from the Province of Haiti.

## 5. Calendar of the members of the General Council

### **Brother Hervé ZAMOR:**

2 July – 16 August	Haïti
18 August – 1 September	Abidjan (Session of the formation of Formators)
1 <sup>er</sup> September	Rome

### **Brother Jean-Paul PEUZE:**

June – July	Nantes
July – August	Ploërmel
September	Rome

### **Brother Vincent SSEKATE:**

18 June – 9 July	Uganda, Tanzania
11 July – 17 August	France (Session of formation of Superiors of com.ties)
17 August – 5 September	Abidjan (Session of the formation of Formators)
5 September	Rome

### **Brother Miguel ARISTONDO :**

24 June – 7 July	United States, Canada
8 July – 17 August	Spain
18 August – 1 September	Abidjan (Session of the formation of Formators)
5 September	Rome

**The next session of the General Council will take place from  
18 September – 6 October 2023 in Rome.**