

ECHOES OF THE General Council



No. 91 February 2017

The General Council held its ordinary session from 13th to 24th February 2017 at the Casa Generalizia in Rome. At this session, the Council welcomed the Pope's announcement of a forthcoming Synod on "youth, faith and vocations". Suggestions will be made in the coming months so that we can take part in its preparation.

Following the session of the General Council, the meeting of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, made up of 6 laypersons, was held from 25 to 28 February.

Then, from 2nd to 7th March, the 5 Novice Masters and the 3 Directors of the Scholasticates of the Congregation found themselves in a formation session with the General Council.

This issue of the Echoes brings the following information and decisions to the attention of the whole Congregation:

1. Animation of the Congregation

a. Visits to Provinces and Districts :

During the months following the last General Conference in Haiti, the Brothers of the General Council visited various sectors of the Congregation. Some highlights of these visits:

- **France:** Brother Yannick Houssay continued the visit of the communities of the Province Saint-Jean-Baptiste, especially those of Finistère, Côtes d'Armor and Morbihan. In these communities, most Brothers are no longer engaged in schools. Some of them, however, are still there (teaching, catechesis). The community of Saint-Brieuc offers a very appreciated service of the network of Catholic schools of the city to young people who are experiencing difficulties and who need a personal accompaniment over several days. Everywhere, the Brothers offer their services to parishes, schools, and various associations. They carry the Congregation and the Mennaisian Family through a strengthened fidelity to prayer. Brother Yannick was also able to meet with a few senior management teams from our schools and see their strong commitment to serving young people.
- **South America:** Brother Yannick Houssay, during his visit to Argentina-Uruguay, was able to participate in various meetings (Provincial Council, meeting of all the Brothers, Laity in the process of belonging, management teams, parents, and students). The Province is aware of its riches and its fragilities; the Mennaisian commitment and the enthusiasm of the laity is a real support for the Brothers. The two Novices of the Province made their first vows on 18th February and continue their formation in communities in the Province. The Province is very happy to welcome them after one year of Novitiate in Chile. It continues with hope its commitment to vocations.
- **Asia:** Bro. Gildas Prigent toured the three Asian countries. For the Philippines-Japan District, the two young Brothers completed their Scholasticate, and went, one to the community of Pandan and the other to San José. Another young man is doing his Postulate at San

José. For the Brothers of the District of Saint Francis Xavier, to welcome these young people is a great grace especially at the time of the reorganization of the Mennaisian presence in Asia (see below). In Indonesia, the school recently opened in Larantuka is booming and will be able to rely on government subsidies, to ensure its development. The vocations ministry continues to bear fruit with 8 young aspirants; next July, the Novitiate will welcome 2 Novices, an Indonesian and a Filipino.

- **Canada - USA:** After the meeting of the General Conference in Haiti, Brother Gerard Byaruhanga visited Canada and the USA. He witnessed the "happy" passage to the new North American Province, and the commitment to ongoing projects: the community of Canton, which is more international and more committed to the future on the campus of the University of Walsh, the development of the FIC mission in Huatusco (Mexico), etc.
- **Uganda:** Brother Gerard's visit coincided with a holiday period, but also highlights of the Province at the beginning of 2017. 31st December 2016: entry to the Novitiate: 6 Ugandans and 4 Rwandans; some thirty Brothers renewed their vows; 10 Postulants are in 2nd year (8 Ugandans and 2 Sudanese); 1st January 2017: 7 Novices made their first profession at Kasasa; 2nd January: 12 Brothers made perpetual vows. And it was the day of the Jubilarians including Brothers Peter Kazekulya, Provincial, Joseph Tinkasimire, Novice Master.
- **South Sudan:** "The Congregation's website has already shared the intense tension in the Rimenze region where the new work of the Brothers is located. Brothers Achilleo Kiwanuka and Delto Kitone remained there and hope for the opening of the school as soon as the situation is more peaceful. Meanwhile, Brother Delto works for the project Solidarity South Sudan", common to many Congregations.
- **Mexico:** Brother Guillermo visited the community of Huatusco. The proceedings with Agape are drawing to an end, to entrust the mission definitively to the Brothers. Things are also well under way with Lay people and young Mennaisians. Another challenge for the development of the mission is the presence of a 3rd Brother in the community.
- **Spain:** Brother Guillermo highlighted the good movement of renewal and innovation in the Province in terms of management, animation and pedagogy in schools. This dynamic is also carried by the Laity of the Mennaisian Family, the will of all to come to walk together. It opens up new horizons and is a bearer of hope.
- **Central Africa:** Brother Guillermo hosted two sessions of the Mennaisian Family, one in Rwanda and the other in the Congo DRC. The Laity present appreciated this dynamics present throughout the Congregation and which has still to be developed in Congo and Rwanda. Probably the remoteness of works and communities, especially in the Congo, remains a difficulty for bringing people together, but all of them, Brothers and Laity, feel the important challenge of strengthening the Mennaisian identity of the works. Brother Guillermo also shared the joy and the thanksgiving of the District during the perpetual vows of Brother Gilles Mbolihinié at Dungu.

b. International meetings

- **Meeting of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family:** it took place from 25 to 28 February at Casa Generalizia. 6 lay persons represented the Commissions of the respective Provinces of Uganda, Haiti, Argentina-Uruguay, North America, France and Spain. The first time was given to sharing what has been experienced since the first meeting a year ago. It was also an opportunity to seize the results of **the investigations of young Mennaisians**, which were made throughout the Congregation. Another important issue was the **preparation of the General Chapter**, especially the participation of the Laity and the themes to be tackled together.
- **Meeting of Formators:** from 2nd to 8th March, 8 Formators (Novice Masters and Scholasticate Directors) met for a formation session in the presence of the General Council. The first two days were more focused on the young people welcomed in the Formation Houses (who are they today, evolutions, etc.) and the pedagogy to be implemented in order to better accompany them. The last two days have allowed us to study the fundamental axes of formation: experience of God, fraternal life, charisma, and mission and Mennaisian identity. All formators have promised to maintain links between them to continue exchanging and pooling their experiences.
- **Session of Ploërmel:** the General Council brings to the attention of all, the organisation of a new Formation session in Ploërmel. The Major Superiors will soon receive the details, as to the dates and actors of this session. But from now on, the General Council indicates that he wishes to extend the participation in this session to any Brother volunteer regardless of his age, in order to offer the session a greater internationality.

c. General Chapter 2018 and Theme of the Year

- Starting from the end of March, the Superior General will send to all the Brothers, the Circular entitled " *Toward the General Chapter 2018 - presentation and election of Delegates*". This Circular will reach communities in early April.
- Regarding the elections, they will take place in the month of June, since the appointment of Visitors from each of the two Districts of Africa, Polynesia and the new Asian District (see below) will only take place End of May.
- On 10th May, the anniversary date of the first meeting of the two Founders at St Briec, the **celebration of the preparation of the Chapter and the launching of the theme of the year will be celebrated as the first step.**
- Four animation themes, inspired by the "Treaty of Union", will be declined throughout the coming months until the next General Chapter. They will offer **a whole process of spiritual discernment in community and in the Mennaisian family.**
- In next September-October, more documents will be sent to the Major Superiors. The Laity and Brothers will be invited to enter into a more immediate preparation for the Chapter.

d. Bicentenary of the foundation of the Congregation

- The opening of the first year of the bicentennial celebrations will officially take place on the **6th June 2017**, by means of a **first video message from the Superior General** on the Congregation's website. The **logo** and **anthem of the Bicentenary** are already known and are online on the new site. The French version is currently in the recording phase.
- The General Council took advantage of the presence of Michel Tanguy, in charge of Communication in the Congregation, to stop the tools of animation of the Bicentenary which are his responsibility: the review La Mennais Magazine, **images**, can be reproduced in **posters, videos** currently in the pipeline.

2. Decision of the Brother Superior General and his Council

Now District of Asia: St. Francis Xavier District:

The collaboration between the present District, made up of Japan and the Philippines and the Indonesian mission, has been in existence for some years now, since the initial formation is common: the Novitiate is in Yogyakarta and the Scholasticate in Manila. Young Indonesian and Filipino Brothers are beginning to arrive on the ground. The Vocations ministry continues in the three countries and new candidates are being prepared especially in Indonesia and the Philippines.

This union of Brothers and resources should help to develop the missionary dynamics of communities and works and to work towards the emergence of an Asian Mennaisian branch.

After discerning with the Brothers in recent years, the General Council decided to erect the new District of Asia and adopted its statutes. It will consist of the 3 countries. The Brothers wished to keep St. Francis Xavier, as Patron Saint.

The new District of Saint Francis Xavier will bring together all the 7 communities of Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines with effect from the 1st July. These communities, it should be noted, are very international. They welcome Brothers of Canadian, Spanish, French, Indonesian, Japanese, Ugandan and Filipino nationalities

3. Approval of the Accounts of the General Administration.

The General Council took the time to study the financial year of the General Administration for the past year. It adopted the provisional budget and decided on the royalty for the year 2017. The financial results of the Provinces and Districts will be examined at the next Council meeting.

Calendar of the members of the General Council

Bro. Yannick HOUSSAY

2 April – 1 ^{er} May	:	Haiti
2 May	:	Rome

Bro. Gildas PRIGENT

9 March– 18 March	:	Paris
18 March – 27 April	:	West Africa
27 April– 10 March	:	France
10 May	:	Rome

Bro. Gerard BYARUHANGA

15 March	:	Uganda Tanzania - Kenya
12 May	:	Roma

Bro. Guillermo DÁVILA

9 March – 22 March	:	Mexico
22 March – 10 April	:	Haiti
10 April– 24 April:	:	Argentina
25 April– 16 May	:	Uruguay
17 May	:	Rome

The next session of the General Council will take place in Rome from 22nd May to 16th June 2017