



## LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

March 2019

The General Superior

# Growing in fraternity

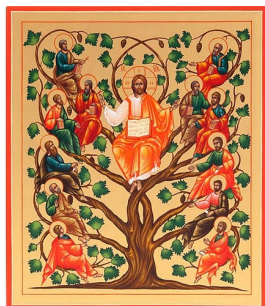
**Dear Brothers, Dear Lay Mennaisians,**

« *It seems important to us that the meaning of fraternal life grows in the Mennaisian Family. This lived fraternity must be appealing to young people in their vocation project* » (GC, 2018, Proposals of the Lay people – Fraternal life). Such is the explicit call that the Lay people made to the whole Mennaisian Family during our last General Chapter. An appealing fraternity for young people today, like that of the first Christians whose fraternal love was the best vocational ministry: « *See how they love each other* » (Cf. The testimony given by Tertullian, 155-220 after Jesus Christ). How can we, Lay people and Brothers, still today, as in times past, offer help to each other to grow in fraternity? How can our fraternal witness be a sign and light to those around us, especially children and young people? How can this appealing fraternity be lived in our different Mennaisian groups?

The last General Chapter invites us to open new paths of fraternity, Brothers and Lay people together, and indicates to us, among others, three main gateways

### 1- Return to the wellspring

To grow in fraternity, Jesus, the eldest of many brothers (Rom. 8:29), is the Way, the Truth and the Life.



Jesus, the Way, became our brother by taking the road of incarnation, by humbling himself (Phil 2,8) and making himself like us except sin (Heb 4,15). Jesus, the Truth, has revealed to us that God is our Father and that we are all brothers (Mt 23,8). Jesus, the

Life, knew how to join us on our paths of Emmaus to warm our hearts, to explain to us the Scriptures and to share with us the Bread of life.

To grow in fraternity in the Mennaisian Family is to imitate Christ who, by humbling himself and by coming closer to indicate to us, by his witness of life, the road that leads to the Father. It is also getting on the road with the other when it is dark in his life, when disappointment leads him to return home very sad. It is also knowing how to celebrate together the joy of belonging to the great family of the children of God.

In concrete terms, how can lay people and Brothers grow together in fraternity?

**By putting the Eucharist at the center of the spirituality of the Mennaisian Family.** This is the recommendation of Pope Francis in his exhortation "Gaudete and Exsultate": « *To share the Word and to celebrate together the Eucharist makes us more brothers and gradually converts us into a holy and missionary community* » (GE, n° 142). In fact, only this holy and missionary fraternity can appeal to the young people of today.

**By celebrating together the sacrament of reconciliation.** Only a fraternity that has experienced the Father's merciful embrace can become a place of welcome, forgiveness, healing wounds, and of deep fraternal communion.

**By learning to entreat the Lord together.** The prayer of supplication represents a beautiful pedagogy to learn to bear together the burdens of life and to open ourselves to the sufferings of others. It « *expresses the fraternal commitment towards others when, thanks to it, we are able to integrate the lives of others, their most pressing anxieties and their greatest dreams* » (GE, n° 154).

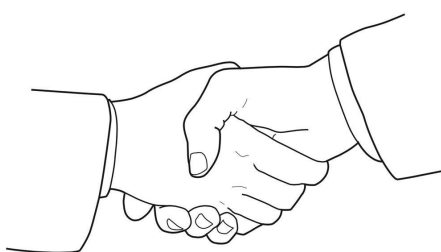
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### 2- Reach out to others

Risking meeting means daring to take the first step towards the other. It's getting on the way with him, but at his own pace. And it is also being capable of withdrawing by tiptoeing at an opportune time to allow grow in confidence.

To grow in fraternity is to help each other on the way to :



**relationship**, which is expressed through the ability to develop a true and deep friendship. It makes possible, like the

apostle John (Jn 13: 23-25), to offer one's proximity and presence to the one who needs it.

**altruism**, which means losing oneself, forgetting oneself to make others live. It is to be like Mary (Lk 1: 39-41), ready to cross mountains and valleys in haste to serve the other.

**anticipation**, which pushes someone to meet the needs of the other. It is to be, like the sinful woman at Simon's home (Lk 7: 37-38), able of thoughtfulness and free delicacy.

**humor**, which is the ability to laugh at oneself, not to take oneself too seriously. It is to be, like the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mt 15: 25-28), able to play down a situation that could have turned into a conflict.

**self-observation**, which reflects one's ability to see himself in his true light. It is to be, like the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15: 8-10), able to recognize on the one hand one's weaknesses and, on the other hand, all the work of the grace of the Lord in one's life.

It would be interesting to share, during a time of meeting, on these relational virtues which help to grow in fraternity. At the end of the sharing time, the group would keep one or two strong points for making the family more appealing. Brotherly love increases our capacity to live in joy, since it enables us to enjoy the good of others: "Rejoice with those who are in joy" (Rom 12:15). "We rejoice when we are weak and you are strong" (2 Cor. 13: 9).

### 3- Dare the peripheries

Lastly, a fraternity appeals when it is open and attentive to the different peripheries, when it welcomes the migrant in search of dignity, identity, homeland and fraternity, when it is the guardian angel of children and young people, when it lends its voice to the voiceless, when it comforts a brother or a sister carrying the weight of solitude and of failure or disappointment.

How can the Mennaisian Family enter into conversation with different forms of peripheries?

By opting for a welcoming, joyful, open and prophetically committed fraternity to fight against social injustice. Thus, the Mennaisian Family makes itself an effective word, a readable message and an audible conversation for the people who benefit from its presence.



By walking together with the most disadvantaged. The poor, the excluded, the suffering, the migrants, the children and the young people in difficulty can get some freshness, dynamism, creativity, credibility, positive solidarity, culture meeting and of gratuitousness to the Mennaisian Family.

By living the generosity of the service. Free dedication in regard to the other person will certainly contribute to make the Mennaisian Family the house of charity.

If our Family dares the peripheries by opening up to the poor, by walking with them, by serving them generously, it will be a source of fruitfulness and it will open *new paths of fraternity for our tercentenary*.

### PRAYER:

Lord, we give you thanks for the gift of the Mennaisian Family to the Church, children and young people.

Help us to grow together in fraternity by returning to the source, by risking to meet others and daring the peripheries. Make us able to rejoice in the good that our sisters and brothers are doing. Teach us to bear the burdens of life together and forgive each other.

Open our hands to welcome those who are waiting for comfort and consolation from us.

Open our hearts to love those around us who need to be listened to, tenderness and affection.

Give us the look that soothes, relieves, heals and restores.

God alone in time! God alone in eternity! Amen !