



LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

Dear Brothers, Dear Lay Mennaisians,

During the Jubilee Year that is drawing to a close, the Church invited us to be Pilgrims of Hope. The Congregation has chosen for its theme this year to continue this invitation to be pilgrims, emphasizing fraternal life. The theme guiding the entire Congregation, even though it may be expressed in various ways locally, is therefore "Pilgrims on the Path of Fraternal Life," or more simply, "Brothers on the Way." It is both a call to fraternity and a call to live it by walking together on the path, which is the meaning of the word "synod."

This call to live fraternity concerns each of us, members of the Mennaisian Family, Brothers or lay people. The call to be brothers is indeed central to the spiritual and missionary project of Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, from the very beginning. Today, the new Rule of Life for the Brothers speaks of "the bonds of fraternity" that unite those who share the same educational mission, and especially those who wish to deepen and live the Mennaisian charism.

The Call of the Gospel

Brothers on the way

We can return to Jesus and his Gospel, to chapter 13 of the Gospel of John (Jn 13:1-17). At the most crucial moment of his life, when the time had come for him to pass from this world to his Father, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. He, the master, presents himself, in a way, as a servant, that is to say, a slave. This gesture is particularly significant at the time of his last supper with those who had followed him until then. Jesus is about to give himself in his Passion. This gift is signified by the bread and wine that become his body and blood given up for him. It is also signified by this humble gesture of washing their feet.

At the end of this scene, where Jesus simply acted, speaking only to indicate to Peter the need to wash his feet, Jesus asks the disciples if they understood this gesture. Then he tells them what they are called to do: "I have washed your feet; you also should wash one another's feet." And Jesus emphasizes: "I have given you an example, so that you also may do as I have done for you."

Let us not overlook Jesus' final words in this passage. They show us that the path Jesus invites us to walk, even if it requires self-forgetfulness, is above all a path to happiness: blessed are you if you do it.



A method for a prayerful reading, in a group or fraternity, of the text of the washing of the feet:

- **Reading** from the Gospel (John 13:1-17) (one reader) Silence, then each person shares what they see or hear (an image of the scene, a phrase, a saying...). Silence. Reading of the Gospel (change of reader)
- **Meditation**: Gospel reading (change of reader).
Silence, then each person says what they understand, what the Spirit inspires in them. It is a mutual teaching.
- **Prayer**: Each person formulates a short prayer based on the text: praise, trust, request for conversion and forgiveness, supplication...
- **Contemplation**: to fix one's whole being in God – to let God look at us, speak to us, transform us...

This method, by adapting it, can also be used for personal "Holy Reading", or Lectio divina.

Living fraternity

Responding to Jesus' call to love one another on the journey of our lives can take many and ever-new forms. Here are seven words and as many attitudes for living fraternity, drawn from the new Rule of Life adopted by the 2024 General Chapter. This Rule, rooted in the long tradition passed down from the Founders, is of course intended for the Brothers, but it can speak to all of us, members of the Mennaisian Family. We are all concerned by this call from Jean-Marie de la Mennais:

"Above all, my children, let great charity and perfect union reign among you."

Each word, and therefore each appeal, drawn from the Brothers' Rule of Life is accompanied by a few quotations from this Rule, primarily from Chapter 6, "The Fraternal Community." The pronouns "he" or "they" obviously refer to the Brother(s), but they also invite each member of the Mennaisian Family to feel involved and called to take action to foster fraternity where they live, in community or family, at their workplace or mission, in Mennaisian fraternity or parish...

Welcome

They seek to know and love each other with the heart of Christ. they consider cultural and intergenerational differences as an asset.

They see cultural and intergenerational differences as a source of richness.

Attention

They are attentive to each other and spare no effort to understand each other, engage in dialogue.

They are united by a common project, with respect for each person and recognizing the diversity of their gifts.

They are open to young people and ready to help them, and they show a particular concern for the elderly, the sick and those in difficulty.

Communication

Fraternal life in community grows through communication, dialogue and encounter.

They use digital technology and social networks with discernment as sources of information and means of communication. They are especially careful to preserve the interpersonal relationships that these tools cannot replace.

Sharing

In simplicity and joy, they willingly share what they are, what they do and what they have.

They share their goods and talents in order to live in communion.

Lay people and Brothers discern the purpose and focus of their shared mission and deepen together their spirituality.

Service

He puts what he has received at the service of others: his life, his talents, his time, and the goods he uses.

They live to the full their availability for serving others (56) ... Through daily self-denial and the generous gift of self.

He is sensitive to the needs of all through a charity that is inventive and respectful, expecting neither profit nor recognition.

Pardon

They work at becoming a community that welcomes and forgives, heals wounds and lives in authentic fraternal communion.

So that their "joy may be complete", they also endeavour to forgive and to forget wrongs. Despite inevitable conflicts, they seek to live together in peace, because it is "the most precious of all treasures, and one cannot make too many sacrifices to preserve it" (Jean-Marie de la Mennais)

Joy

"The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus." This joy permeates the different moments of their lives.

Times of leisure and relaxation, mealtimes, weekends, and holidays, in particular, are moments to cherish.

Have a good Mennaisian week, from November 18th to 26th, then a good Advent Season to everyone.

Brother Jean-Paul Peuzé, Assistant General

For reflection and sharing in community, in Mennaisian fraternity, in a Mennaisian group:

Each person can share one or two words that are important to them. Why? What do they feel called to do in their life?

What are the calls for fraternity or the Mennaisian group?