

LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

June 2023

N° 29



Dear Lay Mennaisians, Dear Brothers,

From 15 March to 30 April 2023, accompanied by Brothers Miguel Aristondo, Assistant General, and Carlos Lovatto, Visitor of the Divina Providencia District, I had the joy of visiting the Brothers and Lay people of the Mennaisian Family in South America (Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay). A very full 45 days! I would like to publicly thank all the people I met for their warm and fraternal welcome.

Magnificat to the Lord for all the good that is being done in this sector of the Institute thanks to the fruitful collaboration between Brothers and Lay people. They instruct, educate and evangelise in a single act. The poor are sacred to them. It is a real family where everyone (father, mother, child, brother, sister, lay person, teacher, pupil) is welcomed and respected in their rich diversity.

Following on from letter no. 28, which introduced the forthcoming General Chapter and its theme, I would like to offer in this letter a few ideas "for an ecology of hope". In the manner of a farmer, it will be our way of preparing our soil for the rain that will make it germinate, grow and produce fruit in abundance.

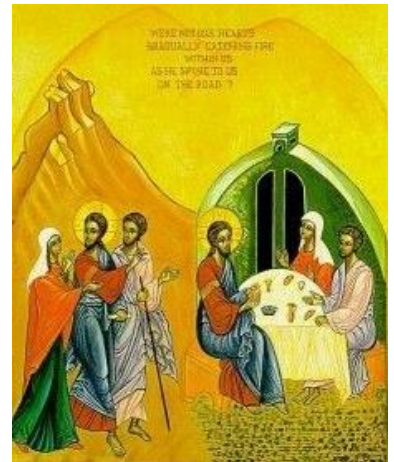
« *For an ecology of hope* » !

What does this mean? In fact, it's about taking care of our fundamental environment, which is God, our neighbour and ourselves. What are the educational places that could help us to do this?

God

The source and summit of the Christian life, the Eucharist is the place of teaching, par excellence, where every Christian is invited to let God take care of him or her. It is there that the Lord heals us by forgiving our sins. When his Word meets us on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-39), he teaches us to shed light in order to come to the truth. In this way, we become aware that our hearts are slow to believe and that we are blind and without understanding. When we agree to walk with him, he gives breath and meaning to our lives. When we welcome him into our homes to break bread, he invites us to get back on our feet and go to Jerusalem, where our brothers and sisters are waiting for us.

Following the example of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, sharing the bread of the Word and the Eucharist is the best way to rekindle the flame of hope within us. As the vital centre of the universe, overflowing with inexhaustible love and life, the Eucharist unites heaven and earth, embracing and penetrating all creation. Through it, by it and in it, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. It is the source of light and motivation that impels us to be sentinels of the dawn, always ready to go out and meet the Risen Lord.



Wherever possible, I invite the brothers and lay members of the Mennaisian Family to celebrate a monthly Eucharist together. If this is not possible, why not organise a celebration of the Word? On the way to our next General Chapter, we are committed to an ecology of hope. Only those who eat the body and drink the blood of Jesus, our only hope, can be salt and light in their environment. Mary, by her interior attitude of listening and obedience to the Word, of total availability to the Lord, lives the Eucharist every day. As the servant of hope, this is the path she shows us, so that our life, like hers, may be a Magnificat! The Cana of yesterday (Jn 2:1-12), the Cana of today, the Cana of every day!

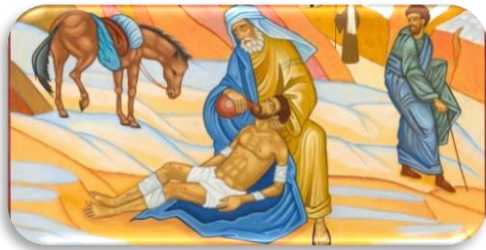
Our neighbours

Caring for our neighbours is our vocation and our mission! This is the fundamental meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-38). In fact, it is a universal call to be our brother's keeper, especially for those left by the wayside. This is the exact opposite of Cain's attitude (Gen 4:9).

Looking after our brothers and sisters requires us to stop, to come closer and devote some time to them. It means overcoming the temptation to lose interest in others, especially the weakest. In so doing, we refuse to build our lives by turning our backs on the suffering of others. So, to the globalisation of indifference, we respond with a revolution of compassion and tenderness. We attest that the only valid response is that of the Good Samaritan. It is the way to make the fragility of others our own and to draw close to them. No one should be left "by the wayside", "on the margins of life".

Taking care of the pain of others is today's emergency. How can we do this if we turn in on ourselves, if we lose interest in those who are wounded in life, if we ignore them, if we turn away, if we close our ears and our hearts? And yet

For an ecology of hope



this is where the Lord asks us to love and serve him with generosity, selflessness and dedication (Mt 25:31-46). Will we be able to seize this opportunity to recognise him in our neighbours who expect a gesture of solidarity and closeness from us, in the child who needs affection and security in order to grow and flourish?

Everything is connected! It is by lifting up those who have fallen, by consoling those who weep, by encouraging those who are discouraged that we will be able to rekindle the flame of hope in our different environments.

I encourage the laity and the Brothers of the Mennaisian Family to identify a suffering in their place of life or mission that they want to take charge of and to specify the actions they intend to take in response. At the Annunciation, Mary learns from the angel Gabriel that Elizabeth is expecting a child. She realised that her cousin needed help. Active and eager in hope, she sets out and spends three months at her cousin's service (Lk 1:39-56).

Ourselves

Taking care of ourselves! This requires a good understanding of our own reality. In fact, it means knowing how to identify our fears, our expectations, our strengths and our weaknesses. In this sense, the apostle Paul shows us what it means to take care of ourselves through self-acceptance. In him, through him, the runt of the litter, unworthy to be called an apostle because he persecuted the Church, the Lord's grace worked wonders (1 Cor 15:8-10). It also means enjoying a healthy degree of self-esteem that allows us not to take ourselves too seriously. It was this quality that helped the Syro-Phoenician woman to implore the Lord's help and accept the crumbs that fell from her Master's table. A marvel of faith, hope and trust: her daughter was healed (Mt 15:25-28).

All this demands of us a new ecology of life. The source and the secret are the person of Jesus. Like Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (Lk 10, 38-42), Brothers and lay people are encouraged to spend time at the feet of the Master. He alone is capable of warming our hearts and giving us new impetus to follow him. This is how we can bear witness to the fact that holiness is the most beautiful face of the Church and of our Charismatic Family. We are all called to be saints by living with love and offering a personal witness in our daily occupations, wherever we may be. This is the secret of being saints by making saints. So, by being both Martha and Mary, we commit ourselves together to taking care of the active and contemplative part of our charism.

Following the example of Mary, who "*kept all these things in her heart*" (Lk 2:51), I urge the Brothers and Laypeople of the Mennaisian Family to regularly nourish themselves with the Word of the Lord in silent prayer and contemplation. It was in the silence of Nazareth that the Word of God took flesh in her womb.

Let God take care of us! Take care of our neighbour! Taking care of ourselves! It is this permanent circularity that we are called to live if we want to promote "*an ecology of hope*", especially in this year of preparation for our General Chapter.

Prayer to Mary :

Mary, Mother of hope, walk with us! Help us to bear witness to Jesus, the only Saviour. Make us helpful to our neighbours, welcoming to those in need, artisans of justice, passionate builders of a fairer and more fraternal world.

Dawn of a new world, show yourself to be the Mother of hope! Watch over the Mennaisian Family: may it be transparent to the Gospel, may it be an authentic place of communion, may it live out its mission of announcing, celebrating and serving the Gospel of hope for the peace and joy of all.

Watch over children and young people, the hope of the future: may they respond generously to the call of your Son Jesus.

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

