

LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

Dear Lay Mennaisians, Dear Brothers,

It's been a busy summer. In Haiti, I took part in the annual retreat which brought together 40 Brothers and 5 Lay Mennaisian Associates (LAM). I received the first vows of three novices and the definitive commitment of a young Brother. I led a day of ongoing formation for the Brothers of the Province. I also presided over the celebration of the entry into the Novitiate of three Postulants.

From 21 to 31 August 2023, in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), I collaborated in the animation of a formation session for Brother formators. There were 19 participants from: Indonesia, Uganda, Tanzania, Mexico, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Togo, Haiti and Italy.



I give thanks to the Lord for all the seeds of hope that have been sown. May he continue to bless and bring to fruition the work of our hands!

As already announced, the 28th General Chapter of our Institute will take place in Ariccia, in the hills overlooking Castel Gandolfo (Italy), from **26 March to 24 April 2024**. The Chapter will be attended by 45 Brothers, 43 of whom will have the right to vote. Also invited will be the 6 lay members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family who will take part in the first week and 6 young Brothers who will take part in all the work of the Chapter, but without the right to vote in the General Assembly. On 22 April 2024, Pope Francis will receive us in private audience.

In the Upper room with Mary!

The success of our General Chapter concerns us all. It will be so insofar as the Holy Spirit is the protagonist. I therefore launch this solemn appeal to the whole Mennaisian Family: "To the Cenacle with Mary! In concrete terms, how can we respond? What can we do?"

If we compare the Congregation to a boat that has been in existence for over two hundred years, its sails really need the wind of the Holy Spirit to carry it out to sea. It is the grace of this new Pentecost that we are invited to ask the Lord with and through Mary, our Mother.

During these five months preceding our General Chapter, let us go to the Cenacle with Mary and ask for the Institute and the Mennaisian Family, especially for the Capitulants, the gift of:

- **Wisdom:** A gift of the Holy Spirit, wisdom teaches us to see and look with our eyes, to hear and listen with our ears, to sympathise and love with our hearts, to judge with our standards and to speak with the words of God. It helps us to recognise and discern the Lord's actions. It sharpens our taste and desire for the realities above. Only listening to the Holy Spirit, the fruit of intimacy with God, can instil in us this kind of knowledge. In the Upper Room, with Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, let us intercede and beg her Son to give us this gift.
- **Intelligence:** The fruit of the Holy Spirit, intelligence enables us to go beyond the outward appearance of reality, to "*read within*" and delve into the depths of God's mind and his plan of salvation. It gives us access to "*what eye has not seen, what ear has not heard, what has not come to the mind of man, what God has prepared for those whom he loves*" (1 Cor 2:9). It makes us understand things with God's intelligence. As with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-35), when the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and enlightens our minds, we grow in our understanding of what the Lord has said and done. We understand Jesus' teachings better and better. The gift of understanding is important for our next General Chapter. In the Upper Room, with Mary, let us ask the Lord for all the Capitulants. May it help them to better understand what the Lord expects of our Institute and of the Mennaisian Family.





- **Counsel:** Through this gift, it is the Lord himself, with his Spirit, who enlightens our hearts and shows us the right attitude to adopt and the right path to take. He turns our inner gaze ever more towards Jesus' way of acting. This enables us to choose what is consistent with his will, according to the logic of the Gospel. The gift of counsel leads us to trust the Holy Spirit: what we have to say will be given to us in the moment, because it is not we who will speak, but the Spirit of our Father who will speak in us (Mt 10:10-20). He also teaches us to trust others. God often uses the voice and witness of our brothers and sisters to enlighten our hearts and help us to recognise his will. In the Upper Room, with Mary, let us pray that all the members of the General Chapter will be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- **Fortitude:** Based on the conviction that the Lord always comes to the rescue of our weakness; this gift of the Holy Spirit makes us stronger to face the difficulties of life and mission. It frees us from our torpor, our uncertainties and our fears. It overcomes our timidity and makes us bolder in bringing the Good News to others, whatever the cost. In the Cenacle, with Mary, let us invoke the Holy Spirit so that our next General Chapter may breathe new ardour and zeal into the Institute and the Mennaisian Family in the proclamation of the Gospel to children and young people.
- **Knowledge:** Thanks to this gift of the Holy Spirit, we have an ever-greater understanding, through creation, of the greatness and love of God and his relationship with every creature. This discovery fills us with wonder and gratitude. Like Saint Francis of Assisi, it leads us to praise the Lord from the depths of our hearts and to recognise that we have received everything from Him. In so doing, we resist two temptations in relation to creation: dominating it instead of protecting it, and making it an end in itself. But by receiving it as a gift from God, we commit ourselves to be its guardians, to care for it and to use it for the benefit of all, always with respect and gratitude. In the Cenacle, with Mary, let us ask for the gift of science for the members of the General Chapter. This is the way for it to help us to place ourselves in harmony with the Creator and to participate in the clarity of his vision and judgement.
- **Piety:** This gift makes us live a double love: that of God and of our neighbour. It strengthens our friendship with God, a source of joy and enthusiasm for following Christ. It develops our ability to pray to the Lord with simplicity. It also leads us to express our love for our brothers and sisters. In this way, we become capable of rejoicing with those who rejoice, of weeping with those who grieve, of being close to those who are lonely or distressed, of consoling those who grieve, of welcoming and relieving those in need. In other words, the Holy Spirit, through the gift of piety, makes us gentle, calm, patient, at peace with God, at the service of others with gentleness. In the Upper Room, with Mary, let us intercede for the Capitulants to receive this magnificent grace. In so doing, they will show us the way to be joyful witnesses of God and his love in our different places of life and mission.
- **Fear of God:** A gift of the Holy Spirit, the fear of God makes us realise our lowliness before the Lord and leads us to abandon ourselves, with humility and trust, into his arms. It opens our hearts to his goodness, love, mercy and forgiveness. It teaches us to let Jesus lead us to his Father. In the Upper Room, with Mary, let us ask for the gift of the fear of God for the members of the General Chapter, so that they may teach us to abandon ourselves more fully to Divine Providence!



The Mennaisian Family awaits a new Pentecost. In the Cenacle, with Mary, let us ask for it by regularly invoking the Holy Spirit with the following text or any other that suits you better:

Come, Holy Spirit, and send down from heaven a ray of your light.
Come, Father of the Poor, come, giver of gifts, come, light of our hearts.
O blessed light, come and fill to the brim the hearts of your faithful.
Wash what is unclean, bathe what is dry, heal what is wounded.
Soften what is stiff, warm what is cold, make straight what is crooked.
To all the members of the Institute and the Mennaisian Family, especially to the Capitulants, give your seven sacred gifts.
Give merit and virtue, give final salvation, give eternal joy.
Amen!

Brother Hervé Zamor, S.G