

# LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

## Following Jesus, Our Elder Brother

Dear Brothers, Dear Lay Mennaisians,

Each year, the Brother Superior General writes and sends what we call a “circular”. He addresses the Brothers to support and encourage them in their consecrated life, in community for the mission. Often, the theme chosen for the circular ties in with the theme of the Congregation's year of animation. In this year 2025-2026, the theme *Pilgrims on the path of fraternal life. Brothers on the way*, which is also part of the deepening of Chapter 6 of the new Rule of Life on fraternal life, is taken up and developed in Circular No. 322 entitled *‘Following Jesus, our Elder Brother’*.

In the introduction to this circular, Brother Hervé Zamor invites us, “*serve one another in daily life, to care for one another and to build true fraternity*” as demanded by the 2024 General Chapter. “In concrete terms, this commits us to living our vocation every day, which consists of “*being brothers of Christ, deeply united with him, ‘the firstborn among many brothers’ (Rom 8:29); brothers to one another, in mutual love and working together in the Church in the same service of what is good; brothers to everyone, in their witness to Christ's love for all, especially the lowliest, the neediest; brothers for a greater brotherhood in the Church*” (John Paul II, Vita Consecrata, no. 60).

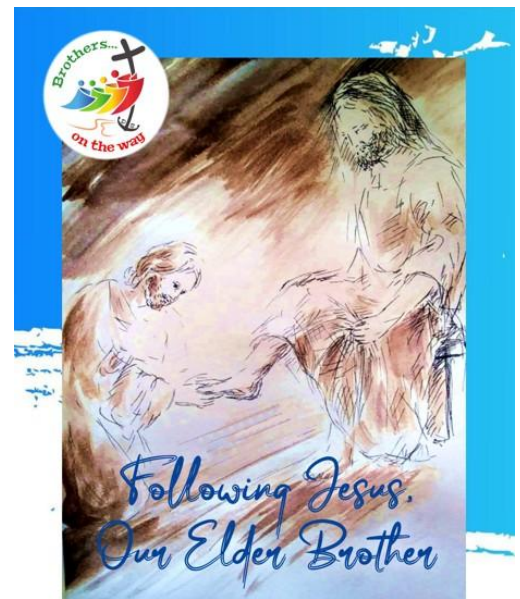
While acknowledging that his circular is primarily addressed to the Brothers, Brother Hervé adds that “*the Lay Mennaisian Family members are also invited to read it. It can help them to better understand their vocation to fraternity on the one hand, and on the other hand, the importance of walking alongside the Brothers in order to build a fraternal, joyful Mennaisian Family that is welcoming to all and attentive to the poorest*” We are all invited to “*follow Jesus, our elder Brother*” “*He is the Way, the Truth and the Life of our vocation and of our mission to fraternity (Jn 14:6)*”.

Below is an excerpt from this circular (Chapter II, pp. 41-43) which calls us all to fraternal love, wherever we are and in whatever vocation we have, giving us precise and concrete guidelines for living this love.

### Living brotherly love

Living as brothers means also helping each other to speak harmoniously the language of brotherly love, which contains five particular nuances.

The first involves **learning to love our enemies**. [...] In fact, “*the enemy according to the Gospel is the one who undermines my spiritual and emotional integrity and with whom I regularly have relational difficulties that slow down our common journey toward communion. In community, the ‘Gospel’ enemy highlights our differences and the invisible yet real distance that separates us.*”<sup>1</sup>



Brother Hervé ZAMOR, Superior General  
Brothers of Christian Instruction  
January 2026 Circular 322

<sup>1</sup> Mgr François Bustillo, Passons sur l'autre rive – Vers une vie religieuse renouvelée, p. 167-168.



To grow in the love of our enemies, Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus shows us the path of smiling and joyful service. This fellow sister, whom she found particularly annoying, she deliberately chose to smile at her and even to serve her with joy. This was her way of practicing fasting and perfuming her face so that her sacrifice would be known only to her Father who sees in secret (Mt 6:17-18).

The second emphasis is on *loving with mercy*. This means being full of love and compassion for someone in a state of fragility and vulnerability. This was the attitude of Shem and Japheth toward their father Noah (Gen. 9:22-23). When Ham told them that their father was naked and drunk, they took the garment, placed it on both of their shoulders, and, walking backward, covered his nudity. What a beautiful gesture of filial modesty and tenderness! Today, it is up to us to be that garment, not to cover the wrongdoing of our brother, but to spare him humiliation and to show him our respect and mercy.

The third aspect invites us *to love without judging or condemning*. This is the most ascetic dimension of love, which requires a genuine inner conversion. The classic example is the attitude of Saint Francis of Assisi who dismounted from his horse to kiss the leper. Through this gesture, he showed that he no longer saw a sick person to avoid, but a brother to welcome, respect, and love. This is the path to follow if we want to love our Brothers in the manner of the Lord, who judges and condemns no one.

The fourth emphasis urges us *to love by forgiving*. In our communal fraternal life, forgiveness is essential if we want to live freely and liberated. Without it, our capacity for love is weakened. We are prisoners of our slavery in Egypt. Our memory remains wounded. Are there not Brothers who, years later, are able to remind us of a word or an attitude that had hurt them? On the path of forgiveness, Joseph, Jacob's youngest son, offers us the right attitude:

*“Joseph is a reconciled man; he has found his way, he has learned to forgive. He has managed to tame the instinct for vengeance that keeps violence alive within. He can then comfort his brothers so that they do not live in guilt and fear. He can speak words that liberate.”<sup>2</sup>*

Happy are we if we have learned to love by forgiving. In this way, we will be free to be makers of peace and reconciliation in our various communities of life and mission.

The final emphasis encourages *loving by giving*. This means offering the best we have for the good of others. This is what the woman with Simon wanted to express when she poured a very precious perfume on Jesus' head (Mt 26:6-12). *“The simplicity of this gesture reveals something great. No act of affection, however small, will be forgotten, especially if it is directed towards those who are suffering, in solitude, in need, as the Lord was at that moment.”<sup>3</sup>*

We will be blessed if we practice speaking harmoniously the language of fraternal love by learning to love fully, with mercy, without judging or condemning, by forgiving and giving. Then we will be fully faithful to our vocation to fraternal life in community.

**Going further: read Circular No. 322 in its entirety:** it will soon be sent to the Provinces and Districts, as well as to the Mennaisian groups. It can be requested from the Provincials or Visitors, or downloaded from <https://www.lamennais.org/document/circulaires-du-superieur-general/>.

**For reflection and sharing in community, in Mennaisian fraternity, in Mennaisian groups:** We can return to the excerpt above and share what we feel is important, positive experiences of fraternity that relate to the text, the calls we have heard that may also be challenges for our lives...What calls are there for fraternity or Mennaisian groups?

*The members of the International Bureau of the Mennaisian Family wish everyone a very blessed Lent as we journey towards Easter..*

*Brother Jean-Paul Peuzé, Assistant Sup. General*

<sup>2</sup> Mgr François Bustillo, Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Pape Léon XIV, Dilexi Te, n° 4.