



# Letter n° 9

## to the Mennaisian Family

Rome June 2013

**Brother Superior General**

## MENNAISIAN PEDAGOGY

Since the beginning of 2013, a Commission reflects with the General Council on the way in which "Evangelization in the field of education," is lived in the Congregation, according to the expression of the General Chapter of 2012. The goal is, first of all, to think of writing what is at the heart of the Mennaisian educational action. Throughout the Congregation experiences are made in educational matters that are attempts to allow children and young people in our schools to open their mind and heart to the beautiful, the true and the good. On its

part, the General Chapter gave some major axes that can be called the "Mennaisian pedagogy." Among these include, for example, the basic objective which is to provide a comprehensive education that forms the « whole person, the heart as well as the spirit » as Jean-Marie de la Mennais used to say. Let us note also the « evangelical-ly » fraternal style, or still more, a special sensitivity for the poorest. But considering these few traits is not enough, it is necessary to take the time to grasp the ensemble that qualifies the Mennaisian educa-

tion to really live it, and especially put it at the service of every young person in our education centres.

The current approach will help us to achieve this. It will be made of exchanges between the central Commission and the Provinces and Vice-Provinces, and of proposals for workshops to better assimilate the legacy entrusted to us in order to propose it today in a new and refreshing way.

The closing of this approach will be in the form of an Assembly to be held in Ploërmel in 2015. We will talk about it again.

## THEME OF THE YEAR.

### *Being a Brother is good news !*

The Brothers will be invited next year (2013-2014) to rediscover the joy that their Brother's vocation gives to the world of youth.

Every Christian has a vocation. God calls each and sends him on a mission, not alone but with brothers and sisters. Every Christian has received the Holy Spirit as the breath of life that transcends him and seeks to spread.

Every Christian enters into dialogue with God who speaks, calls, draws him to Himself, sends him to his brothers and sisters, makes him love in his own way, and opens him to the free gift of self.

Everyone is a unique being, loved in a singular way by God who expects from him a unique and personal response in a real dialogue of love.

This is what Vocation is. That of the Brother is part of this process. Why and how is it good news for young people?

The course proposed to the Brothers and the Mennaisian Family this year will help to rediscover it.

## BELONGING to the Mennaisian Family

In many sectors of the Congregation the Laity have made steps towards a commitment to « Mennaisian Laity ». With slightly different ways in different places, what is common to all members, men and women, is the annual engagement according to a charter of life. This commitment follows a proposed formation by the Brothers, which usually lasts one

year. Everyone is thus invited to discover that the « modality of membership » proposed in the « text of reference » of the Mennaisian Family is a response to a call of the Spirit received by each and every one, in communion with other Laity and the Brothers. Thus they recognize themselves as baptized persons engaged with the Brothers to follow

Christ in the service of youth for whom they receive from God the mission to educate according to the Gospel. Their gaze on the young takes on an altogether special colour. They learn by reading the Word of God and the writings of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, to go out to them as the « shepherd » who gives his life for his sheep.

## Good News

### THE LAITY ENGAGED IN THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY.

*Number of committed Laity :*

Canada : 95 ; France : 15  
Spain : 9 ; Japan : 13

In addition, 26 people are preparing for this in Argentina-Uruguay. Others in Spain, Canada, France, Japan, Philippines.

Moreover, in most countries, the Mennaisian Family organizes itself in schools and Communities of Brothers. Thus are born fraternities or Mennaisian groups. Similarly there exist Mennaisian youth groups.

The General Council, for its part, is considering the organization of an International Council of the Mennaisian Family.

## Pope FRANCIS : a word.

We were surprised and happy to receive the gift of God in the person of Pope Francis. A gift that God has given to his Church that He loves so much.

Since then, day after day, Pope Francis speaks and acts. He strives, by his gestures, to do what he says : to go out to meet Christ in the poor, to hear the word of God as expressed by the « little ones » because in them the Holy Spirit makes himself heard.

Francis thus tells us words that we love, but which, if

we listen to them well, call us to a radical conversion. I chose an excerpt from his homily on May 24:

« To bear with patience and overcome external and internal oppressions with love is not easy, » admits the Pope. Indeed, « when difficulties come from outside or when problems arise in the heart, in the soul, internal problems, it is not easy to bear them. It is easier to become impatient. »

What should we do then?  
What does it mean to bear?  
The Pope replied: "It's tak-

ing a difficulty and bear it up with strength so that the difficulty does not drag us down. It is a Christian virtue. [...] The Christian has the strength not to give in, but to rise up, to bear. »

« How many elderly people have walked this path ! » recognizes the Pope. It is beautiful to watch them. They have a beautiful look, that of serene happiness. »



## SOUTH SUDAN : a new mission

The Spirit today pushes us to the "peripheries" as Pope Francis often tells us. Alternatively, we could say that we go to the "borders" where children and young people are waiting for the "bread of instruction."

This is why the Brothers of Uganda, supported by the other Provinces of the

Congregation decided to found a school in South Sudan, at the request of the Bishop of Tombura-Yambio.

In this region, which is close to Uganda and the DRC, peace seems to have returned, but everything is to be done, especially in the field of children's education. 62% of the popula-

tion is illiterate. Primary schools that exist are very poor. Often lessons are taught under trees.

The first Ugandan Brothers leave in July 2013. They count on your aid and on your prayers.



### YOUTH PREPARE- THEMSELVES FOR THE BROTHERS' VOCATION.

More than 20 young people are living their first experience with Brothers in Bolivia, Argentina, Rwanda, DRC, England ... to discern God's call to them.

36 others are Postulants. They are from Haiti, West Africa, Uganda, Rwanda and DRC, Philippines and Indonesia.

27 others are making an important experience of the Novitiate in Haiti, West Africa, East Africa, in Indonesia and in Japan, for two young Filipinos.

Finally, more than 50 others continue their formation at the Scholastic level. The Congregation has 3 centres for the Scholasticate: two in Africa, one English (Uganda), and one Francophone (Ivory Coast) and one in Asia, Manila (Philippines).

## HAÏTI : 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

October 20, 2013 will be the opening of the year-long celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Brothers in Haiti. On April 20, 1864, in fact, four Brothers left France for the West Indies. They landed at Port-au-Prince on May 13 of the same year. The following October, on the 3rd, the first school opened its doors. It was the beginning of an adventure that led more than 650 Brothers from Europe and North America to Haiti. There were many trials. From 1864 to 1900, out of the 239 Brothers on mission in Haiti, 80 died, mostly killed by yellow fever and other diseases. Still, the Brothers continued their humble mission of education that Brother Athenodorus described like this at the inauguration of our first school : « We want our students to be strong Christians ... affable to all, dedicated to their homeland ... willing ... if necessary to shed their blood for it ... ». Today, the Province of Haiti has 55 Brothers of whom 36 are Haitians. (from notes of Brother Hervé Zamor, Provincial of Haiti)