

Echoes of the General Council

Number 72

March 2011



From 14 to 26 February 2011, the General Council held their session at the Generalate in Rome.

Thereafter, they went to Casa Mennaisiana at Castelgandolfo for the meeting with the major Superiors from 2 to 11 March 2011.

This issue of the Echoes brings to the knowledge of the entire Congregation the following information and decisions:

1. The animation of the Congregation:

1.1 Visits to Provinces et Vice-Provinces :

Several Provinces and Vice-provinces were visited by the Brother Superior General, and the members of his Council during these last months, be it for canonical visits, or for participation in retreats and sessions: St. Jean-Baptiste Province, Vice province of Central Africa, Vice-province of West Africa, St. Teresa of the Child Jesus Province, St Michael-Archangel Province, Immaculate Conception Province, and the Missions of Chile-Bolivia and Indonesia.

- The 150th year gives an occasion, in all the sectors, to make Jean-Marie de la Mennais better known. Many initiatives permit the Brothers and the Laity to get together, the children and the youth of the schools to engage themselves in the numerous sportive, cultural and spiritual events in liaison with the theme of the year.
In the context of this special year the « *Cross of the missionaries* » continues with its journey throughout the Congregation. It is an instrument in the service of the deepening of our vocation and mission, and it offers the possibility to the Laity, the students of our schools and the Brothers of reflecting and praying together.
- The communities in all the entities must accept the numerous challenges: the fragility connected with the small number of Brothers in each Community or the outstanding ageing in certain sectors, the difficulties of living the daily prayer and the Eucharist, the ongoing formation, etc. At the same time many Communities show dynamism in the communitarian animation and in the apostolic engagements (schools, parishes, neighbourhoods etc.).
- There where there are young people in formation, the Provinces and the Vice-provinces strengthen their structures of the initial formation. That is done, for example, by a better accompaniment of the youth, an improvement in the conditions of studies and of work.
- In several sectors, the vocations ministry is re-organised and dynamic. New initiatives are taken to make the Brother's vocation known: itinerant exhibitions, video clips, posters etc. The effort for prayer in favour of vocations continues with trust.

1.2 The initial formation:

The Council made a survey of the Houses of Formation for the current year, especially as a follow-up of the decisions taken after the meeting at Kisubi in September 2010. The Council emphasized once again that the implementation of a quality initial formation requires at once qualified Formators and sufficient material and financial means. That will be done only if the Provinces concerned invest in this domain of formation and that if the entire Congregation shows its solidarity regularly.

	JZ	AO	H	IND	K	KT
Postulate	8	7	9	2	21(2yrs)	1
Noviciate	4	4	4	2	2	5
Scholasticate	11	5	5		13	

The Council paid special attention to two other aspects: the basic formation of the new Formators and the regular accompaniment of Formators in action.

1.3 The ongoing formation:

Brother Guillermo Dávila presented the main points of the next **session of the Brothers of 35-50 years**: it will take place from 13 July to 14 August 2011 at Ploërmel. It will begin with the Mennaisian pilgrimage at Lourdes, joining the ensemble of the Brothers and the Laity who will be there. The thematic and the methodology of the session will be mainly the same as those of the 1st session in 2010.

Several Congregations of Brothers held a joint meeting in view of preparing **an international session on the Brother's vocation**. This session could take place in September 2012 in Rome, and each Congregation could send 4 to 5 Brothers.

1.4 Meeting of the International Council for the Ongoing Formation.

The International Council of the Ongoing Formation held its first meeting in the Generalate, in Rome, from 11 to 15 March 2011. In order to achieve a common culture on the congregational level, it was first of all necessary to begin by sharing the diverse experiences proposed in the Provinces: matters for giving thanks for what has been lived and also matters for accepting the challenges on the way forward!

The choice of the theme of the year, the dossier that accompanies it, the pamphlets on the *'Word at the centre of our life'*, were well received and appreciated initiatives, even if they had to be adapted locally. The ongoing formation remains a matter of personal conversion and of dynamism for each Brother, without forgetting the essential role that the local Superior plays. That is why this first meeting ended by examining a possible **project of animation for the formation of Superiors of communities**.

2. The decisions of Brother Superior General and his Council

2.1 Nomination of Superiors:

The Brother Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has named:

- For the Province of Jean de La Mennais (Canada),
Brother **Lévi BOUDREAU**, Assistant Provincial for a mandate of 3 years.
Brother **Robert SMYTH**, Assistant Provincial for a mandate of 3 years.
- For the Vice-province of Japan-Philippines :
Brother **Raymond DUCHARME**, Vice-provincial for the 1st mandate of 3 years.
- For the Vice-province of central Africa (DRC and Rwanda) :
Brother **Pascal MBOLINGABA**, Vice-Provincial for the 1st mandate of 3 years.

2.2 Approbation of the Statutes of Vice-province:

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has approved the new **statutes of the Vice-province of Central Africa for a period of 3 years.**

These new statutes take into account the reality of the Vice-province shared between 2 countries (DRC and Rwanda) functioning on two different models for the language, the school calendar and the programmes. While preserving the unity of the ensemble of the Vice-province, these statutes should permit a better animation of each national entity by respecting their specificity.

3. The financial report of the Treasurer General

3.1 The financial report

The Brother Treasurer General presented his annual financial report to the Council on the financial state of the Congregation and of the Provinces and Vice-provinces. As a whole, the ensemble of the administrative units submits their reports on time and in a satisfactory way with regard to book-keeping. Progress has been realised in the regular and dependable keeping of books of accounts even if such or such a unit that seems to be more difficult. The General Council has approved the ensemble of the accounts and, thanking the Treasurer General for his patient and detailed work invited him to continue with his mission of counsellor and formation in the sectors that are most in need.

3.2 The annual budget

On this occasion also, the General Council, started a reflection on the way the annual budget, by means of the contributions from the Provinces, would permit to respond to the different needs of the animation and the government of the Congregation. No doubt, some developments will be necessary in order to take into account in a better way the present situation, and implement a financial and economic dynamism that will be at once supportive and responsible.

3.3 The Solidarity Fund

The Brother Treasurer General informed the members of the Council about the setting up of the Solidarity Fund and the successive instalments realised by the Donor Provinces in conformity with the agreed upon calendar. The Council was pleased with the efforts accepted by these entities despite the financial crisis as well as the multiple needs and calls to which they respond generously. They also invite the International Solidarity Committee to accentuate the information on the constitution of this Fund for the ensemble of the Brothers.

4. The meeting of the major Superiors at Castelgandolfo

The work of this session was largely geared on the preparation of the forthcoming General Chapter. For one day, Father Jose-Luis Moral (Salesian) gave his contribution on the theme of “evangelisation through education.”

During this session, several other themes were dealt with, in liaison with the last General Conference that was held at Kisubi, in March 2009. Among these themes, the Superiors took up again those of the initial formation, the ongoing formation, the Mennaisian Family, the missionary engagement and the solidarity.

This was the third and last meeting of the Council and the major Superiors before the next General Chapter 2012.

5. The Mennaisian Family

In all the sectors we notice a positive evolution in the implementation of the Mennaisian Family and a greater engagement, particularly on the part of the Brothers.

A formation guide of the Mennaisian Family was sent to all the major Superiors since some months. All the Provinces and Vice-provinces have not yet taken time to study it in view of its progressive implementation. It is an important work for the years to come.

6. The General Chapter 2012

The major Superiors gave their consent to certain aspects touching the organisation of the forthcoming General Chapter. The **Circular Letter announcing the Chapter 2012** and the implementation of the elections for the delegates should reach the Communities at the beginning of April. The launching of the preparation for the Chapter will be on Palm Sunday, 17 April 2011.

The preparatory Commission finalised **the steps for the preparation of the General Chapter**: it will consist of 2 stages distributed through the year 2011. The elements of work for the 1st stage will reach the Communities during the month of April.

7. The mission of Indonesia

On 15 March 2011, **Brother Javier Fernández**, of the Province of the Immaculate Conception (Argentina and Uruguay) left for Indonesia, thus going to strengthen the Communities of the mission. A ceremony of sending him as a missionary took place in the Chapel of the Generalate in the presence of the Brother Superior General and his Council, the Brother Provincial Superior of Argentina-Uruguay, the Brothers of the Community of Casa and many Brothers of the session major Superiors and of the Commission of the Ongoing Formation.

The General Council is very grateful to the Province for this generous gift. Like the widow in the Temple of Jerusalem, we give thanks for this important gesture and we pray the Lord to make him fruitful in the seeds of life for the Province of Argentina-Uruguay and the Mission of Indonesia.

8. Information and communication

The international Council of information held their meeting from 10 to 13 March in the House of Jean de la Mennais in Paris where they were accorded a warm welcome. Brothers Francis Kiggundu, James Hayes, Marcel Lafrance and Mr. Alfonso Blázquez and Mr. Michel Tanguy were present. Brothers Philippe Blot and Guillermo Dávila were absent with apologies.

The Council of information recognised the positive impetus developed in the domain of information and communication. This impetus is confirmed by many elements: The influence of the media tools of the Congregation: *La Mennais Magazine*, the new version of the Internet site

www.lamennais.org, the realisations on the occasion of the 150th anniversary : publications, posters, images and the success of the *Operation-Video* proposed by Jean de la Mennais Province (Canada) “*Tell me what you like in your School*” of 9 videos, by 8 Schools (5 in Spain, 2 in England, 1 in Japan, and 1 in Canada).

From the disposition of mind previously defined « the communication for living the communion », the Council of information worked on the orientation received from the General Council to « show by means of texts and images the seeds that are sprouting today in the Congregation and the Mennaisian Family».

At the end of the meeting, the Council of information made proposals to the General Council, notably in the perspective of the General Chapter on the different ways of utilising the media (before, during **and after**), but also on the developmental projects of long duration. That concerns particularly *La Mennais Magazine*, the evolution of the Website, the symbols of identity of the Congregation and of the Mennaisian Family, the coherence between the different media of the Congregation and the strengthening of the Information Team by the collaboration between several Brothers, and the Lay and young volunteers.

Finally, the Council met **Father Eric POINSOT**, Director of the national service of Vocations and of the Evangelisation of youth in the ambit of the Conference of Bishops of France, **Father PAUL**, Assumptionnist, Treasurer of the *Auberge de jeunesse internationale Adveniat*, opened in Paris in June 2010 and Brother **Hervé ZAMOR**, Provincial of Haiti who presented to him the present situation of the country and the energy at work in Haiti.

Calendar of the members of the General Council

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY

March	Rome
End of March- Beginning of April	France
May	Rome
16 May to 8 June	Rome (session of the General Council)

Brother Miguel Angel MERINO

16 March – end March	Spain
Beginning of April-Midi-April	France
End of April	Spain
16 May- 8 June	Rome (session of the General Council)

Brother Gerard BYARUHANGA

20 March- end of March	Uganda
April	Tanzania-Kenya
16 May- 8 June	Rome (session of the General Council)

Brother Gildas PRIGENT

15 March -29 March	Indonesia
5 April – 6 May	West Africa (Abidjan – Togo)
16 May- 8 June	Rome (session of the General Council)

The next Council meeting will take place in Rome from 16 May to 8 June 2011. It will be followed by a sojourn in Indonesia for the official closing of the Mennaisian Year.