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**The devotion to our Founder:
the relevance of Jean-Marie de la Mennais today**

But Father de la Mennais is no longer among us. First of all because his history ended more than 150 years ago. Secondly, because the territory on which he deployed his activity represents only a small part of the Congregation. Finally, because the present, historical, cultural, social and religious context is very different from that of his own.

But is Father de la Mennais still relevant? Is his work still so important and indispensable for the Church and the world today? And why should the relationship with him remain current and alive today? And then, here, the presence, the spirit, the intentions, the filiation with the Founder have been actualized in a *surprising* and ever new way. This actualization has been concretized in two ways: first, by reliving his own spirit and walking in his footsteps. Then, by concretely establishing a personal relationship with the Father, at different times and places.

To illustrate this actualization, we can take as an example the Mennaisian spirit which presided over the foundation of the Mennaisian undertaking in Canada, from 1886 onwards, especially in the first years of the "mission".

We compare this story with the foundation of Jean-Marie's undertaking.

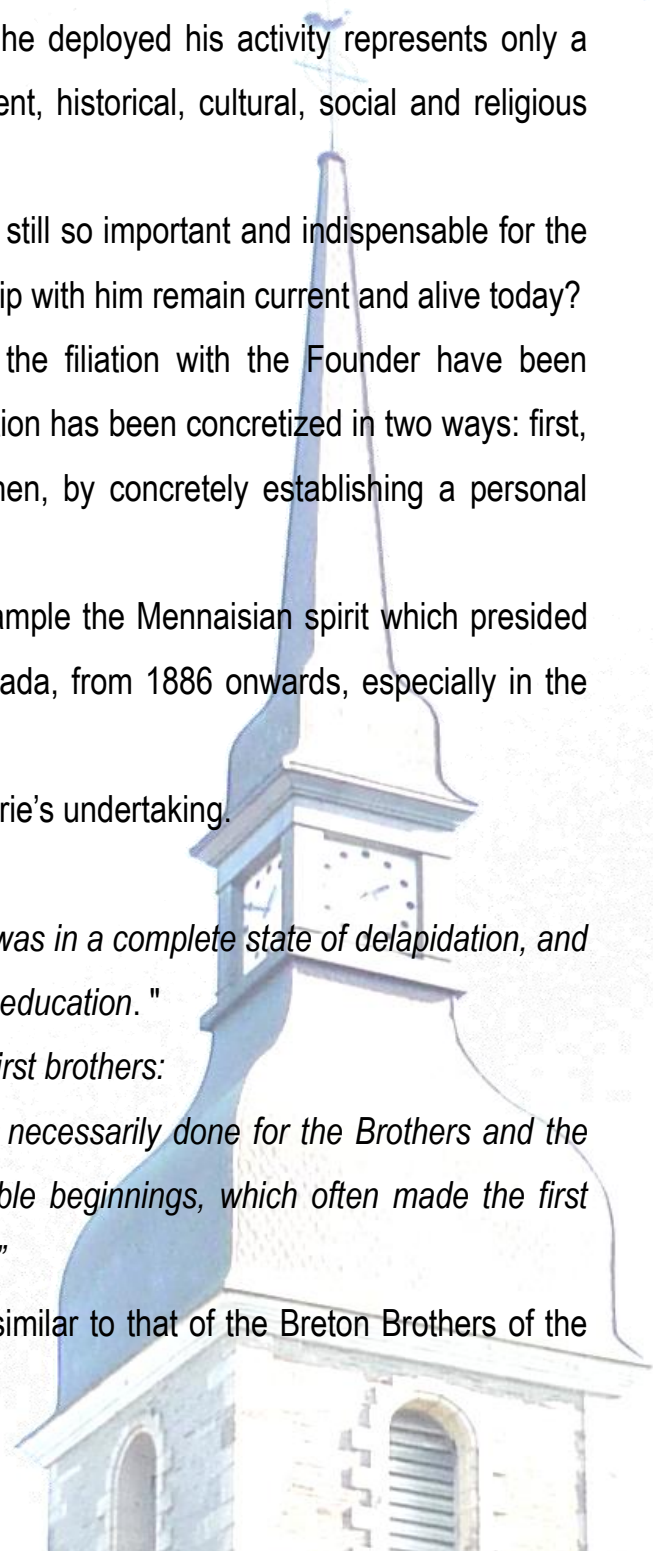
The same field of action:

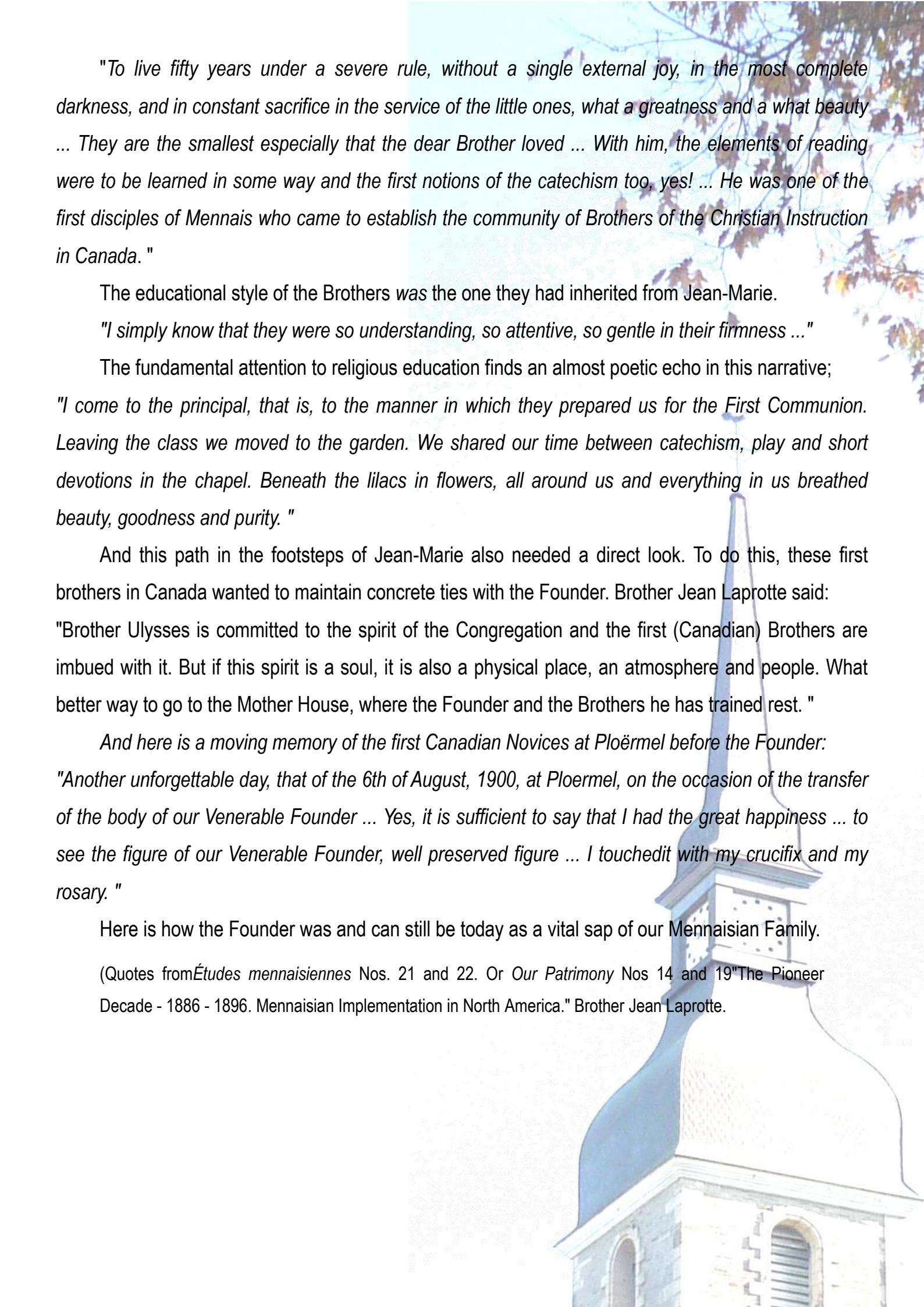
"There was much to be done at Chambly. The house was in a complete state of delapidation, and children, accustomed to vagrancy, indiscipline were lacking education."

The same beginnings in poverty and sacrifice for the first brothers:

"Considering the poverty of the mission, all this work was necessarily done for the Brothers and the young men... Our congregation in Canada had very humble beginnings, which often made the first Brothers feel the severe embrace of great religious poverty."

The Brothers lived an enthusiasm and a generosity similar to that of the Breton Brothers of the first schools. This is what was said of Brother Ange Davy:





"To live fifty years under a severe rule, without a single external joy, in the most complete darkness, and in constant sacrifice in the service of the little ones, what a greatness and a what beauty ... They are the smallest especially that the dear Brother loved ... With him, the elements of reading were to be learned in some way and the first notions of the catechism too, yes! ... He was one of the first disciples of Mennais who came to establish the community of Brothers of the Christian Instruction in Canada. "

The educational style of the Brothers was the one they had inherited from Jean-Marie.

"I simply know that they were so understanding, so attentive, so gentle in their firmness ..."

The fundamental attention to religious education finds an almost poetic echo in this narrative; *"I come to the principal, that is, to the manner in which they prepared us for the First Communion. Leaving the class we moved to the garden. We shared our time between catechism, play and short devotions in the chapel. Beneath the lilacs in flowers, all around us and everything in us breathed beauty, goodness and purity. "*

And this path in the footsteps of Jean-Marie also needed a direct look. To do this, these first brothers in Canada wanted to maintain concrete ties with the Founder. Brother Jean Laprotte said: *"Brother Ulysses is committed to the spirit of the Congregation and the first (Canadian) Brothers are imbued with it. But if this spirit is a soul, it is also a physical place, an atmosphere and people. What better way to go to the Mother House, where the Founder and the Brothers he has trained rest. "*

And here is a moving memory of the first Canadian Novices at Ploërmel before the Founder: "Another unforgettable day, that of the 6th of August, 1900, at Ploermel, on the occasion of the transfer of the body of our Venerable Founder ... Yes, it is sufficient to say that I had the great happiness ... to see the figure of our Venerable Founder, well preserved figure ... I touched it with my crucifix and my rosary. "

Here is how the Founder was and can still be today as a vital sap of our Mennaisian Family.

(Quotes from *Études mennaisiennes* Nos. 21 and 22. Or *Our Patrimony* Nos 14 and 19 "The Pioneer Decade - 1886 - 1896. Mennaisian Implementation in North America." Brother Jean Laprotte.