



# MENNAISIAN MONTHLY NOVENA

**FEBRUARY 2023**

## **1 – NEWS OF THE POSTULATION**

- For the moment the cause of the Father is awaiting further developments. The Postulation has begun to reflect on a possible exploration of the lives of certain Brothers, who have kept a “Reputation of holiness” in their region, notably **Br. Zoel (Aurélien Hamon)** of Plouvorn, Finistère, France and of **Br. Arthur Greffier**.

**The list of MENNAISIAN BROTHER ANIMATORS is nearly complete.**

UGANDA: Joseph TINKASIMIRE  
BENIN: Nicolas LE MILLEUR  
COTE D'IVOIRE: Joseph BELLANGER  
SENEGAL: Steve Paul KENY  
TOGO: Augustin BOUDAN  
CONGO DRC: Clément ABELI  
RWANDA: Pierre-Célestin NIYONSENGA  
URUGUAY: Guillermo DAVILA  
BOLIVIA: Casimiro MERIEL  
CHILE: Felix CORADA  
ARGENTINA: Ricardo MORZAN  
HAITI: Charles COUTARD  
FRANCE: Michel BOUVAIS  
SPAIN: Raul BLANCO  
ITALY: Dino DE CAROLIS

***A few Mennaisian Animators are still missing.***

**The FUNCTIONS of ANIMATORS are as follows:**

- Receive the Novena from the Postulator and adapt it according to local needs: adding the intentions coming from their own region/pointing out the local favors obtained/summarizing or adapting the other headings: devotion to the Founder - Mennaisian Witness (you can add or replace with local witnesses).
- Disseminate the Novena by the most accessible means.
- Organize a “MENNAISIAN SHRINE” with resources such as: prayers, relics, pictures, books, albums, audio-visual presentations, prayer notebooks for intentions and messages of thanks.
- Lead times of prayer: monthly novena, specific novena for a particular intention.
- Liaise with the Postulator to obtain resources, to identify important intentions and favors, to present new initiatives to be made known to the whole Congregation, to resolve any questions that may arise.

## 2- INTENTIONS RECOMMENDED TO FATHER DE LA MENNAIS

We have several favors to ask of the Father:

- **BR. JEAN-PAUL PEUZÉ, ASSISTANT GENERAL.** He returned from his mission in Africa (Uganda, Congo, Rwanda) very tired due to work, travel and other difficulties. He contracted a very serious form of malaria, which caused a severe general infection. He was immediately admitted to hospital in Nantes and put into an induced coma. Let us pray for his recovery and that there are no serious after-effects. Fr. Michel Bouvais has given him a relic-image and Novenas are being said for his healing.
- **GIUSEPPE, 12-YEAR-OLD CHILD.** He has had leukemia for several years. Every two or three months he is treated at the children's hospital in Rome, with blood transfusions and spinal cord transplants. His little sister was a pupil at Sant'Ivo and the whole family have entrusted themselves to Father de la Mennais.
- **OTHER SICK PERSONS ENTRUSTED TO OUR PRAYERS:**
  - JULIETA PERALTA (Argentina) sick with cancer. The Mennaisian family continues to pray for her.
  - MYRIAM DE COURREGÉ (FRANCE): she continues her fight against cancer, supported by her great faith and the prayers of the Mennaisian family, especially in those Rennes.
  - MASSIMO MENSURATI: his recovery after a stroke progresses slowly. His whole family is very devoted to the Founder and joins in the novena.
  - A message: *"I wish to recommend to the novena of Father de la Mennais **JEAN GUNEU**, an 11-year-old autistic child from La Prairie"* Br. Henri Hébert

## 3 - FAVORS OBTAINED BY THE INTERCESSION OF THE FOUNDER

- The healing of two children from Ploërmel.
- The day after the death of the Founder, a three-year-old child from Ploërmel, Léon Stubert, fell seriously ill. His doctor, Dr. Pringué declared him dead at 9 o'clock in the evening. The parents had a sudden inspiration: that they run to the Brothers' house. The Brother on the door hesitated to open it for them, then, at their insistence, eventually invited them to come inside. They went straight to the Brothers' cemetery and knelt on the tomb of the Founder to beg him to intercede for the healing of their child. Coming home, they saw little Leon sitting on his bed asking for food: "I want chocolate!" The healing was instantaneous and radical, to the immense joy of the parents.
- A long time later, Léon's sister, Mme Boury saw her own son Augustin on the verge of death due to a sudden and violent bout of meningitis. Medical science proved powerless when faced with this illness. His parents were being prepared to resign themselves to the sacrifice of their son. Suddenly, the mother remembered the healing of her little brother. She ran to the chapel of the Mother House and went to the tomb of the Founder to pray at length for her child. When she got home, she saw her child lying on his bed, drinking, his face completely rested, the symptoms

having completely disappeared. The doctor, astonished to see the child still alive, did not believe in the evidence of a cure and continued to prescribe medication, which they were careful not to administer to the child.

## 4- THE HISTORY OF THE DEVOTION TO FR. DE LA MENNAIS

### **Chapter 3 – THE GENERAL COUNCIL DECIDES TO CREATE A “FOUNDER’S DAY ” (24<sup>th</sup> March 1927)**

In 1927, Brothers’ Congregation was still suffering the consequences of the secularization of France in 1903. The Brothers lived a near clandestine life and opening new schools was fraught with difficulty. The Superiors and the young Brothers in formation had to go to Jersey, outside of France. Slowly the new missions that developed elsewhere gave a more international face to the Institute and enabled new growth: the rapid development of the Canadian branch, the potential for growth in Spain, the vitality of Haiti, the new missionary adventure in Africa, the presence near the Vatican of a Mennaisian community...

In this context of renewal, it was necessary to reunite the Congregation around its natural center point, i.e. its principal Founder, Jean-Marie de la Mennais, especially at a time when the Brothers were dispersed over several continents. His memory, no longer linked to people and to the places of origin, risked becoming ever weaker and more distant. The Cause had by now been introduced in Rome, and had gone through several stages, there had also been a new exhumation of his remains and the Summarium on his heroic Virtues was being prepared.

The General Council found a way to reunite the Congregation and give it a new Mennaisian impetus by instituting a “Founder’s Day” or “Day of the Father”. This decision was taken by the General Council, chaired by the Reverend Br. Jean-Joseph, on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1927. It would be a day totally dedicated to the Founder: a day of remembrance, of prayer, of unity. It would give a great impetus to each individual’s devotion to the Father.

It would be a day for increasing knowledge of him: *“It is fitting that all our students know the life of this Servant of God to whom they owe their teachers. It is right that they take an interest in his cause for Beatification, since they must recognize in him a benefactor. Therefore, we must talk to them of our Venerable Father.”*

It would be a day of Prayer: *“It is desirable that this day be prepared by a Novena, or at least a Triduum. Every day we will recite the prayer to obtain the Beatification and if possible, we will collect a spiritual bouquet of prayers and sacrifices that the students would like to share on this occasion, which will be sent to the Superior General.”*

It would be a day of meditation: *“Each day we will also choose a thought of the Venerable Father for the Morning Reflection. During this period, we will aim to share some interesting anecdotes of his life. We could even choose him as the subject of a writing exercise or use in a dictation exercise some passages on his life by one of his historians”.* On the day of the feast there would be a special celebration: *“The students will be invited to attend Holy Mass and, if possible, to pray together for the Cause of Beatification. On that day we would address them on the life of the Venerable Founder and the Congregation he founded for the Christian education of children and young people. It is quite natural that the image of the Venerable Founder should be shown to the children.”*

Finally, it would also be a day of prayer for Vocations: *“A good way to encourage new vocations is to make known the Institute and its Founder.”*

Founder's Day was initially set for October 26<sup>th</sup>, but several Head Teachers pointed out that the date was too close to the start of the school year and that they would therefore be unable to properly prepare for the day. Thus, the Superior General Br. Jean-Joseph in the Chronicle of September 1932 fixed the definitive date as November 26<sup>th</sup>.

The institution of Founder's Day has borne much fruit. It has helped to make known the holiness and the charism of the Founder, made the fervor and spiritual life grow in many students, Brothers and Daughters of Providence, has given many vocations to the Congregation and brought the fire of mission to young people and children.

SOURCES: Menologe p. 356; Circular of Br. Jean-Joseph May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1927; La Chronique, Sept. 1932.

## **5 – MENNAISIAN WITNESS: Br. François Cardinal (1942-1992): confessor of the faith et martyr for the people.**

Brother François Cardinal was born on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942 in Saint-Benoît, Quebec, into a large, united and deeply Christian family of farmers. His origins gave him a solid foundation for his future work improving the lives of the poor in Africa. He entered the Novitiate of Oka at the age of 19, at a time when the Canadian Province was in full development. He then began teaching with great enthusiasm in Mascouche, but after four years, the Superiors suggested that he go to work in a mission in Rwanda. These were difficult years of protest and revolt, but the Canadian Brothers responded to this crisis by opening a new series of missions in Africa, specifically in Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. At the age of 27, Br. François began his African apostolate in the college of Giseny (Rwanda) : *"He loves his students very*



*much and the students adore their devoted teacher".* He did not stay there long, being chosen to take care of young delinquents in the center of Mayange. He made use of agriculture, small-scale animal breeding and sport in an effort to help them, But, above all, he conquered them *"with his smile, his patience, his ability to listen and his kindness".*

In 1981 he was called upon to replace the White Fathers in the management of the Rural Training Center for Young People (CFRJ) in Butamwa. This center welcomed for a two-month internship poor young people who did not have the means to go to secondary school. These students were sent by their priests and lived in a boarding school. Br. François put his talents as a farmer and breeder of large and small livestock to good use. Together with his colleague Brothers (Br. Paul Latraverse and native Rwandan Brothers) he organized theoretical courses and practical work in the fields. He gained extensive agricultural knowledge, through following correspondence courses run by INADES and through the UNESCO magazine. He also organized moments of recreation for the Brothers, the grounds being equipped for different sports.

But as Brother Director he was also concerned about the human and spiritual formation of the trainees. During these years in the countries of Central Africa there were violent ethnic and political tensions, which would eventually lead to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, despite the warnings given by

the Virgin Mary at Kibeho. Br. François organized courses and training in self-esteem, in respect for people and property, in justice, in the welcoming of differences. He invited those who were Christians to follow the way of the Gospel and its example of fraternal life. The Rural formation Center (CFRJ) grew in reputation in the area and the rural communities of the surrounding area found in it a great support. Through the actions of the Center they were able to purchase, at little cost to themselves, small and large livestock and also seeds, sell their own produce and install a supply of drinking water. They had so much confidence in the Center, and in particular in Br. François, that they entrusted their money to him for safe keeping. Over time, a small bank was born. The Center became a point of reference and hope, a source of human and social advancement. At its height, more than a hundred local farmers from the area worked there. *"For the Center and all the farmers of Butamwa, Br. François was a great leader who had won the trust of all, because against all odds he had succeeded in defending the respect and dignity of the farmers, without any distinction made between them."* Where did this strength come from? He had a discreet but intense spiritual life, from which all his zeal was born, to the point of giving his own life. Someone who saw him pray testified: *"It was enough to look at him in the Chapel: upright in his seat, his eyes riveted on the tabernacle for long moments, conversing with Him from whom he expected the strength necessary to undertake a new day..."*

The life of Br. François was a gift to others each day, his death the ultimate gift. He was aware of the climate of violence, disorder and hatred that was rising in the country. But he remained in his place, like the good shepherd who does not flee but stays to defend his sheep. *"On Sunday, November 29, 1992, in the evening, bandits (5 or 6), some of whom were in military uniform, killed Brother François in a cowardly act while he was working in his office before going to speak to the trainees, as he was accustomed to do."* He was going to carry the word of Gospel charity and he ended up bearing it through the testimony of his blood. His colleague Br. Paul Latraverse concludes: *"As for me, I would gladly write down in our religious calendar, on November 29: 'Brother François Cardinal, confessor of the faith and martyr for justice'."*

SOURCES: L'Entraide fraternelle 1993/ Testimonies of Fr Paul Latraverse and Br. Gérard Parisien.