



DECEMBER 2017 BULLETIN

The devotion to the Founder - a living heritage

"Providence would guide the events. These words reveal the magnificent spirit of the Daughters of Providence, a spirit of deep faith and total abandon to Providence. This made it evident that the spiritual heritage of Father de la Mennais and the spirit of the Founding Sisters had been faithfully preserved and still influenced the decisions to be taken".

This word "HERITAGE" is of a fundamental importance for the understanding of what the devotion to the Founder is all about. A word that has the flavor of Scripture: "You have not received a spirit of slaves, but of sons. And if you are sons, you are also heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ". At our modest level of the Congregation, we too are heirs. The inheritance is a gift that the Father transmits to his sons: the gift of continuity of life, of a rich accumulated wealth, and which helps us to grow.

We inherit a path drawn for us, drawn with discernment. We receive a treasure of holiness, fashioned by the Father and by a multitude of Brothers and Sisters who have preceded us. We inherit stories, experiences, sacrifices, joys and adventures that make up the history of our family. We inherit, in our congregation, the Spirit, the Heart, and the Holiness of our Founder that we revive every day, even if we do not realize it. The missionary spirit of Jean-Marie is still much alive today as evidenced by many examples given by the Daughters of Providence in Western Canada.

"If, as you believe, our presence in Canada is for the good of the souls and the glory of God, Divine Providence will lead us there one day; we are in the hands of God to work in his vineyard in the place and in the way he will make us known."

How can we not see in this reflection the abandonment to the Father's Providence? ²² part of this inheritance. Mennaisian congregations are also a fruit of the heart of Father de la Mennais come to maturity, and which helps us to live as Brothers.

It is thus that Brother Cyprian, the Superior of the Brothers, addressed the Sisters:

"May our Father de la Mennais inspire your chapter... I do not abandon the hope of seeing the children of Fr. De la Mennais united in that beautiful and remote mission."

As in the old days of the first missions, the Sisters also gave their 'Mennaisian' answer:

"Each Sister living at the motherhouse cast her vote. His Lordship counted the votes: 101 in favour, 8 against and no abstentions."

A striking feature in the spirit of the Mennaisian Congregations is fraternity and the joy of being together in the same family of Brothers. Our hymn echoes it: *"Animated with love by which we found ourselves amongst our dear Brothers ..."*, a familiarity inherited from Father de la Mennais.

"Sister St Jean Berchmans had come to welcome us, she nearly crushed us in her arms." ... it is there that he saw Sister Saint Philippe wiping her tears with her apron; but those were tears of happiness!"

It is here that the heritage of evangelization in favour of the little ones is also renewed.

"The orphans were simple and obedient, they formed a real family with us; they loved the outings even more than the lessons in religion or Bible history that we gave them in the big hall where they sat on the floor around us."

And always the leitmotif of Providence:

"You see that Good Providence does not forget her Daughters and that it seems to tell us: I provide for all your needs. "

It is significant that the entire mission of Western Canada would end up being called "Little Providence" precisely to maintain the connection with the original Congregation. Because of their diocesan status, they were afraid to detach themselves from their origin and their Mennaisian heritage. That is why they requested for visits from France and the Papal approval of their Constitutions.

In conclusion, the "Daughters of Providence" preserved the heritage of the Founder and drew inspiration and strength from it.

"I was a witness of such a supernatural and humble apostolate of these early labourers, of their living faith and of their contagious piety."

This is the Mennaisian heritage.

Les citations sont prises dans le n° 8 des *Études mennaisiennes : Les Filles de la Providence de Saint-Brieuc dans l'Ouest canadien*. (Dei Soli, Our Patrimony, n° 14)

