

Bulletin of the Postulation

September 2019

The Brothers and the Daughters of Providence.

With the Treaty of Union of 1819 and with the common retreat of 1820, the portrait of a Brother of Christian Instruction begins to take shape. Linked - from the canonical point of view - to the Congregation by the sole vow of obedience, canonically, however, this master lives essentially for a reason of faith. Dressed as a religious teacher, with the crucifix that identifies him well, with the motto God alone that indicates his belonging to God as consecrated, the Brother is now ready for his mission. Although the formation was very brief, the first Brothers faced their mission with an enthusiasm and a spirit of sacrifice which can only be explained by a great spirit of faith. The Founders watched over them, by their visits, letters and retreats expressing their zeal for Jesus and the students, and showing the affection of Jean-Marie and Gabriel towards their Brothers.

Indeed, who could have faced such a tiring mission, often in isolation, sometimes in very difficult and precarious material conditions: schools relegated to attics, stables, or old chapels. The fire of Jesus' love warmed them and gave them an enthusiasm fueled by a simple but intense prayer life, by participating in the liturgy of the parish, by the proximity of the priest who was their 'father'. What motivated them was the passion to educate, to instruct in faith and in various subjects, but always enlightened by faith. They felt themselves fully missionaries and Jean Marie urged them to be the "*angels and apostles*" of "their" children.

"They would apply themselves to the religious instruction of the children and to inspire them with true and solid piety: they would ensure that their pupils regularly receive sacraments and that they would prepare them with zeal: the Brothers would consider this last duty as the first of all and as the main purpose of their mission "(p.45)

Faith, holiness, education, mission, children: these were the words that Father de la Mennais related to each other in an inseparable manner: "*Your work is wonderful; it is holy, because it aims to create Saints, not intellectuals. Your ministry is sublime and divine because you do not only aim at giving these children committed to your care, a knowledge of worldly things, but of making them true disciples of Jesus Christ and heirs of his kingdom and glory. [... ..] Your school is therefore a temple [... ..] Remember that you are charged with making saints of all children entrusted to you, and for that, be holy yourself.*" (pp. 45-46)

It was from there that all the sanctity of these missionary masters came: all their school activities were to be imbued with the Gospel and love, in the image of Jesus. Their way of relating to students would be full of respect and understanding, firmness and gentleness, the seriousness and solidity of the teaching given with rigour and after adequate preparation, the evangelical climate fully respectful of the people of the small or large educational community: everything was an expression of a faith that exalted human values and placed them in the wake of Christian love. "*With children be good, patient and gentle ... you will better correct the faults of these poor children by making yourself to be loved, than to be feared*". (pp 47-48)

The whole society and the people recognized the changes made by the Brothers through their schools: "*The most important object for the inhabitants of this city was to instill in these young hearts a Christian Instruction which would strengthen them in virtue and one day make them peaceful inhabitants and useful citizens: thus the establishment of the Brothers of the Christian Instruction was of a utility generally felt and the conservation of this establishment must be one of the first needs of the city*". (P. Perrin, P.67) ¹

Fr. Dino De Carolis, Postulatore

¹ The quotations come from : "*Les idées pédagogiques de Jean-Marie de la Mennais* », Perrin