

# The October 2017 bulletin

## The devotion to the Founder – Paternity



The name of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, for the Brothers and the Daughters of Providence, has always been “the father”. It was in this familiar relationship of paternity that they lived their vocation: for them, to be a Brother or a Daughter of Providence, was to enter into the family begotten by Fr. De la Mennais especially after Fr. Deshayes had left to go and engage in the new mission that the Church had just entrusted to him. The “Mennaisian Family”, was the Brothers and the Sisters who had embraced the mission, the Charism and the spirituality that their Father had begotten in them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Thus « Father » de la Mennais regarded the Brothers and the Sisters as his children, and this paternity, he often expressed. We shall confine ourselves to a few letters which he wrote to one of his most representative Sons, Bro. Ambroise.

*“Be assured that your Superior is also your father, and if he irritates you he is sorry, even more than you. Think also that when he acts in certain ways he has reasons that you do not know of ...”* (to Bro. Ambroise, the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1831)

*“Whatever happens be sure, my dear son, that you are very dear to me and that I love you with all my heart.”*

(to Bro. Ambroise, the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1831)

*“In this follow, the paternal advice that I give you,”*

(to Bro. Ambroise, the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1838)

In return, Brother Amboise responded to the paternal affection of the father with a filial confidence which went as far as exposing to him his most intimate secrets and sentiments.

*« It is true that your children sometimes have harsh words for you, but where would these children go to unload their distressed hearts full of bitterness, if not to you who are their spiritual father? »*

(to Bro. Ambroise, the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1845)

Bro Gilbert Ollivier concluded his study of Brother Ambroise in a significant way by describing the collaboration of the two at Ploermel.

“Ploermel above all meant the Father, who was the soul of this large house, the man who knew him well, who had guided and loved him in spite of passing epistolary skirmishes. He must now live close to him, work under him help him in his decisions concerning the mission, serve the Brothers of the colonies in a different way. Bro. Ambroise was not the person to be negatively influenced by sentiments: knowing he would not go back to the mission, he resolutely took up his new duties.”

He reminds him “our venerable Father” “the good Father”

This paternity is still valid today. Let us consider Father de la Mennais as our Father, let us entrust ourselves to him, let us have recourse to him and follow him on the way that the Lord, by his intermediary, has indicated in the Church and the world...

Deo Soli, our Patrimony, n° 9, *Brother Ambroise – An Outstanding Religious and Missionary (1795 – 1857)*.

(Études mennaisiennes, n° 12, br. Gilbert Ollivier)