

MENNAISIAN NOVENA FOR FEBRUARY 2019 GOSPEL MISSIONARIES FOR THE CHILDREN

"Inspired by the will to provide the children of the common people, especially those of rural Brittany, with teachers of solid piety..." (Treaty of Union 6-6-1819).

The purpose of the new Congregation was **evangelization through education and instruction**. The recipients were in particular the poorest children and young people of the dioceses of the Founders. This undertaking created a way of life and a project that could be extended to the whole of France and to the entire Church.

Jean Marie took the images illustrating this mission directly from the Gospel. The Brother Teachers were like the "**Guardian Angels**", who continually contemplated the face of the Father whose gaze invited the Brothers to see their students as *children of God*, as their little brothers to whom they could give education, faith, goodness and example and thus be like their elder brothers.

As the Apostles had distributed the "**bread**" multiplied by Jesus, so the Brothers would distribute the **bread of education**, based on the Gospel, to many children and young people hungry for it. They would be able to give the children and young people the meaning, the clarity and the taste that was needed for their existence and future.

With faith, the existential challenges of young people would have taken the right direction, even in the civil and social sphere. *"Thus, in these schools we form the entire person, the heart as well as the spirit... This is the true purpose of all good education and especially the one given by our Brothers in their schools. A remarkable thing that experience reveals every day; our students progress rapidly in human sciences, but even more rapidly in the first of all sciences, the science of human and Christian duty"* (S II, 793-800)

The missionary Brother brought the Gospel of Jesus, but also the civilization animated by faith to many children and young people who would have otherwise lost not only in the religious sphere, but also in their human parable: disarray, violence, drugs, immaturity, neurosis ... The mission of a Brother is the great evangelizing response that goes alongside, completes and often replaces the work of a Parish. *"Your Excellency knows the deplorable state of ignorance and poverty that exists in most of our Breton parishes. You will therefore judge that the only way to overcome this ignorance and disorder is to increase the Christian schools and develop the training of teachers, who are motivated solely by religion to accomplish these difficult tasks. They cost parishes little, but inspire in their pupils' parents a total and highly deserved confidence."* (Letter 958 to the Minister)

Certainly, this difficult, delicate, laborious work required the total gift of self, as a true and proper mandate in distant missions. But the great dream of Jean Marie, who guided his work and for which he spent all his energies, was the joy of bringing the Gospel to the little ones and the poor through the Brothers. *"You will perform miracles in the spiritual order... these infirm children to whom you will restore the health of the soul ... what is it if not to restore the sight of the blind people, to help the crippled who, thanks to your care, continue to walk straight and safely!"* (S VII; 2237)