

# Bulletin June

## 1819 – 2019 : 200 Years

### = 200 pages of Novelty

1819 - 2019: 200 years - two hundred pages of news

2019: A new page! How many have been written during these 200 years, by Jean-Marie and the first Brothers, then by their successors, to reach us? New schools, new countries, new missions, new activities, new modes of training, new types of teaching, new ones ... What's new!

While taking our place in this series of novelties, we also want to make our own contribution. What new things are expected today? Admittedly, we find ourselves at a very special moment, as was the time of the reconstruction that followed the Revolution, the beginning of an increasingly secularised society, as were the terrible periods of wars and their consequences, as was 1968 and its cultural revolution, as is the globalisation of trade, but also that of terrorism

But does our religious life - just like our Congregation - have anything significant to say today? God always calls as he called Father Deshayes and Jean-Marie in their time when there were children without education and without future, doomed to ignorance and submission. *“At this time we have seven classes: three in reading, two in writing, one in knitting and handicraft, and another in sewing. [...] The house we have rented is spacious and comfortable; I have set up a small chapel inside.”* (p. 101)<sup>1</sup>. In Auray, there are many children who need instruction and education, and to know Jesus: this is the answer of Gabriel Deshayes: *« Providence gave me the inspired thought of creating a Congregation of Brothers for the small towns and villages that cannot have Brothers from the Christian schools.»* (p. 108)

In Brittany, the vacuum created by the Revolution is enormous in terms of pastoral care and evangelisation. It destroyed materially and morally all the signs of the Christian faith. And now, on the horizon, there is a school system that aims at removing from education the Christian foundations. On his part, Jean-Marie de la Mennais provides such a modest answer in the ways that his confidence in Providence is immense.

*« I have begun my work in my room in Saint-Brieuc with two young people from Lower Brittany, who barely speak French and who did not know any more than I did about what we were going to do. We knew only that we wanted, with God's help, to set up Christian schools in our rural villages where we feared that, despite us, inferior schools could be set up. Little by little, the mustard seed has grown into a great tree, under which a great many children would take refuge. A Domino factum est istud. (It is the Lord who has accomplished it.»* (p.117)

The courage of our Founders, the first Daughters of Providence, the first Brothers of Christian Instruction challenges us today. What are the calls we are making today, society, people, young people, families, the Church? Our challenge today is to open our ears and our eyes, to change our habits - even if “we have always done like that!” - to wake us up like the disciples of Emmaus. Jesus is alive, Jesus is risen and he is doing all things new, silently and in the shadows, perhaps without us realising it. It is in darkness and silence that the works of God are born.

So let's open our eyes to today's children, often without a real family, without guides, cluttered with lots of things, but poor relationships. Let's look at young people with their energy of which they do not know what to do, except to invest in the virtual world, immediate realisation, with concern for the future. Let's look at families, often isolated and without landmarks. Let's look at today's culture, with its riches, but often without horizon. Let's look at the Church with all her efforts to evangelise young people, work, society, culture, work often difficult, not always with the expected results. It's all this world waiting for us. What can we give Brothers and Sisters as Congregations founded to evangelise the young and the poor? The Holy Spirit who spoke to our Founders speaks to us today too. **Let's listen to him.**

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from J. F. Olabarrieta: “*Jean-Marie de la Mennais Pathfinder*”