

NOVENA: APRIL 2017



Jean-Marie: The brother of pupils.

Introduction

Most of Jean-Marie de la Mennais' correspondence concerns practical issues: the founding and direction of schools, the financial participation of the State in educational works and the training of teachers, administrative problems and various authorisations ... This kind of writings, which at first sight are not spiritual, show, on the contrary, the passion of our Founder's apostolate, his faith in the work of evangelisation by a Christian school, a central place to allow Children and young people to meet Jesus. The objective was religious and apostolic, and no obstacle could prevent the realisation of those undertakings which Jean-Marie had had the inspiration to found and develop.

In all these writings of struggle and passion, of legal reasoning, or of common sense, he had tried all the possibilities given by the law to allow the development of schools instituted with the object of making Jesus and his Gospel known and loved.

Tuesday 18th April 2017

Schools are made for children and young people. For Jean-Marie, the whole school organisation had to be practical and oriented towards the good of the pupils and their families.

Finally, when I established boarding schools, it was not only with authorisation, but also at the request of the university which recognised how such schools were useful: for example there are places, in the countryside, where it would be impossible without such schools, to return home for dinner because the children would absolutely be unable, on account of long distances; in towns, in other respects, it is even more necessary to keep children all day long, and this is also what a large number of families request.

Letter 1450 - To the Rector of the Academy of Rennes, 10th February 1831.

Jean-Marie, help us to seek, in all our educational organisations, the true well-being of young people.

Wednesday 19th April 2017

The teaching system had to be very flexible, oriented towards the total and harmonious growth of the pupils, according to the various circumstances.

Finally, our system of education is not absolute, in a sense that we are able to give all kinds of lessons and in all forms, individual, simultaneous and mutual according to the needs of the localities.

We therefore take into consideration the age and needs of each student: they are more or less delayed or promoted according to the circumstances and desires of their parents.

Memorial on Primary Education, 22 March 1830 (GC II, p.501)

Give us, Lord, to keep in our hearts those of our students who are in need, to recognise them and to respond as best as possible to their needs.

Thursday 20th April 2017

Such was the heart of Jean-Marie: to feel as a 'father' of all the children of his schools and never to abandon any of them.

In conclusion, I shall observe that it seems impossible, the way things are, to substitute our school with a new primary school on the 1st of next September: but do not be worried about this, Your worship the Mayor, I will never abandon the little children of whom Providence has made me, as it were, the father.

Letter of 1776 - To the Mayor of Ploërmel, July 10, 1831

Help us, Lord, to have a father's heart in our contacts with our students.

Friday 21st April 2017

Jean-Marie was seeking all the means to finance his school undertakings. But if it were necessary, he would not hesitate to open free schools, counting on Providence, and with an assurance that a school was wanted by God to evangelise children and young people.

I have the honor to submit to you my commitment to support, for five years and at my own expense, the free primary school of Hillion

To the Prefect of Côtes du Nord, November 5, 1831

Lord, help us to have the same courage and faith in Providence like Father Jean-Marie our Founder.

Saturday 22nd April 2017

To found a school, Jean-Marie was never afraid of struggles. He took every possible means, while respecting the law, to defend the rights of children, especially the poorest.

Let the Mayor of Hillion choose a teacher who will be employed by the municipality, nothing better; but may he not pretend to oppose the free instruction that we will be giving to the children who will be entrusted to us by their parents, since the current legislation gives us the right to do so, and since the proposed law to the chambers is even more favorable to us.

Letter 1504 - to the Rector of the Academy, November 15, 1831

Lord, give us the courage and ardour that Jean-Marie had for God's work which is our Christian schools.

Sunday 23rd April 2017

The preferential option for the poor was not only a slogan for Jean-Marie, but a passion that was always in his heart.

The school thus assumed consistency, and far from diminishing, it increased in numbers every day, three hundred and thirty, or three hundred and forty children of whom at least two hundred were poor but who received, from this school, an excellent education in all respects, I dare say so, and all the families applauded their progress.

Memoir on the suspension of the FIC schools at Vitré, September 2, 1832, CG II, p. 577

Help us Lord to have a heart full of passion for the poor like Jean Marie.

Monday 24th April 2017

Jean-Marie's goal was to found schools where children and young people could receive a fully and integral Christian education, even if opposition was not lacking.

It is now clear that all the accusations concerning the details referred referred to above were merely pretexts, and finally, the only cause of so many harassments, which I refrain from qualifying, is that these Gentlemen would like that the people receive a less religious education.

Memoir on the suspension of the FIC schools at Vitré, September 2, 1832,

Lord, help us to make our schools Christian educational places and communities, as Jean-Marie dreamed.

Tuesday 25th April 2017

To realise a school according to Jean-Marie's plan, apostles were needed according to his heart. Here is what a school could be like in the early days of the Congregation.

For almost five years a school held by the Brothers of Christian Instruction had been established in your town which had formerly been so little favored in this respect; there our children received a solid instruction; they were watched over almost all the day with a religious solicitude, and directed with the gentleness, kindness, patience, and zeal which characterised these estimable teachers. The children of the poor, so numerous at Vitre, were the object of the same care as the children of the rich.

Letter 1581 - Petition to the Minister, October 1832; CG II, p. 589

Lord, to us who are the disciples of Jean-Marie, grant that every day we help our schools to little by little conform to what you expect.

Wednesday 26th April 2017

The word of God (Mt. 5: 18 – 19)

In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappears, not one dot, nor one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved.

Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.

The Church's word

The Institutes of Brothers whose mission is associated with social promotion and defending human rights in the various fields of marginalization, of human frailty or development of the person, offer prophetic signs of a Kingdom which seeks the integral salvation of every human being. Their insertion in these tasks and environments is preferably communitarian. They thus bear witness as a fraternal community whose cohesion is based on the One who has called and sent them. Even when, by age or other circumstances, the Brothers cannot engage in professional activities, the presence of the consecrated community in this context is a sign that shows the way and points to a horizon which gives meaning.

Identity and mission of the Religious-Brother in the Church, n° 31

Jean-Marie de la Mennais' word

Jean-Marie's heart vibrated for Jesus and for the children. He had so many dreams and plans. He did not succeed in realising all of them. It is to us to continue his work.

I founded a large number of primary schools in Brittany, in which nearly 180,000 children learned to read and write and calculate: now I occupy myself with establishing an institution in which I would collect a number of Vagabond or children abandoned by their parents, or ex convict for slight mistakes; My intention is to give them a state, so that when they will have return to the society they will be able to live by the product of the labor.

Letter 1599 to the Minister of Commerce and Public Works; Nov. 1832

Lord, help us to continue the work begun with enthusiasm and realism by our Father Jean-Marie.

**Prayer for the beatification
and canonization
of John Mary de la Mennais**

Choose a suitable song for each day.

We pray for the sick, the needy, and the following intentions
(they can be said aloud).

Prayer for the beatification and canonisation
of Jean-Marie de la Mennais

God our Father, you gave Jean-Marie de la Mennais,
a generous heart and an unwavering zeal
to make known and loved your Son Jesus
and his Gospel.

Grant us to follow his example.

Give us to build united and fraternal Communities.

Help us to proclaim your Gospel
to the youth of today.

For the glory of your Name, grant that the holiness of Jean-
Marie de la Mennais
may soon be recognised
and proclaimed by the Church.

Deign to grant us, O Lord, through his intercession,
the healing of the persons recommended...

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**O Lord Jesus, glorify your servant,
Venerable Jean-Marie de la Mennais!**

