



We are and we call ourselves "Brothers", or, in the Congregation of the Daughters of Providence "Sisters". We are our first family. Of course, we were not founded to care for each other first, but to care for the children and young people, and bring them the bread of Jesus.

But this is really what unites us: being together in the mission as one body and one family. And it is by this closeness that we are a family.

That is why Jean-Marie insisted very much on unity, on having only one heart and one soul, on bearing the burdens of each other, on reciprocal forgiveness, and on attention to Brothers. We are a family for the mission; Each according to his own capabilities.

Saturday 18, March 2017

Unity does not mean uniformity. Each has its own gifts and differences. Putting these personal peculiarities in common is the difficulty, but also the strength of being Brothers for the mission.

Wanting to form a union of men who have the same inclinations, the same tastes, the same talents, and whose thoughts are always and in all things perfectly in accord, would be an absurd project. It would be equally absurd pretending to form an army of soldiers having the same height, the same features, and the same temperament. If each one has certain qualities, or an aptitude of acquiring them that would be sufficient to gain admission into a body of this nature. Each party being subject to the common laws, all the differences disappear and do not prevent at all the harmony of the whole.

Retreat of the Congregation of S. Méen (Anthology, p. 173)

Help us, Lord, to know how to put our differences together as a multicoloured mosaic.

Sunday 19 march 2017

We often use the words "charity, fraternal union, communion, fraternity. Here is the meaning given to them by our Founder:

When I speak of charity I do not mean only the love of

God and the neighbour in general. I mean that we must be so united that there reigns among us such perfect agreement that we can truly apply to us this word of St Paul in all its depth: cor unum et anima una. I mean that each one tolerates the infirmities of his brothers, be they of body or mind, with a patience that nothing can alter. Infirmities sive corporum sive animarum patientissime tolerant. I mean that, when one of us suffers, we suffer with him. I mean that each one wills the happiness of the other as his very own. I mean that when one of us needs help or consolation in his tasks, the promptitude and the joy with which we shall render him service evidently mark the depth of tenderness that we have one for another. And finally, I mean that each one be indulgent to the other, and never be irritated or indignant except against ourselves.

End of the Retreat of the Society of S. Méen (Anthology pp. 172)

Give us, Lord, your charity. Give us your Spirit to fill our weakness with the love that comes from you.

Monday 20 march 2017

In his great wisdom Jean-Marie envisages a fraternal union in a very realistic way, in which difficulties of character can be manifested at any moment. Communion then is made of mutual support, putting us all under the same dispositions to forgive and be forgiven.

One body and one soul

The spirit of the Congregation must be a spirit of charity and of union. It will happen, no doubt, that among us there will be some, and me the first one, who will be in need of indulgence. Well then! We shall bear in a spirit of charity one another's burden. Alter alterius onera, etc. Far from being irritated by the defects of our confreres, as it happens too often, we shall think of humbling ourselves for ours, and we shall have, if I may say so, for our spiritual ills, the most attentive and the tenderest care. It would be absurd to expect that in a big gathering of people there would not be any sick ones. It would not be less absurd to suppose that in a Congregation, there would not be any troublesome characters, whatever precautions we may take in the choice of the subjects we receive. Moreover, the characters sometimes change with the positions and with the years. And who among us can affirm that his present dispositions will be invariable? Thus, we are perhaps speaking of and for ourselves at this moment.

On the Spirit of the Congregation of S. Méen (S. VIII, 2403-04 - Anthology p. 172)

Help us, Lord, to accept every member of the community as he is, and grant that we strive to extenuate defects and enhance qualities.

Tuesday 21 march 2017

Here is the hymn to Mennaisian charity. Our Founder prays to the Lord to give us charity and that in the family of his sons, Charity might be the vital sap that always renders it more alive in the Church and in the world.

Following the example of St John the Apostle, I will tell you unceasingly, their response will be full of indulgence and mercy for one if we willed it! That is, if we had the spirit of faith and if we considered those very ones who are, in our opinion, the most unjust as the instruments which God uses to teach us how to serve him without having any recourse to human interest! May they be blessed! And may God grant them all the good they do to us! Let us then be on our guard never to utter a bitter word against them. On all occasions, let us show them that we do not have any other feelings for them except those that are inspired by charity and Christian gratitude.

On the Spirit of the Congregation of S. Méen (S. VIII, 2403-04 - Anthology p. 173)

End of the Retreat of the Society of S. Méen (Anthology pp. 172)

Grant us, Lord, to taste the joy of being together as Brothers. We thank you for every Brother that you have put beside us.

Jesus, give us the strength to forgive, to forget the wrongs and to always begin over.

Wednesday 22 march 2017

Again, with realism, Jean-Marie refers us to the experience of fraternal charity, made up of a thousand and one considerations of delicacy, efforts to support others and self-control; In this way we will be able to repeat, as our Founder repeated to us: how good and happy it is to live together as Brothers.

This is more necessary as we are habitually together and always so near one another. The smallest frictions of character, if I may say so, repeating themselves at every hour, soon cause heartbreaks. It is necessary then that the oil of charity softens them, and heals these little wounds, apparently so light, but very dangerous in reality, and which soon make matters worse. Yes, my children, let us love one another as brothers, "in visceribus Christi", following the Apostle's advice that nothing could ever change our peace, our union. This holy union will not be broken by death; it will be eternal as God himself.

On the Spirit of the Congregation of S. Méen (S. VIII, 2403-04 - Anthology p. 173)

**Jesus, be our teacher of brotherhood.
Help us to live in patience
and joy with each other.**

Thursday 23 march 2017

Sometimes, even in a community, there may be offenses and injustices. Jean-Marie exhorts us, even if it may require sacrifices, namely to use the evil received as a good

occasion for us, as a gift to purify us and make us grow in charity.

But if we love only those who love us, what merit shall we have? The pagans do the same. For our charity to resemble that of Jesus Christ, it must be extended to our enemies, since we have the joy of having some. Oh! How --

Friday 24 march 2017

Good mutual help is the best example we can receive from each other. This reciprocal help can encourage us in difficult times, exhort us before the temptation of lukewarmness and give us the nostalgia for holiness

Well then, I am confident, we shall always have near us also, if not such perfect models, at least more perfect men than ourselves whose behaviour will be a lively and continual preaching. In times of trial, when we shall feel our strength failing, we shall cast a glance at them and, like St Augustine, we shall tell ourselves: why don't I do what so many others have done not only before but also in front of me? Don't I have the same help and the same graces? Oh! My soul, take courage, it is not without a special plan of mercy that God has placed such examples before your very eyes; take courage, and imitate them.

Retreat of the Society of St.-Méen, (S VIII, 2408-09 – Anthology, p. 171)

Thank you, Jesus, for the examples of our Brothers, grant that we may not be a cause of scandal, but of fraternal edification.

Saturday 25, March 2017

The congregation and the Mennaisian Family are like one body. Like Saint Paul, our founder exhorts us to live together and take care of one another as members of the same body.

The spirit of charity must reign among us, and we should have a holy eagerness to lighten the burden of the

poor, particularly our own. I mean those who, being members of our Congregation who would need some help in their infirmities or illnesses. The honour of the Congregation to which you belong does not allow you, in some way, to leave to others the duty of helping them for they are ours. Their afflictions are our afflictions; their sufferings, our sufferings; and their needs, our needs. Like Saint Paul, we should be able to say: "Which one among you suffers without my suffering with him?"

To the Congregation of the Demoiselles of S. Briec (Anthology p. 168)

Jesus you are our head, grant that we behave like members of the same body.

Sunday 26, March 2017

The Word of God (1 Co 12, 31 – 13, 7)

Set your mind on the higher gifts. And now I am going to put before you the best way of all.

Though I command languages both human and angelic-if I speak without love, I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains- if I am without love, I am nothing. Though I should give away to the poor all the I possess, and even give up my body to be burned- if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances, love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

The Church's word

The name "Brothers" positively designates what these Religious assume as a fundamental mission in their lives: "These Religious are called to be brothers of Christ, deeply united with Him, *"the firstborn among many brothers"* (Rom. 8:29); brothers to one another in mutual love and working together in the Church in the same service of what is good; brothers to everyone in their witness to Christ's love for all, especially the lowliest, the neediest; brothers for a greater brotherhood in the Church"

Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church, n° 11

Father Jean Marie de la Mennais's Word:

Yes, my children, I love you in Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ. I am thirsty, if I may say so, for your happiness and for your salvation. You and I make but one body; we have but the same interests, the same desires and the same goal.

We want to go to heaven, by obtaining the glory of God, according to the measure of our means and of our strength. Oh! Let us unite ourselves more and more in this thought. Let us try, my dear children, to help one another to become saints, and for that, let each one give to his brothers the example of gentleness, patience, humility and the fidelity to the Rule of Life. Let each one pray not only for his own needs, but also for all the members of the Congregation. In a word, let us have but one heart and one soul. May this heart, may this soul burn with all the divine fires of charity. And, after having been thus united on earth, we shall also be united for all eternity in heaven itself: Fiat! Fiat!

Closing of the Brothers' retreat (S VII, 2374 - Anthology, p. 175)

Help us, Lord, to know how to put our differences together like a mosaic with multiple colors.

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!