

Bulletin  
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From the first favours being received up to  
the healing of Josette Poulain (1955)

The “sons” of Jean-Marie and those close to them had been praying to Jean-Marie de la Mennais for particular favours since the introduction of his Cause. Favours obtained through his intercession were reported. In 1940, a short, anonymous publication *“The Question of Miracles in the Cause of Beatification of Venerable Jean-Marie de la Mennais”* stated the following: *“Let us put to one side for the moment less important temporal favours. Counting only the extraordinary healings attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Father that were published in the Echo of the Missions and in the Chronicle of the Institute, this gives us the figure of 126 healings, which, added to the 18 listed in the Process of Vannes, provides a total of 144. This total only includes sufficiently detailed accounts...”*

The tradition of invoking the Founder has indeed been maintained over the years, supported by prayer sheets and objects associated with him (such as pieces of cloth that had touched his tomb and pictures), visits to the places where he lived, etc... However, over the years we did not collect either enough medical documents (diagnoses and prognoses) attesting to healings obtained, or testimonies of the ways that people invoked the Founder. We owe a debt of gratitude therefore to those Brothers who did have the good sense to collect such reports, though the necessary documentation is still incomplete.

It must also be said that all the procedures initiated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, now the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, are very rigorous in their examination of what is supposedly inexplicable scientifically. A particularly meticulous canonical rule was established which examines every aspect of a potential healing, with the help of competent physicians who seek - by all means possible - to demonstrate that the healing is scientifically explainable.

It is at this stage of a well-argued presentation relating to a cure believed to be miraculous that we find the main artisan of the Founder’s Cause: the Postulator, Brother Hippolyte-Victor Géreux. While he was searching, in collaboration with Bishop Frutaz, for documents that could be used in putting together the *Additional Summarium* in response to the Observations of 1946, he learned of a surprising healing, that of a five-year-old girl. The Postulator had the intuition that this healing could be presented to the S.C. of Rites for official examination. Here is a summary of the case.

It concerned a little girl from a very poor family that was not particularly religious. The events took place in the town of Combourg, near Rennes, Brittany (France). In this town there were, at that time, three Mennaisian institutions: a Brothers’ school, another run by the Daughters of Providence and a clinic also run by the latter.

One Sunday in winter, January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1955, little Josette Poulain, who had just turned five, was playing with her brothers and sisters in the house’s single room, located in the countryside. Her father was a soldier on active service at that time in Indochina. Her mother went out into the yard to get some charcoal for the stove. It was around 1 p.m. The eldest child, Josette, organized a game that involved running around the table without getting caught by her brothers. She had the idea of climbing onto the table but lost her balance and, falling to the ground, hit the corner of the stove heavily.