

The culmination of this work required that the new Postulator, Brother Gabriel-Henri Potier, and the lawyer Dante prepare together a new *Positio*, which they then presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites under the title "*New Positio on the Virtues*". This one was shorter than that of 1946, comprising 165 pages, among which there were 40 pages presenting the objections of 1946 and then 125 pages providing answers to these objections which were taken from the *Summarium additionale*, this latter document being referred to continuously. In addition, the *New Positio* included a synthesis of all the previous work: the responses to the three main hostile testimonies, the adherence of the Servant of God to the doctrine of the Catholic faith, his submission to the Church in the persons of the Pope and the bishops and the extent of his charity and love expressed in his relationship with his brother Féli, despite their disputes. The final 70 pages were devoted to the argument in favour of the heroicity of his theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, his cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, strength and temperance, and annex topics relating to poverty, chastity, obedience and humility.

The *New Positio* served as the basis for the discussions of the Preparatory Congregation of May 25th, 1965. It seemed then that everything was in place for the procedure recognising the heroic virtues of Father de la Mennais, but the new Promoter of the Faith, Father Perez, had not yet had the final word. On February 26th, 1966, he presented a new, comparatively brief, dossier entitled "*Final Observations*."

We should, at this point, underline the difficulties associated with the cause of Father de la Mennais. Fr. Perez justified the additional dossier as follows: "*The ancient traditions of this sacred Tribunal teach us how complicated is the examination of the heroic nature of the virtues of those Servants of God who undertook great projects and who had a large network of relationships, whereas the causes of those Servants of God who had led a private life and who had maintained little connection with the outside world were much more straightforward. This confirms for us the difficulty we face in relation to the cause of the Servant of God, Jean-Marie Robert de la Mennais, who undoubtedly achieved great things and maintained an extended network of social relationships...*"

The postulator, Brother Potier, replied to these final objections with the help of lawyer Dante, the Prosecutor Mgr. Felici and Mgr. Frutaz. Their "*Final Positio*" was given to Cardinal Tisserant, official Protector of the Congregation, who forwarded it to the Consultors of the General Congregation. On June 21st 1966, the latter officially expressed a favourable opinion in relation to the proclamation of the heroic virtues.

It only remained for the General Congregation to ratify this opinion in the presence of the Pope.

Following the favourable opinion expressed by the General Congregation in June 1966, the day of the official public proclamation by the Church of the heroic virtues finally arrived. On December 15th 1966, in the presence of Pope Paul VI, the ceremony for the Promulgation of the Decree of Heroic Virtues took place. It should be noted that all the candidates named that day received the title of Venerable except ours who had already received it in accordance with the old provisions of 1911, that is to say 55 years previously, proof that the cause of Father de la Mennais had been exceptionally laborious and long-winded.

Brother Jean-Charles Bertrand noted the following: "*We must not forget that the cause of Father Jean-Marie de la Mennais cannot be compared to any other because of the extensive ecclesiastical activity of this priest who was so involved in all the various clerical matters of his day during a very troubled and ambiguous period of religious history in France. The long and intimate relationship between the blood brothers Jean and Féli, (the latter a priest and forthright defender of the Church who was subsequently rejected by her in such a dramatic and painful way) and their well-known collaboration also gave rise to an a priori mistrust on the part of the consultors. It is understandable that such a careful, detailed study was therefore required, with not a single act of this priest, Grand Vicar and Founder, prohibited in two dioceses, escaping a meticulous examination under the magnifying glass.*"