



### Introduction

This month in February, when I was preparing the novena to our founder, the foreseen theme was "Brothers of Jesus", which is within the theme of the year: "Being Brothers". By pure coincidence, the theme of the last Circular of the Superior General was "The Centrality of Christ." From these we get the great actuality of the thought and work of Jean-Marie, of which we have often heard the following quotation: "My schools have been instituted to make Jesus Christ known and love."

Let us be guided by the words of Brother Yannick who reminds us of the central path already traced by our founder:

This will lead us to see how the Brother, who must live at the heart of this world, is called to enter into the mystery of salvation. The Brother is invited to the "*radicalism of prophecy*" as underlined by Pope Francis to the Superiors General in 2013. He is a sign of Christ's presence. By his testimony much more than by his words, the Brother is present in the world in the manner of Christ himself. He is called to be, like John the Baptist, the one who points to Christ and

invites all to direct their gaze upon Him and Him alone. Thus, he is in the world a light that guides the steps of those who walk in darkness: "*You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High: you will go before the face of the Lord, and you will prepare his ways*" (Lk 1, 76). But no one is a prophet unless he is first a disciple. We will then hear our founder asking us to imitate Christ, to have His feelings, to love what He loved.

### Saturday 18 February 2017

Our life, to be fully realised, must be centered on Jesus. He is its center, the beginning and the end, the source and the summit, the joy and the full meaning.

Based on these texts, John Mary de la Mennais exhorted his Brothers with the words: "*Know but one thing: Jesus and Jesus crucified...*" He asserted without hesitation: "*None of us will enter the bosom of God if he does not conform to the image of his Son... God wants to find in his miserable creatures the traits, if I may say, the figure, the living imprint of the One he has begotten before all ages*". His advice to his Brothers on the occasion of the annual retreat was never to tire of "*going into the details and comparing the feelings of Jesus Christ to our own, our behaviour to his*."

*The Centrality of Christ, p. 22*

### **FATHER, GRANT THAT JESUS REALLY BE THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE**

### Sunday 19 February 2017

The religious as well as the laity receive the gift of the priesthood of the faithful.

This is the priesthood which associates us with the mission of Jesus.

*"The religious profession is [...] participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, since it associates you with his divine functions of redemption, to his charity for men, and to his zeal for the glory of his Father ... Just see how great is the mystery that is going to take place in your soul. ... All the work*

*of religious life is to perfect this divine imprint..."*

*Sermons VII 2169, in The Centrality of Christ, p. 24*

**Thank you, Jesus, for making us participants in your  
priesthood, in the sacramental Eucharist  
and in the Eucharist of your daily life.**

### **Monday 20 February 2017**

Our authentic existence consists in resembling Jesus. A goal that seems inaccessible by our own efforts. But we have the strength of the Holy Spirit that makes us conform to Him, Jesus.

*"When God says he wants our sanctification, it is as if he said he wants to find in us the perfections of his Son; ... that we be clothed with Christ, as the Apostle says ...; that we judge all things as he did; that we love as he loved .... In a word, that all our thoughts be consistent with his thoughts and we be his living image!"*

*à Bruté de Rémur, 1810*

**Holy Spirit, help us everyday  
to resemble Jesus a little more.**

### **Tuesday 21 February 2017**

With Jesus we join a family, not of blood but of the Holy Spirit. He introduces us into the great family of the sons of God, the Church. And it is in this family that we find ourselves with all those who are "the true brothers of Jesus".

And the word of Father de la Mennais, who had a clear perception of this, resonates in our hearts: "You are *messengers of peace and of love who seem descended from heaven to teach men to know God and to love Him.*" Those who "fashion" the heart of children are "sons of God", not related to their human family, but to the family which is the Church. This is what the "Mennaisian Family", made up of Brothers and Laypeople, means, a family willed by the Holy Spirit, in "the Church, family of God." With Saint Paul, we can

assuredly say that "we know no person according to the flesh", but according to the Holy Spirit.

*The Centrality of Christ, p. 33*

**Thank you, Lord, for calling us in this great family  
of the Church,  
and in particular, in the Mennaisian Family**

### **Wednesday 22 February 2017**

For Jesus to be at the center of our lives, we must listen to His words, enter into His thoughts, and daily nourish ourselves at the table of the Gospel.

We must receive the lessons of the Gospel as if the Lord were speaking himself for his disciples have faithfully transmitted the instructions that came from his mouth to us. They are written so that, until the end of the world, all those who are fortunate to belong to him should hear the voice of Jesus Christ. Let us then open the ears of the heart, so that this word of truth penetrates and nourishes our soul. We should never let a day pass without reading some passages from this sacred book; it is the will of our Father

*Anthology p. 135*

**Help us, Jesus, to nourish our heart, our spirit and our  
actions with lessons of the Gospel.**

### **Thursday 23 February 2017**

Little by little the feelings of Jesus will enter into us, but also, concretely, in our daily life. The distance between us and Jesus is reduced by our concrete closeness to him.

Remembering all that our divine Lord has done and willed to suffer for you, have a great desire of responding to so much love with a tender and faithful love. Desire to imitate his gentleness, his patience, his charity, and his zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Seeing how little you have so far profited from His lessons and His examples, seeing how good and holy He is, and how ungrateful and

sinful you are, -- implore His mercy, ask for such or such a grace which you think you particularly need, and promise Him to lead a more Christian life. *Anthology, p. 147*

**Help us, Jesus, to be near you,  
give us the taste of prayer and meditation of the Gospel.**

### Friday 24 February 2017

The moment of the Eucharist is one of the most precious moments to remain close to Jesus. To profit by this moment, here are pieces of advice from our Founder :

Your act of thanksgiving after Communion should last about a quarter of an hour. You will listen in silence to the voice of Jesus Christ really present in you, and you will expose to him your needs, and ask him for the virtues that you lack. Do not forget to pray also for the children he has entrusted to you, especially for those who, by their defects, give you more anxiety and vexation.

**Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of the Eucharist  
that you make for us everyday,  
help us to receive it with love.**

### Saturday 25 February 2017

The demanding words of the founder encourage us to decide to follow Jesus, our brother, the first born of a multitude of brothers. That is how we can always be more like him.

None of us will enter into the bosom of the Father if we do not bear any resemblance to his Son. It is in his Son, as he tells us himself, that he has placed all his favours, and raised his miserable creatures to him. He has to find in them the traits, and, if I may say so, the figure, the living impression of the One he has engendered before all ages. Hence, the spirit of poverty, of mortification and of obedience is the very

spirit we should all have.

*Anthology, p. 50*

**Help us, Jesus, to take decisions without looking back,  
to follow you on the road that you have indicated for us.**

### Sunday 26 February 2017

**The word of God (Mt 12 : 46-50)**

*The true kinsfolk of Jesus*

He was still speaking to the crowds when suddenly his mother and his brothers were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. But to the man who told him this Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother?' 'Who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

**The word of the Church** (The Centrality of Christ, pages 41-42)  
*Anthology, p. 149*

Through this modest survey, we have felt that ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit who is the main actor of our inner transformation in Christ. We are not more deserving than others. Like them, we are poor sinners. Often, however, we can see how many lay Christians can have a committed life, given to the point of being for us stimulants on the way to the likeness of Christ. Everyone is called to holiness, whether religious, priest or layman. Only God knows the heart of each. He knows the generosity of our response.

The question now is how, exactly, we respond to our vocation to be "friends" of Christ – so he calls us: "*I no longer call you servants ... but I have called you friends*". (Jn 15, 15). We have seen, there is no possible response without an exclusive love for Christ. This is our call: to love Him, to love but Him, so that He loves in us. Without this bond of love, humble and entire, we will not live the "radicalism of prophecy" to which the Pope invites us.

We have to ask ourselves: Is Christ at the centre of

our life, of our preoccupations, of our thoughts? Is He the object of our sole love? What bonds of love unite us to Him? Where are we at with this intimate relationship with Him? What can we answer to the question that so much moved Peter by the lake side: "Do you love me?" What of our quiet contemplation of the Word of God? Is it our daily fare? Or do we allow ourselves to be "distracted" and seduced by everything that keeps us away from Him?

*The Centrality of Christ, pp. 41-42*

### The Word of Jean-Marie de la Mennais

Oh! My God, when I see you attached with nails to the infamous wood on which you accomplished the great mystery of our redemption! When I see your bruised and bleeding body! When I count one by one the thorns that pierce your head, and then consider my sensuality, my extreme sensibility, my shameful spinelessness, my continual self-seeking in all things and the strong apprehension of all that might pain my body or break my pride! Can I really say that I am your disciple? And if I am not your disciple, what am I then? On whom is my hope of salvation founded?

*Anthology, p. 54*

**JESUS, WHEN YOU ASK ME : " DO YOU LOVE ME ? "**

**MAKE ME ANSWER WITH SINCERITY : " YES, JESUS, WITH ALL MY WEAKNESSES, YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU. "**

**Choose a suitable song for each day.**

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

INTENTIONS RECOMMENDED THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF FATHER DE LA MENNAIS DURING THE NOVENA OF FEBRUARY 2017

- **Maria Luisa Teclaco Suzano**, a member of the Mennaisian Family in Mexico who has been bedridden for nearly 20 years, paralysed by an incurable and severe arthritis.

- **Pascal Irubetagoiena**, a teacher at Saint-Jean-de-Luz (France), suffering from a disease of vocal cords that prevents him from teaching.

### 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!**

