



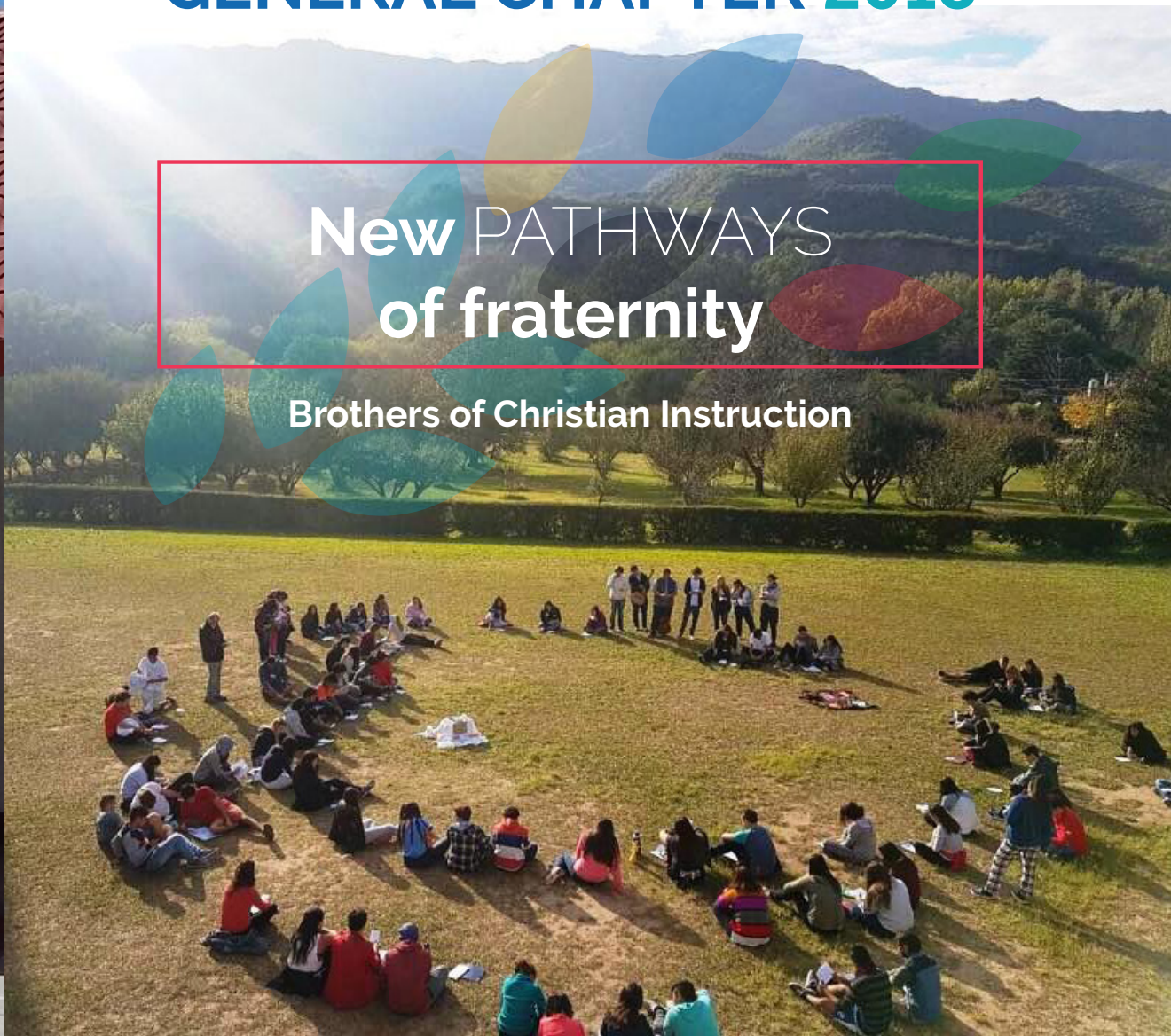
La Mennais 2019

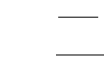
Une nouvelle page  
A new page  
Una nueva página

# GENERAL CHAPTER 2018

New PATHWAYS  
of fraternity

Brothers of Christian Instruction





## SUMMARY

Introduction.....	4
The educational mission.....	8
Vocation ministry.....	12
Formation.....	16
Community.....	20
Mennaisian family.....	24
Mennaisian young adults.....	26
Lay people's proposals.....	28
Animation and Government.....	30
The Rule of Life.....	32
The Superior General's Message.....	35

The orientations and decisions of the General Chapter are presented by the help of a text which runs along the document as a leading thought. This text, written by Bro. Josu Olabarrieta, seeks to insert the experience of the Chapter within the spirit of the celebration of the bicentenary of the foundation of the Congregation.

Otherwise, the Chapter chose the Biblical icon of the "Disciples of Emmaus" to express the rich experience of spiritual discernment that was lived. It is also presented along the pages in the introduction of the preceding texts.

## INTRODUCTION

The Lord passes by...

Will we choose to await a later encounter?

Why delay?

Let us join Him now in following new pathways of fraternity ...

This Chapter is indeed for us a "kairos", an opportune moment: the Lord passes by, arranges a rendezvous and invites us to set out with him on new pathways of fraternity without delay.

Just as He did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Lord passes by and:

- He invites us to accompany him without delay on the pathway of the educational mission, with passion in our hearts, encouraging us to develop a culture of fraternity within our educational centers and other mission locations.
- He calls us onto the pathway of vocation, in the knowledge that being a Brother or a Lay Mennaisian is Good News for both the Church and today's world in general.
- He joins us on the pathway of formation, a path that transforms and transfigures our fragile hearts and thus our entire lives.
- He gives us the gift of fraternity, the first fruit of his Passover. He gives us the grace to be Brothers together: Brothers in an international congregation, brothers of our Brothers in community, brothers of the laity, the young and the poor, brothers of creation.
- He arranges a rendezvous with us on the pathway of the Mennaisian family, a path that gives hope, a path that challenges and destabilizes us, but also leads to new projects, audacious strides forward and renewed fruitfulness.

The Lord passes by ...

The New Page awaits us, as it did for the Emmaus disciples. Let us write it with audacity and creativity, with passion and trust in Divine Providence!

May you be successful in living out the Chapter in your daily lives!

**Brother Hervé Zamor**  
**Superior General**

## A NEW page...

The first page was written almost two hundred years ago. So many years have passed, making it seem like just a vague memory. But, life continues to flow from that wellspring in an inextinguishable current. Such is the unshakeable conviction of the 41 Brothers who lived through the General Chapter in Rome, from March 1st to 24th.

We re-lived the very same experience as Jean-Marie and Gabriel almost two hundred years ago. Like them, we did not know each other well, coming from different origins and cultural backgrounds. And like them, we discovered that we shared the same deep-held convictions and aspirations. Inspired by our Founders, we shared their vision and expressed their dream anew for today: "**The two houses will have the same rule, the same method of teaching and will become one**", they said in the Treaty of Union. "**New pathways of fraternity**": the same fire, the same spirit, but expressed in a new way.

Aware of our vulnerabilities and our fragilities, we decided to return to the source of our foundation so that we might rediscover the desire to found new projects for today: "*I began my work in my room in Saint-Brieuc, with two young men from southern Brittany who hardly spoke a word of French...*" Today, we experience being a small minority as a grace, as a call to hope, knowing, like the Founders, that everything is part of God's plan – "*God alone*", as it says at the beginning of the Treaty - a surprising God who stimulates us into acts of creation, who pushes us to rise to the challenges that we face, with the calm certainty of one who believes in miracles: "*Little by little, the mustard seed has become a big tree, under which a multitude of children come to take refuge*".

Here are the texts.



## The EMMAUS disciples

“ The same day, that is, the first day of the week, two disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, two hours' walk from Jerusalem, and they were talking to each other about everything that had happened...” (Lk 24:13)

The two disciples were disoriented by what had happened to their master, Jesus, by what he endured on the way to Calvary. Everything had happened so fast; from the day of his arrest until his death on the cross, with all the suffering he endured in between...

We came to the Chapter carrying within us uncertainties about our own futures and that of the congregation. As individuals we alternate between periods of spiritual consolation and desolation, and through all of this the Spirit still speaks to us, a voice bright and sure, though often we struggle to grasp its meaning.

When the Spirit's fire does not burn brightly in our hearts, our fraternal communion does not shine and darkness obscures the path ahead.



## A NEW page...

**D**uring the Chapter, it was easy to feel fired up by our mission. Together, we experienced the desire, the dream of founding something new, the ideal of a truly fraternal school. We rediscovered the miracle of the educational community, as experienced by Jean-Marie in the ecclesiastical school at Saint-Malo, his first contact of this type with young people. We heard the call to experience the same gentleness and strength that are felt when one is in deepest communion with others. *"The most intimate union reigns among all the teachers: they love each other, help each other, use the same educational methods, and are animated by the same spirit"*.

We felt compelled to renew ourselves for today, returning to the model of those first schools that were built on intimacy, attention to the individual needs of all and protective vigilance: to recreate this place where we watch over the pupils, where we protect them and defend them with a father's love: *"The Brother who cares for you is a second father given to you by Providence."*

We made an emotional rediscovery of the Mennaisian school, attentive to the most needy, the most insignificant, to those whom Jean-Marie wished to raise up, to put back on their feet, to whom he wanted to give life. *"Some people gather up the debris of shipwrecks; I gather up young children who have, in a sense, been thrown overboard and have little life left in them."* New pathways of fraternity built on compassion, that of the Good Samaritan.



## THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION

1. We wish to continue **sharing, inculturating and enriching** the precious educational heritage, stretching back **200 years**, that we have received from our founders. From within the Mennaisian charism, we seek to simultaneously instruct, educate and evangelize, taking into account the different local realities. We are conscious of the progress we have made in understanding and sharing our charism with our lay brothers and sisters since the last chapter. Rather than focussing on "doing", we should instead **focus on our way of being** through the quality of our fraternal presence among others.

We hear the call, as a Mennaisian family, to develop **a culture of fraternity** in our educational centers and other mission locations, in order to be a sign of the Kingdom.

### RETURN TO THE WELLSPRING

2. Today more than ever, we, the Mennaisian family, feel within us a **passion, an urgent need** to proclaim Jesus Christ. We bear this missionary challenge together in a spirit of **fraternal collaboration**. To better respond to it, we propose:
  - a. That each educational community, taking into account its local reality,
    - Adapts, discerns and develops, with creativity and boldness, its own **educational project** taking inspiration from by the Mennaisian Educational Project document<sup>1</sup>, so as to more effectively bear witness to the Gospel and its values which are still relevant today.
    - Invites all its members promote the **values conveyed by the Mennaisian charism**.
    - Forms **a group of volunteers (made up of Brothers and Laity of all ages)** who wish to gather to reflect on their mission, develop their understanding of the charism and share the fruits of their discussions within their educational center.
    - Engages in a **community discernment**, with our lay colleagues, seeking to impart **renewed dynamism** to its missionary activities and locations.
  - b. That an international commission draws up **a guide for applying the charism**, taking into account what has already been done in different parts of the congregation, in order to guide the formation of our Brothers and lay educators.
  - c. That *La Mennais Magazine*, the congregation's website [www.lemennais.org](http://www.lemennais.org) and any other appropriate channel of communication, regularly shares aspects of how **Mennaisian educational pedagogy** is being lived out.

<sup>1</sup> Document written by the previous General Chapter of 2012 – after a study undertaken throughout the congregation – and finalised just before the 2018 Chapter. It was sent to all Major Superiors either before (Spanish and French versions) or during the Chapter (English version).



## REACH OUT TO OTHERS

3. Each educational center is invited to live out an **inclusive educational philosophy** that promotes fraternity, where everyone is attentive to the needs of others, lives in close proximity to all the members of the educational community (students and their families, teaching and non-teaching staff, administration), so that our establishments might truly become "schools of brothers and sisters" bearing fraternal witness to the presence of Christ. We emphasize the importance of the quality of our presence, our attention to the needs of others, our ability to listen to others, the way we accompany and offer mutual support, our daily sharing of our joys and sufferings, our ongoing apprenticeship of solidarity and our inner spiritual lives. We seek to develop in our Mennaisian educational centers the pedagogy of **apprenticeship and service** in which we share what we have received, we teach what we have learned, and we live a fraternity built on personal responsibility and solidarity.

We recommend:

- a. Appointing a person or a team of people whose role would be to create an **international network of schools** with a clear Mennaisian identity so as to encourage exchanges and collaboration between these schools.
- b. Making **our educational centers places of fraternity**
  - where children and students – who are the chief navigators of their own educational journeys – feel loved and respected **as they are**.
  - where we share together, Brothers and Laity, our **common responsibilities** in the service of our educational missions.
  - where we make the protection and safety of children a priority (cf. no. 17, Chapter 2012)
- c. Offering opportunities for **integrated, holistic formation** (spiritual, human, Mennaisian) to all Mennaisian educators.
- d. Inviting all the families of our pupils to participate in the life of the educational center to which they have entrusted their children and become more involved in their children's education.
- e. Providing particular assistance to those families that are going through difficulties.
- f. Enabling the fraternity that we experience in our Mennaisian schools to go beyond class and school boundaries so as to better support the **holistic growth of each young person** in all dimensions of their being.

## DARE TO GO TO THE PERIPHERIES

4. In order to create or strengthen fraternal relationships and solidarity, including on an international level, and to promote exchanges and sharing of formation between our different educational structures, we propose:
  - a. To give lay members of the Mennaisian family, in communion with the Brothers, the opportunity **to engage in volunteer work** in existing projects or to create with us new ones where we hear the call to do so.
  - b. To seek ways to respond more effectively to the needs of **young people with special educational needs** and those with mental or physical handicap, through appropriate educational initiatives adapted to their psychological and physical needs.
  - c. To create fresh initiatives with young people that allow them to fulfil **their desire to give of themselves in the service of the poorest** and most needy.

## The EMMAUS disciples

“While they were talking Jesus approached them and began walking with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognising him.” (Lk 24:15-16)

This unrecognised figure now approaches us as we carry our burdens and our disappointments. God always comes to his children. He will never forsake them. God comes to meet each woman, each man, each child. He enters our daily existence and gently illumines it with his Presence. We know well this beautiful phrase of Jean-Marie De La Mennais: “God alone in time! God alone in eternity!”



## A NEW page...

The lack of vocations is a major concern in certain parts of the congregation. We looked back at our history so as to be able to recommit ourselves, with vigour, to the path that Gabriel and Jean-Marie undertook almost two hundred years ago: **to go out** towards life, into the streets, the town squares, towards the young; to allow ourselves to be challenged by reality and **to look upon** it with eyes filled with mercy and compassion, the way they looked upon it at Auray and at Saint-Brieuc.

And it is through looking upon reality in this way – and only through this – that we have felt our hearts burning, giving us the strength to dare **to call**. It is a call that gives hope when faced with failure: the fragility of having only a Mathurin Provost ... or a Yves le Fichant, with the emptiness left by his death.

Today, as yesterday, we will continue to hope, we will dare to call and to accompany those who seek to journey with us.



# VOCATION MINISTRY

## RETURN TO THE WELLSPRING

5. We are convinced that:
  - a. **The Lord still calls today**, in all settings and all walks of life.
  - b. For the world and for the Church:
    - **Being a Brother is good news**,
    - The Mennaisian charism, lived out in the Mennaisian family, is a gift that is still relevant today.
  - c. **Vocation ministry is of vital importance to the Mennaisian family**, both in relation to the vocation to be a Brother and the vocation to be a lay Mennaisian. It enables the young person to discover that being Mennaisian is a path leading to life, a path that can fulfil his/her deepest desires and make him/her happy. It requires mustering the appropriate human, spiritual and material resources and is an integral part of youth ministry. (See Report of the Superior General, December 2017)
  - d. The prayer and the love of the Congregation expressed by older Brothers also contribute to the growth of the Institute, especially in the Provinces and Districts that many of them helped to bring into being.

Therefore:

- e. **The awakening and support of vocations** concern each member of the Mennaisian family and each local community, whatever the situation of the Province or District.
- f. Communities should discern opportunities for Brothers to express the powerful witness given by their fraternal communion through proximity, availability and service. **Fraternity is our grace and our vocation.**

## REACH OUT TO OTHERS

6. We realise that **nothing can replace the testimony of a community** that is open to the mercy of God, that is happy, and joyful, in spite of its weaknesses and fragility.

Therefore, it is important:

- a. That each Brother strives to promote a culture of vocation and dares, using Pope Francis' own words, **to go out to others, to seek out and to call**, thus echoing the invitation of Christ: "Come and see".
- b. That communities welcome young people for times of sharing, conviviality and prayer, in an atmosphere of warmth and mutual kindness. Such opportunities for prayer would benefit from being developed alongside opportunities for social action created with and for young people. Each community project should define the modalities of these encounters with the young.

- c. That Provinces and Districts encourage Brothers to engage with young people in the diversity of their cultural expressions, in order to get to know them and learn from them, so as to better understand their desires and needs.
- d. That, in each Province or District, a team (or teams) of lay people and Brothers be established
  - That accompanies the human and spiritual progress of the young according to their particular socio-religious context.
  - That maintains regular ties with the families of those who are engaged in a vocational process.
  - That uses modern means of communication as indispensable tools for creating and maintaining a community of young people in discernment and accompanying them on their journey.
- e. **That we may welcome aspirants** who seek to discern with us a Mennaisian vocation that would express itself through an educational mission other than that of teaching.

## DARE TO GO TO THE PERIPHERIES

7. Our sensitivity to the needs of those on the peripheries encourages us to highlight the following areas:
  - a. That each person be offered varied possibilities of commitment, both in style and in length, to help in the discernment of his/her vocation. And that in doing so, both young aspirants and lay adult Mennaisians may tread new pathways that prioritise experience, paired with an ongoing accompaniment (before, during and after):
    - **Spiritual experiences** that enable them to feel God's freely given love and have a personal encounter with Christ.
    - **Life experiences with the most vulnerable**, the poor, the sick, the elderly, especially for members of vocation groups in our educational centers.
    - Missionary experiences for young adults, in the form of **solidarity projects and Mennaisian volunteer projects**, which involve - through their radical nature - a certain rupture with their previous life.
  - b. That our vocation ministry be especially **inventive and audacious with regards to the young in our own schools** and in urban areas in general.
  - c. That young Brothers in regions where vocations are plentiful be invited to have a community experience in regions where vocations are less common, giving them the opportunity to bear witness to their calling among the young people there.

*The Chapter dares to restate its belief that our God is a God of the covenant, of the unexpected, of hope and of life. At a time when in various places we are experiencing the grace of being in a minority, we may yet be surprised by vocations springing up, though probably finding alternative forms of expression. In the light of requests coming from young people themselves (both girls and boys), who desire to live as Mennaisians with their own form of consecration, we must heed the calls of the Spirit, daring to invent new pathways which correspond to what the Spirit is accomplishing in the hearts of today's young people. (Report of the Superior General, December 2017)*

## The EMMAUS disciples

*“He asked them, ‘What are you discussing as you walk along?’ They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, ‘Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?’ And he replied to them, ‘What sort of things?’ They said to him, ‘The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.’ (Lk 24: 17-23)*



These two men understood nothing. They were still ignorant of what God was doing at the heart of their existence. Many things surprised them. They were unable to put their ideas in order; they did not understand that God wanted to speak to them in their hearts. Their salvation was found through authentic, truthful communication, a word freely shared and freely received.

Before the unrecognised figure revealed himself, he let them talk and simply listened. He does the same with us. God is close to those who speak to him from the heart. His love works secretly within those who let themselves be accompanied by him in their daily lives. It is through speaking from the heart that we come gradually into the light.

So too with our communities. Those who grow in unity are those where the Brothers enter into dialogue in mutual trust and openness.



## A NEW page...

**W**e spent many days studying a theme that preoccupies and motivates us: formation. We know that this is the key to our renewal; formation that goes far beyond books, courses and sessions, that seeks, with Jean-Marie, to lead us to identify ourselves with Christ and become images of Him. *"Let all our thoughts conform to His thoughts and let us be His living image."*

Formation at the service of the mission, because we are indissolubly united with children and young people. *"The salvation of a Brother, as well as that of a priest, is linked to the salvation of others".*

Formation that we engage in with others, not simply to become more knowledgeable, but to better serve others. So as to renew our formation, we looked at the formation that Jean-Marie and Féli sought to develop for the magnificent project of the Congregation of Saint Peter which was actually ahead of its time: *"What would you with all the knowledge of the world if that's all you had? It would be useless, as it would be for others too, because it is a zealous and pious spirit that gives fruitfulness to your actions, and any science that does not give life is forever sterile".*



# FORMATION

8. So that we might engage on new pathways towards fraternity, we must first realize that our whole life is a process of formation. In other words, it is a response to a call from Christ to conform ourselves to him as missionary disciples. We must let ourselves be continually converted and evangelized, both personally and in community. Formation is thus a path that transforms and transfigures our whole life, in spite of our frailties. It manifests itself in our fraternal relations with Christ, with our Brothers and with those we meet. It awakens in us the missionary call, according to the Mennaisian charism, that we live in a spirit of gratitude, mercy and humility.

## RETURN TO THE WELLSPRING

9. At every stage of our lives, the community remains our first place of formation, growth and fidelity.

Therefore, we propose that each community:

- a. Whatever its situation, its composition and its mission, strives to ensure that the varied elements of its daily life (prayers, meetings, sharing of the Word, community dialogue, relaxation) enable it to become a fraternity that is ever richer in humanity. It will do so through opening its doors to the laity, the young and the poor.
  - b. Aims for its prayer to become an ever more authentic fraternal experience, especially through the liturgical and sacramental life of the community, so that we might better heal each other's wounds and deepen our fraternal unity.
  - c. Includes in its community project the appropriate means to truly become a community of formation.
10. The **formation of formators** is a major challenge for our common future. We therefore propose:
    - a. To create a team responsible for the formation of formators, Brothers and Laity, in regions of the congregation where vocations are flourishing, especially for the topics of Mennaisian spirituality and pedagogy, so as to encourage a greater inculturation of the charism in each region.
    - b. To provide to the members of such a team of formators a common foundation of training relating to the Mennaisian charism.
    - c. To offer interdisciplinary formation to future formators and those responsible for vocation ministry (spirituality, psychology, Mennaisian pedagogy and charism...)
    - d. To strive for relationships built on authentic fraternity between the Brothers in formation and those responsible for them in each house of initial formation.



## REACH OUT TO OTHERS

11. In order to open new pathways of fraternity through initial and ongoing formation, we propose:

### For Brothers in initial formation

- a. That participation in the Mennaisian family be an integral aspect of initial formation and that lay people be involved in delivering formation programmes.
- b. That appropriate training and tools be given to formators to enable them to promote true fraternity and an openness to our international dimension.
- c. That candidates be given the opportunity to experience fraternal life through the service of elderly and sick brothers, through collaboration with the laity and through inter-congregational formation.
- d. That the study of the three official languages of the Congregation be further developed and that appropriate use be made of modern means of communication in order to promote a greater openness to our international dimension and a more authentic fraternal communion throughout the Congregation.

### For young Brothers

- e. That a Brother - who may or may not be a Superior - be appointed in each insertion community (or group of communities) to accompany young Brothers and ensure their ongoing formation.
- f. That young Brothers and their Superiors be given opportunities to meet with those of other communities, to share thoughts and experiences in order to promote a greater mutual understanding and to deepen fraternal communion.

### For the formation of community Superiors

- g. That community Superiors be trained to take care of the gift that is their fellow Brothers, especially the elderly, the sick and the young.
- h. That Brothers' ongoing formation include an introduction to the service of authority ("government"), as requested by the document of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: "This task, which is so fundamentally important to community life, is sometimes assigned without due care and carried out improperly and incompletely." (New Wine, New Wineskins, n° 16)

## DARE TO GO TO THE PERIPHERIES

12. We propose:

- a. To develop in young Brothers **an authentic Mennaisian missionary spirit** and an openness to the possibility of becoming missionaries themselves.
- b. That Brothers - especially the youngest - be encouraged to live a year of missionary commitment outside their home sector, appropriate accompaniment being provided. This would provide meaningful experiences of fraternal life and the service of the young and the poorest.
- c. To include in the community project, especially at the stage of initial formation, opportunities to experience fraternity with young adults, the laity and the poor, in the context of the Mennaisian family.

## The EMMAUS disciples

*“And he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.’ So, he went in to stay with them.” (Lk 24:25-29)*

After listening at length as Jesus spoke, gradually his words brought peace, light and meaning to the discontented hearts of ones who had lost all hope. The light of hope illuminated the darkness.

The presence and the words of the Beloved invited them out of their prison. The two disciples then witnessed the Lord's graces, like a little cloud on the horizon in the shape of a man's hand, announcing life-giving rain ... This is how fraternal relationships are woven in the heart of a community, when its members listen to words that spring from a Brother's heart, shared in simplicity.

And the presence of the Lord's Spirit in the community brings forth the prayer, “Stay with us! Be the guest who illuminates our daily lives and radiates our fraternity to the eyes of the world.



## A NEW page...

Fraternity was at the heart of our reflections. No doubt the weeks spent together at the Chapter were a living experience of this fraternity. Was not the experience at the Père Éternel chapel at Auray similar to ours? A few dozen young men came in, but by the time left they were united in one body ready for the mission. They came in as individuals with individual names, only to go out with the shared name of Brothers.

In such a climate, we became aware of the joy of living together, united by the same project; of the wonder of forgiveness that accepts weakness, of the beauty of simple gestures that bring sparkle and freshness to our lives, of the common mission that brings us together ... Fraternity, the heart of our being and of our action.

There is nothing more wonderful or more joyous than telling ourselves each day: *"You and I form one body; we have the same interests, the same desires, and the same goals."*



# COMMUNITY

## RETURN TO THE WELLSPRING

13. We feel called today by the Church and by society, but also by the fragility of our situation, to live out our identity as Brothers in a new way and to let ourselves be converted to authentic fraternity by God.

In order to be more truly fraternal, **we wish to center our lives more radically on Christ**, our wellspring and our model of perfection. He gives us the grace to be "brothers" together: Brothers in an international Congregation, brothers to our Brothers in community, brothers to lay people, brothers to the young and the poor, Brothers of creation (cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*).

We would like to establish, through Christ, **communities founded on a spirit of welcome, on mutual forgiveness and the healing of wounds and on a profound fraternal communion**. We wish to be "islands of mercy in an ocean of indifference."<sup>2</sup>

For that purpose, we recognise that:

- a. The community project is still a valuable tool, especially for the discernment and evaluation of initiatives aimed at promoting fraternity and reconciliation. Its realisation is the responsibility of each member and presupposes the investment of time and the necessity of making practical – and, at times, difficult – choices. By encouraging mutual sharing and support, the community project enables the apostolic activities of each Brother to become part of the common mission of the community.
- b. The accompaniment given to each community Superior by Major Superiors is of vital importance. The Major Superiors themselves need to be accompanied and assisted in this work.

---

2 Pope Francis' message for Lent, 2015.

## REACH OUT TO OTHERS

14. That we might revive and keep alive the thirst for and the meaning of fraternity:
  - a. **Each community must create opportunities to come together with lay people<sup>3</sup>**, for sharing and mutual growth, experiencing at first hand the vitality of the Mennaisian family.
  - b. Brothers and Laity will develop together a Mennaisian community project in sensitivity to the needs of the young and the poor, committing to joint mission projects.
  - c. Create opportunities for international experiences that **strengthen the unity of the Congregation as a living body such as**
    - study sessions for community Superiors
    - longer-term missionary experiences with the necessary accompaniment for volunteer Brothers, in particular those in temporary vows.

## DARE TO GO TO THE PERIPHERIES

15. That we might emphasise **Christ's merciful love** for those who are in most need and foster collaboration between lay people, Brothers and the young:

We request that each Province, District, or continental region, after discerning the calls arising from the new forms of poverty, create a new community which would be established in close proximity to the poor, providing a presence among them. It would preferably be international, possibly in partnership with other Congregations.

---

3 When referring here to "laity" or "lay people" we infer "lay Mennaisians".

## The EMMAUS disciples

*“As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:30-32)”*

Life springs up again and calls us elsewhere. God surprises us. He is not where we thought. He always invites us to an adventure. He is the Presence that invites us to take a step further, to open a new page. Let us dare to open our hearts and our minds, and let Jesus, who walks by our side, irrigate the life of our communities. He unites us through the sacrament of the Eucharist. He makes himself known in the poor and in the brother whom we serve.



## A NEW page...

**W**e were able to experience in practical ways the new life that we wish to live with the Mennaisian family. We united with a group of lay Mennaisians in prayer, in shared reflection and in daily life together. We are grateful to God for this gift. We are called by His Spirit to advance on this path. Throughout this Chapter document appears, in one form or another, the reference to our family united by its charism.

To live as a Mennaisian family is not a matter of structures, but a matter of the heart in which it is born. Jean-Marie could not, at that time, see things as we see them today, but we must nonetheless come back to him and let ourselves be warmed by his insightful words: *"Let us have a truly Catholic heart; that all those who, like us, work to enlarge the heritage and the kingdom of Jesus Christ remain dear to us"*.

We do not own the charism. That is why we must share our spirituality, our mission and our life as a gift that we can all savour together and that enriches us all.



## MENNAISIAN FAMILY

### RETURN TO THE WELLSPRING

16. The Mennaisian family's presence everywhere is a sign of hope; a presence that challenges, but that has also proved to be a source of renewal and fresh commitment, of audacious progress and new fecundity.

**As Brothers, we give thanks for these men and women** who have heard the call to live the same charism as us. The Mennaisian charism is a gift of the Spirit to the Church. It attracted us and it continues to attract lay people today.

**We perceive as a sign of the times** the invitation to listen ever more closely to lay people and to how the Spirit is inspiring them to live alongside us, to be creative and to take risks with their lives, their mission and their spirituality.

**In recognition and thanks for their propositions** presented during the 2018 Chapter, (see below, p. 26) we pledge to discern with them the pathways that will enable these propositions to bear fruit. The ways in which the Mennaisian family is developing - and will continue to develop- in the various regions of the congregation are - and must remain - rich in their diversity. Our Family's vitality depends upon its response to the promptings of the Spirit within the context of local culture and local needs. Therefore, the Chapter encourages each Brother and each community to think and act more and more as members of the "Mennaisian family".





## REACH OUT TO OTHERS

17. In recent years, **the Mennaisian family has become for the Brothers a source of life-giving grace** through shared experiences and a deepening of our fraternal communion at the service of our mission.

By making our own the Mennaisian family reference document we will deepen our knowledge and understanding of our respective vocations.

**We invite** Brothers to help support the growth and development of Mennaisian groups in which lay people and Brothers can live out the call to fraternity, grow spiritually and find ways of serving our mission together, whilst recognising the value of each other's respective vocation.

To this end we call on:

- a. **Each community** to engage in initiatives together with local lay people so as to develop our communion in the service of the mission.
- b. **Each Province and District** to put in place the necessary structures that will allow lay people to engage in decision making within the context of our mission and the life of the Mennaisian family (e.g. Mission Teams, Mennaisian family Commissions, etc...)
- c. **The General Council** to continue discerning with the members of the International Mennaisian family Commission an appropriate structure that will bring greater dynamism and life to our fraternal communion of Brothers and Laity together.

## DARE TO GO TO THE PERIPHERIES

18. Pope Francis and other important figures whose lives bear witness to the Gospel ideal of Christian charity remind us of the need to be attentive to the cry of the poor. Jean-Marie de La Mennais is such a figure: "The poor are sacred for us."

**Recognising that the poor have much to teach us**, we call on Brothers and lay people to:

- a. Discern new forms of fraternal community life that can more effectively meet the demands of new projects on the "peripheries".
- b. Act together to protect children and the young from any form of abuse and to support the most vulnerable, both in terms of material poverty and psychological welfare.

## MENNAISIAN YOUNG ADULTS

19. Mennaisian young adults express their belonging to the Mennaisian family in various ways and share with us aspects of the charism. Participation in this Family should be open to all, no matter where they are on their journey of faith.

We hear the call from young adults to

- a. **Walk with them in the manner of Jesus**<sup>4</sup>, providing appropriate formation as regards the Mennaisian charism.
- b. **Help them to discover their own individual calling** through inviting them into a deeper personal relationship with Jesus and offering them opportunities for service.
- c. **Empower them to live out more fully our common mission** of education and evangelisation in fraternal communion within the Mennaisian family.<sup>5</sup>

### RETURN TO THE WELLSPRING

20. As Mennaisian educators, Brothers and Laity, **we are called to accompany young adults in their formation.** We therefore propose:

- a. Enabling young adults to discover their deepest identity as children of God, called and loved, helping them to focus on BEING by reviewing and reflecting on their personal journeys and the spiritual experiences that have become signposts along their paths.
- b. Inventing with them itineraries of formation, adapted to their own cultural realities, that focus on the three dimensions of the Mennaisian charism: fraternity, spirituality and mission.
- c. Creating opportunities for communities to bear fraternal witness among young adults of the joy of being Mennaisians (Brothers and Laity) and the passion for Christ that inhabits us, a passion that is contagious.
- d. Sharing formation resources throughout our international network.
- e. Producing a guide for young adult formation that would take into account the different models produced throughout the congregation.

<sup>4</sup> **"To understand a young person today**, you have to understand it in motion. One cannot remain motionless and pretend to be on the same wavelength as him. **If we want to enter into dialogue, we must be mobile**, and it is he who will slow down to listen to us, it is he who will decide to do so. (...) This is how we can make progress." - Interview with Pope Francis, "God is young", in "La Croix" 22/3/18.

<sup>5</sup> We are "Sent to bring Jesus to young people... walking with them... calling and sending them." (General Chapter 2012, § 11 – 21). This three-part movement reflects that which is found in the Gospel account of the encounter between Jesus and two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

## REACH OUT TO OTHERS

21. We, Brothers and Laity, propose:

- a. **Maintaining contact with young adults** once they have left school, through social media, etc... inviting them to participate in our events, celebrations and solidarity projects.
- b. Enabling them to develop **their own tapestry of relationships** with like-minded young people who share the same values throughout our international Family.
- c. Encouraging them to get fully involved in the next Synod: "Young people, the Faith and Vocational Discernment" and to make use of its conclusions.
- d. Designating someone to accompany young Mennaisians in each sector of the congregation.
- e. Working with them in the **creation of an international Mennaisian Young Adult Commission** - within the context of the Mennaisian family and its own international Commission - with the purpose of promoting our international fraternity.

## DARE TO GO TO THE PERIPHERIES

22. We, Brothers and Laity, walk together with young adults who sometimes strike out on new paths that they call us to follow with them.

We propose:

- a. **Listening to their desire to give of themselves in the service of the poor**, especially the young.
- b. Inventing together opportunities to be **missionaries of fraternity**, for example:
  - By evangelising youngsters in our schools and movements.
  - By developing (through our NGO network) volunteer solidarity projects among the poor.



# PROPOSALS OF THE LAY PEOPLE

## of the international commission to the General Chapter 2018.

The lay members of the International Mennaisian family Commission came together to share their dreams. After praying and working together, they decided unanimously to draft this set of proposals and lines of action that they consider it necessary to work on.

### FORMATION

The lay people of the International Commission suggest working on the area of formation. They pledge involvement in relation to the following points:

- a. **The formation of Brothers and Lay people together**  
This entails an openness to learn from each other during the time of formation. In this way, we will share our knowledge, our spirituality and our life.
- b. **The formation of the whole person:**  
A formation that is spiritual, psychological, relational, Mennaisian and human.
- c. **The formation of formators**  
A formation programme conceived by lay people and Brothers working together.
- d. **Differentiated programmes of formation within the Mennaisian family.** Formation programmes that are aimed at newly qualified teachers, parents, students, former students etc... and that each Province would adapt to its own reality.
- e. **A programme of formation and apostolic action** that is geared to the needs of young people, created and led by young adults and Brothers together.

Young people evangelizing other young people. This initiative may develop at varying rates depending on the reality of each province.



The six members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian family. From left to right : Michèle HETU, Jean-Robert LEBRUN, Lorena MOLINA, Françoise LE BRETON, Laura JOSÉ, John Bosco DDUNGU.

## MISSION

Our mission is not only educational. It must also be an evangelizing mission as it represents the first step into the Church. It engages in a re-discovery of the Gospel message and the Christian life. The Mennaisian family must accompany both young people and adults.

- a. **Educate in the need** for greater solidarity, proposing opportunities for service.
- b. **Propose specific initiatives for service**, suited to young people, that may help them to find their vocation (in a broad sense), in the context of our vocation ministry.
- c. **Propose an international youth gathering** for the whole Congregation; encouraging the youth to set up their own gatherings by continent as a first stage towards a worldwide event.
- d. The Mennaisian family believes that each Provincial must recognise that young people need to have their own "space" within his Province, young people who are a source of hope and a gift from God to the Congregation.
- e. **The mission of the Mennaisian family** must retain a preferential option for the vulnerable and needy.

## FRATERNAL LIFE

It is important that we develop a greater sense of fraternity within the Mennaisian family. **The way we live out this fraternity should itself attract** and inspire young people who are discerning their own vocation.

Fraternity must be mentioned in the community project of the Brothers and Lay people. It enables the sharing of our lives together and deepens our relationships.

## STATUTE

During the meetings of the International Mennaisian family Commission, we began to discuss the possibility of seeking **the official recognition of our statutes by the Church**, through the means of the Congregation.

As an outcome of our discussions we ask that this procedure be looked into further as a necessary step forward for the organization and ongoing life of a united Mennaisian family, Brothers and lay people together.

# ANIMATION AND GOVERNMENT

## IN THE SERVICE OF FRATERNITY

### 23. The General Government.

- a. The General Chapter of 2018 has adopted the guidelines given by the General Chapter of 2006 concerning the structures of animation and government of the Congregation. The newly elected General Council will endeavour to follow these recommendations.
- b. The General Chapter has decided that for the next 6 years, that the General Council will be composed of **three Assistants**.

### 24. Some guidelines for action and animation.

- a. **Strengthened links between the General Council and the Provinces and Districts.**

"The Brothers, especially those in charge of the administrative units, will develop an ever greater interprovincial/district sensitivity; they will seize the opportunities to meet and share, and they will follow the dynamics of our international communion." (Chapter of 2006)

With due respect to the proper autonomy of Provinces and Districts, the General Council will be a "force for animation and dynamism at the service of communion, mission and formation" (Chapter of 2006). It will promote international and intercultural links. It will offer suggestions and will assist the Major Superiors in their mission of animation and government.

- b. **Adaptation of Structures.**

"There is a need to adapt structures. This has already begun, but it needs to continue, in particular when considering that statistics suggest that there are a certain number of isolated Brothers. It is necessary to try and avoid this situation as much as possible so as to make the religious vocation more effectively visible, but also to encourage the personal fidelity of the Brothers." (Letter of the Prefect of the CICALSAL to the Superior General of March 5, 2018).

The General Chapter encourages the process of regrouping in situations where structures are too small in terms of the number of communities and Brothers, as was the case in North America and Asia.

**c. A government based on dialogue, consultation and participation.**

The Chapter recommends that the General Council carry out its mission of government, discernment and animation by promoting sharing and participation of the other stakeholders. This could be done, for example, by:

1. The convocation of all Major Superiors three or four times between two General Chapters.
2. The appointment of one or two Brothers for specific services of animation or formation at the level of the Congregation. Although these Brothers are not members of the General Council, they should be invited periodically to attend one or other of its sessions to deal with the areas entrusted to them.
3. The organization of Continental Conferences which would bring together the Major Superiors and their Councils.
4. The holding of one of its meetings, during the six-year term of the General Council, in each part of the Institute (Chapter 2006).
5. etc.

Within the context of the global Mennaisian family, the International Commission of the Mennaisian family, is an opportunity for lay representatives to participate in dialogue and consultation.

**d. Recommendation**

The Chapter requests that during the next six years the General Council study, in liaison with the the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), the possibility of introducing a new form of organization of the General Council. A proposal could be made to the General Chapter of 2024.



The new General Council elected on Tuesday, March 20. From left to right : Bro Vincent SSEKATE, Assistant (Uganda), Bro Jean-Paul PEUZE, 1st Assistant (France), Bro Hervé ZAMOR, Superior General (Haiti), and Bro Miguel ARISTONDO, Assistant (Spain).

# THE RULE OF LIFE

## SOME MODIFICATIONS TO THE CONSTITUTIONS

The General Chapter of 2012 voted for numerous changes to our Constitutions in the area of governance structures. However, it was not possible to approve a new definitive edition because after the Chapter the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) asked us to look again at the question of Vice-Provinces.

A provisional edition was published in 2013, containing a proposal to introduce Districts. The General Chapter of 2018 was therefore required to return to this proposition with a view to adopting it definitively. While doing so, it took the opportunity to return to three other points: initial formation (so that our Constitutions are in agreement with the Ratio Institutionis), the role of Assistant Visitor and the terms of office of the Provincial and the Visitor.

Therefore, we are only publishing here the changes made by this General Chapter to the provisional 2013 edition. These changes must, of course, receive the agreement of the CICLSAL.

### a. Initial Formation

59. Several forms of preparation to the Postulate are offered to aspirants. They are planned and organized by the Provinces and Districts within the combined framework of youth ministry and vocation ministry. These different forms - Juniorate, house for vocation discernment, individual accompaniment - should offer the candidates a first contact with the Brother's vocation and an initial accompaniment.

### b. Postulate

60. The candidate reaches the Postulate after a pre-postulancy period of at least one year.

61. The Postulate provides a more direct preparation for the Novitiate through a deeper experience of the Christian life and a more thorough discernment of the Lord's call. It preferably takes place in a house other than the Novitiate, but its director keeps in touch with the Master of novices. The modalities of the Postulate and its duration of at least one year, are determined within Provinces or Districts, and approved by the Superior General with the consent of his Council. Admission is the responsibility of the Major Superior.



c. **The Provincial**

99. After appropriate consultation with the members of the Province, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, **appoints the Provincial to a three-year term.**

The Provincial must be at least thirty-five years old and perpetually professed for five years. **He may be re-appointed for one three-year term, and exceptionally for a third term.** Upon leaving office, he cannot be a member of the next Provincial Council.

d. **The Visitor**

120. After appropriate consultation of the members of the District, the Superior General, with the consent of his council appoints the Visitor to a three-year term. The Visitor must be perpetually professed for five years. **He may be re-appointed for one three-year term, and exceptionally for a third term.** Upon leaving office, he cannot be a member of the next district council.

e. **The Assistant Visitor**

122. **The Visitor is helped by an Assistant Visitor.** The terms of his appointment and his role are the same as those of the Assistant Provincial, indicated in numbers 105 and 106 of the Constitutions.



## The EMMAUS disciples

**“**And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, who said, ‘The Lord has truly risen! He has appeared to Peter.’ Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him at the breaking of bread (Lk 24:33-35)



Let us also arise so that we might witness to the hope that dwells within us. Light illuminates the road of those who will bring it to their brothers. Let us be among them. Let us not waste time in the trap of self-absorption. But, let us go to our brothers and sisters, let us go to children and young people. Let us run to announce to them the Resurrection of the Lord.

Together, let us be prophets of the Fraternity that He came to inaugurate; He, the eldest of a multitude of brothers. It is He who unites us. We bear witness to His Presence by weaving a tapestry of relationships.



## The Superior General's Message

on 24th March, 2018



Brother Hervé Zamor, Superior general

Today the General Chapter begins: it is a question of writing a new page each day, of tracing new pathways of fraternity.

A conviction dwells in my heart: Jesus walks with us, Brothers and Lay Mennaisians, on our way to Emmaus. He joins us in our frailties, in our moments of despair and disappointment, in our preoccupations and discouragements to explain the Holy Scriptures, to warm our hearts, to share our bread. Nourished with the bread of His Word and His Body, we are ready to join the community of Jerusalem.

A new departure by the same route! The way is the

same yesterday, today and tomorrow. This way is Jesus. But it is always a new way: Jesus surprises us with his constant creativity.

This ever-new path that Jesus invites us to take is one that bids us to "return to the wellspring", learning to be his brother, deeply united to Him, "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). "Whenever we seek to return to the wellspring to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, there appear new ways, new creative methods, other forms of expression, more eloquent signs, words full of renewed meaning for the world of today." (EG, no. 11).

This ever-new path that Jesus shows us amounts to "reaching out to others", being 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 of the Religious Brother in the Church, No. 11).

This ever-new path that Jesus points us to is that of "daring to go to the peripheries". Doing this involves for us a double reality. First of all, we must let ourselves be evangelised by the poor through becoming close to them. In other words, "We are called to discover Christ in them, to lend our voice to their defence, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them and to welcome the mysterious wisdom that God wants to communicate to us through them." (EG, no. 198). We are subsequently called to involve ourselves in their lives and to teach them how to fish instead of giving them a fish each day.

This Chapter wants to invite each Brother, each member of the Mennaisian family, each young person in formation, each member of the educational community, to write a new page with audacity and creativity:

- By watering every day the little seed that the Lord has entrusted to each of us;
- By setting out in faith like Abraham who "trusted the Lord and continued his journey, even in difficult times"<sup>6</sup>. The God of the promise is always faithful;
- By marching on, no matter what: a hesitant stride or limping footsteps are always better than staying on the spot, trapped by one's own doubts or by fears for one's safety<sup>7</sup>;
- By renewing one's passion for God and compassion for children and young people, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. This is the specific recommendation of Jean-Marie de la Mennais: "The poorest and most unhappy young people, the least virtuous and the most difficult must be your favourites!";
- By knowing how to heal wounds with the oil of consolation, with mercy, solidarity, care and attention;
- By protecting the most fragile plants as any good gardener would do.

This Chapter was a time of grace for the whole Congregation. God visited us and gave us the grace of hope. The rain that will bring life to our deserts and dry lands is on the horizon.

This Chapter was a time of grace for the whole Congregation. It was a celebration of brotherhood. Brothers and lay people met and lived together an experience of discernment. Brothers learned to listen to one another in prayer and to discern together new pathways of fraternity, to live as brothers. The dawn of a new era of fraternity is coming!

This Chapter was a time of grace for the whole Congregation. We are celebrating our bicentenary. Inspired by Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, the new page that we are called to write must be written with the ink of communion, on the paper of collaboration.

This Chapter will remain a time of grace for the whole Congregation if each Chapter delegate becomes an ambassador of fraternity in the different areas of his life.

This Chapter will remain a time of grace for the whole Congregation if each community becomes a place of welcome, of forgiveness, of the healing of wounds, of deep fraternal communion, an "island of mercy in an ocean of indifference"<sup>8</sup>.

This Chapter will remain a time of grace for the whole Congregation if the Mennaisian family is, for Brothers and Laity, a source of life, of mutual sharing and of authentic fraternity for the mission.

This Chapter will remain a time of grace for the whole Congregation if each Province or District helps each Brother, each lay Mennaisian to centre his or her life more radically on Christ.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, Morning meditations at the Chapel of St. Martha Community, Rome, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Document published by the CICALSAL, Scrutate, no. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis' message for Lent, 2015.

"Stay with us, for evening is falling and the day is already coming to an end" (Lk 24:29). Like the disciples of Emmaus, we want to offer hospitality to our risen Lord. It is He who gives meaning, impetus, audacity and creativity to our New Page. It is He who helps us to discern "the right time for the little gesture, for the humility that knows how to offer a little bread and two fish for God to bless them (Cf Jn 6: 9), that knows how to perceive *in the small cloud like a man's hand*, the arrival of rain."<sup>9</sup>

Let us not be afraid! Let us move on to chart new pathways of fraternity because the risen Lord is here, and he always leads the way!

Life is in Jerusalem and not at Emmaus!

Life is on the ocean and not on the shore!

Life is at the wellspring and not in the desert!

Life is in the encounter and not in the withdrawal into one's shell!

Life is on the peripheries and not in the centre!

May the Virgin Mary, our Patroness, a Woman rich in humanity, a Woman who knew to "return to the wellspring", to "reach out to others" and to "dare to go to the peripheries", guide our steps on new pathways of fraternity!

**Brother Hervé ZAMOR,  
Superior General**

---

9 Document published by the CICLSAL, Scrutate, no. 18.

### New pathways of fraternity



At the end of the catechesis of Wednesday, March 21, Pope Francis greeted the members of the Chapter.



The members of the Chapter during an exchange in the Chapter Hall.



Brothers and Lay people at the General Chapter in Rome.

## CAPTIONS OF THE PHOTOS

Cover: Southern Cone Youth Meeting (Bialet Massé - Argentina): Argentina-Uruguay-Chile-Bolivia.

p 7: Group of children from Togo.

p. 11: Young people from Maldonado, Uruguay.

p 14: Adult Literacy Class, El Alto, Bolivia.

Youth of the Faith and Prayer Movement, France.

p 18 : Youth of San Gregorio School, Aguilar de Campóo, Spain

p. 19: Young Brothers of the Scholasticate of Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

p 23: Formation session of the members of the Mennaisian family, Uganda.

p 24 : Meeting of Mennaisian family, Quebec.

p 27 : Youth from Lycée La Mennais, Papeete, Polynesia.

p 33 : Students of the Mennaisian Schools, Haiti.

p 34 : Planting a tree at SDK La Mennais School, Larantuka, Indonesia.

p 40 : Animation at the John Paul II Center, Huatusco, Mexico.

# A NEW page...

*Here are the texts.*

*We now have a new page to write, or better still, a page we will continue to write day after day, moment by moment.*

*Just as it was 200 years ago, a page of living, ongoing history, written in faith and trust.*

*Today, we are invited to continue writing together, daring to take new pathways of fraternity.*

