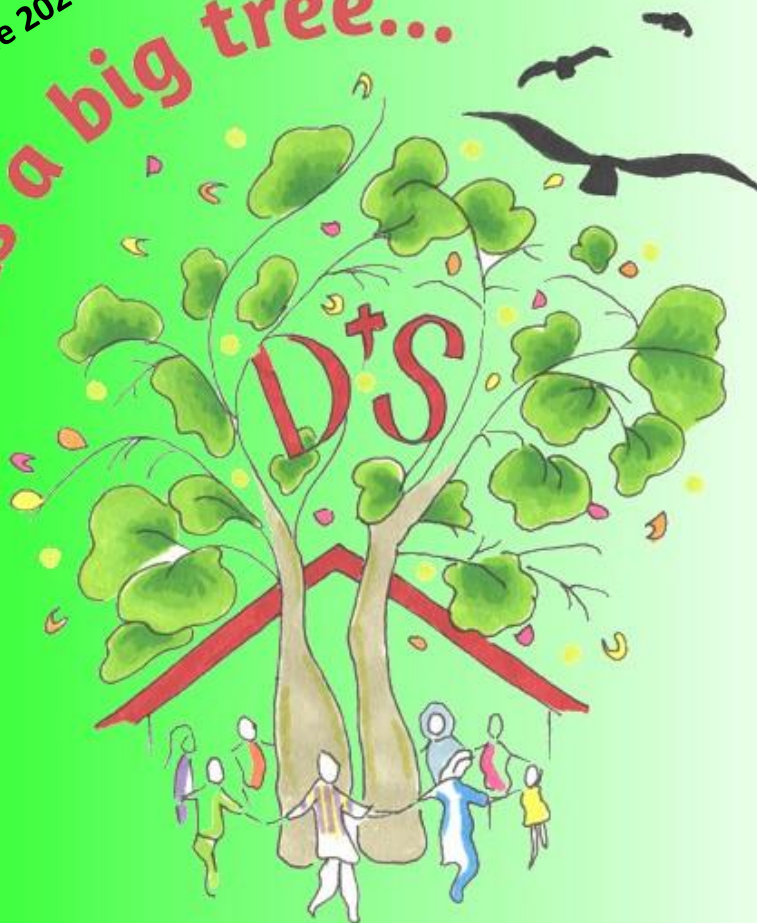


New Edition
Rome 2024

As a big tree...



THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY



DOCUMENT OF REFERENCE

STATUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION "LAY MENNAISIAN ASSOCIATES"

Brothers of Christian Instruction

THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

**New Edition
Rome 2024**

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Presentation of the new edition

From one General Chapter to the next, the Reference Text of the Mennaisian Family is enriched. Thus, on the proposal of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, the General Chapter of 2024 discussed and adopted a number of important modifications to this basic document. These changes concern the Chapter 4 – The Mennaisian Family – which describes our spiritual family and gives orientations for its life and development.

More specifically, it is the organization of the Mennaisian Family that has been reviewed and developed, at the local, Provincial or District, and international levels. Three convictions have motivated this evolution:

- 1) The need to anchor the Mennaisian Family at the local level. It only really exists through local fraternities where the Mennaisian charism is discovered and lived. Hence the addition of an important part (article no. 41) which can help these fraternities and other local groups to emerge, grow and progress.
- 2) The decisive role of the Commission for the animation of the Mennaisian Family at the Provincial or District level (n° 42). The new text provides additions and clarifications regarding its operation and its mission. It indicates some points of attention, in particular for relations with local fraternities, groups of Mennaisian Lay Associates (MLA) and the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family.
- 3) The reaffirmed importance of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, whose mission of animation and formation is specified (No. 45). An entire issue has been added to describe the functioning of this commission (No. 46). In particular, it provides for the creation of a Bureau (Executive Committee) of three members (one Brother and two Lay people) to give greater dynamism and flexibility to the functioning of the Commission.

We all know that texts are necessary to move forward and move in the same direction, but they are nothing without the commitment of people and the life they want to inspire and foster. This revised and enriched Reference Text will have achieved its goal if it allows the Mennaisian Family to continue to grow and bear fruit.

Rome, October 2024

Preface

The General Chapter of March 2018 invited Brothers and Laity to "*live more and more as members of the 'Mennaisian family' - in Mennaisian family mode*" (no 16). The Chapter wished that "*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*" (No. 17c) . The six Lay people of the International Commission of the Mennaisian family who participated in the first three days of the Chapter expressed the wish that "*the possibility of seeking the official recognition of our Statutes by the Church, through the means of the Congregation*" be studied.

In response to these calls or wishes from the last General Chapter, today we are publishing the new Document of Reference of the Mennaisian family, as well as the Statutes of the Association "Lay Mennaisian Associates". The first of these documents largely repeats the Document of Reference, published in April 2009. It is the culmination of a long process, the fruit of a synodal process. In April 2019, at the meeting of the Major Superiors of Portugalete, the General Council presented a first re-written draft of chapters 4 and 5. Following the various remarks and suggestions, a second version was developed which was submitted to the International Commission of the Mennaisian family, gathered in Rome, from October 2 to 4, 2019.

After this meeting, chapters 4 and 5 as well as the draft Statutes of the Association "Lay Mennaisian Associates" were sent to Major Superiors and to the various commissions of the Mennaisian family of Provinces and Districts for corrections, amendments and suggestions. During its ordinary session in February 2020, the General Council finalized the two

documents taking into account the contributions that were sent to it. On March 4, 2020, the Superior General, with the consent of his council, therefore approved the Document of Reference of the Mennaisian family and the Statutes of the Association "Lay Mennaisian Associates".

The Statutes were then submitted to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL). By approving them, the Church, through the CICLSAL and the Congregation, offers Lay Mennaisian Associates a specific framework for living the call to holiness that the Lord addresses to them.

This new publication therefore assembles in one two fundamental documents for our family. The **Document of Reference** presents the different roots and branches that form, constitute and nourish this large tree that represents the Mennaisian family. The **Statutes of the Association "Lay Mennaisian Associates"** offer a path to those *"who, in response to a personal call of the Holy Spirit, want to go and live their lives as baptized, in the Mennaisian family, through an official commitment as members of the Association "* (Statutes, no 2).

May these texts accompany the growth of what has already been sown and cause to germinate what will be thrown into the ground! Life belongs to those who dare to set out for the cause of God Alone by surrendering themselves to Providence. Fecundity is offered to those who know how to open their eyes, ears, hands and hearts to welcome the creativity and surprises of the Holy Spirit.

Brother Hervé Zamor
Superior General

**Document
of Reference
of the
Mennaisian
Family**

October 2024

1

INTRODUCTION

THE RAISON D'ÊTRE OF THE DOCUMENT

1. This document is an answer to a specific call from the Church so that we may faithfully live what is asked of us. The official Church documents ask us to live our mission in the new context of the shared mission. *“These new experiences of communion and cooperation should be encouraged for various reasons. They can in fact give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the Institute, which will then be in a position to ensure the continuity in the Church of the services typical of the Institute. Another positive consequence will be to facilitate more intense cooperation between consecrated persons and the laity in view of the Institute's mission.”*¹

¹ *Vita Consecrata*, n° 55

2. The shared mission seeks to discover new means of communion between Brothers and the Laity, thus continuing to actualise in the Church and in history the Mennaisian charism through keeping alive the spirituality and the mission inspired by the Spirit to John Mary de la Mennais. The same Spirit awakens in Brothers and lay people a wish for communion so that we may actualise God's design to save children and young people, especially the most needy, through Christian education.

3. The document ***"Starting Afresh from Christ"*** states: *"The experience of communion among consecrated persons results in an even greater openness to all other members of the Church... The fact that the charisms of founders and foundresses, having been born of the Spirit for the good of all, must once again be placed at the centre of the Church, open to communion and participation by all the People of God, is being increasingly discovered."*²

The present document, therefore, wishes to seek creative and faithful means of answering that call of the Spirit and of the Church. The 2006 General Chapter has stated: *"Today, one cannot understand the mission save as a shared mission."*

This document, therefore, seeks ways for Brothers and lay persons to implement this affirmation of the Chapter.

A FOUNDING EVENT

4. This document is the outcome of a lengthy process. After the Chapter of 2006, the General Council organised a vast survey among Brothers and lay people in countries where the Congregation is present. A letter of the Superior General to lay persons and Brothers accompanied the survey.

² *Starting Afresh from Christ*, n° 31

5. This survey revealed that a large number of Brothers and of lay persons were convinced that the Church is calling us today and that we should forge ahead with confidence and willingness to answer that call.

The General Council then went ahead with a first draft of a “document of reference for the shared mission”.

The document was circulated among a large number of Brothers and lay persons who studied it closely. Proposals from all countries surveyed made it possible to improve the first draft.

An international Mennaisian gathering, held in Ploërmel in August 2008, brought together some 80 Mennaisians, Brothers and lay persons from the five continents.

6. The assembly of Mennaisians was a founding event. The five-day session of deliberations, the pilgrimage to Mennaisian sites and the last day celebration have, under the promptings of the Spirit, pledged both Brothers and lay persons attending the session to a journey full of promise for the future.

From that time onwards, it became obvious that we would speak in terms of a family, the Mennaisian family. The Mennaisian family brings together Mennaisians who have heard the call to follow Christ, either as Brothers or as lay persons, in keeping with the charism given by the Spirit and transmitted by John Mary de la Mennais.

One of the participants expressed that call as follows:

Do you hear the call?

It is from Me; do not turn a deaf ear to it.

It is a spring; will you let it run, like living water, offering it to others?

*You are the sower; the seeds are life: I shall give the increase.
Go!*

Bro Yannick HOUSSAY – Edition April 2009

2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

7. It is through seeking ways open to us by the Spirit in the Church, through Church documents, especially synodal documents, that theological foundations can be established. We wish to walk the same road through which the Spirit led the Church to the shared mission. Thus, we discover a twofold call of the Spirit to the Church:

- a call to ecclesial communion as full manifestation of Christ, as the unique way of living the mission in the Church today and as the necessary road, in a mutual relationship, to discover our own identity.
- a call to discover the identity of each vocation.

8. The invitation of the Spirit to live the shared mission originates in the coming together of this twofold call. This shows us that Christian existence cannot be lived in isolation, in well-circumscribed and separate states of life. The theology of communion demands from us mutual acknowledgement, not only to recognise other styles of life, but also to discover the true identity of our particular gift.

A CALL TO COMMUNION

a) All are called to holiness

9. This is the vocation common to all Christians.

“Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: ‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph. 4, 5), sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity.”³

This common vocation is the source of the dignity of all vocations. *“We come to a full sense of the dignity of the lay faithful if we consider the prime and fundamental vocation that the Father assigns to each of them in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit: the vocation to holiness, that is, the perfection of charity... It is ever more urgent that today all Christians take up again the way of gospel renewal, welcoming in a spirit of generosity the invitation expressed by the apostle Peter ‘to be holy in all conduct’ (1 Pt 1:15).”⁴*

10. The source of this ecclesial communion is the communion of the Trinity and constitutes the true mystery of the Church. *“Again we turn to the words of Jesus: ‘I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser... Abide in me and I in you’” (Jn 15: 1, 4).*

These simple words reveal the mystery of communion that serves as the unifying bond between the Lord and his disciples, between Christ and the baptized: a living and life-giving communion through which Christians no longer belong to themselves but are the Lord's very own, as the branches are one with the vine.

The communion of Christians with Jesus has, as its model and source, the Trinity, that is the unity of the Son with the Father in the gift of the Holy Spirit. United to the Son in the Spirit's bond of love, Christians are united to the Father.

³ *Lumen Gentium*, n° 32

⁴ *Christifideles Laici*, n° 16

Jesus continues: *"I am the vine, you are the branches"* (Jn 15: 5). The communion that Christians experience in Christ gives rise to the communion which they experience with one another since all are branches of a single vine, namely, Christ. This fraternal communion is the wonderful reflection and participation in the mystery of the intimate life of the love of God as Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus prays for the accomplishment of this communion: *"That they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me"* (Jn 17: 21).

Such communion is the very mystery of the Church, as the Second Vatican Council reminds us.⁵

b) A communion of charisms, of vocations and of states in life

11. *"Ecclesial communion is more precisely likened to an 'organic' communion, analogous to that of a living and functioning body. In fact, at one and the same time it is characterized by a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities."*⁶

This common vocation is lived in keeping with the different charisms and states in life. *"In Church Communion the states of life by being ordered one to the other are thus bound together among themselves. They all share in a deeply basic meaning: that of being the manner of living out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love. They are different yet complementary, in the sense that each of them has a basic and unmistakable character which sets each apart, while at the same time each of them is seen in relation to the other and placed at each other's service... Thus in the diversity of the states of life and the variety of vocations this same, unique mystery of the Church reveals and experiences anew the infinite richness of the mystery of Jesus Christ."*⁷

⁵ *Christifideles Laici*, n° 18

⁶ *Ibid.*, n° 20

⁷ *Ibid.*, n° 55

We are thus led to share one concrete facet of the figure of Christ, to give flesh to the charismatic word which has been entrusted to us. *“Conciliar ecclesiology has shed light on the complementarity of the different vocations in the Church which are called to be, together in every situation and place, witnesses of the Risen Lord. Encounter and collaboration among religious men, religious women, and lay faithful are seen as an example of ecclesial communion and, at the same time, they strengthen apostolic energies for the evangelization of the world... Collaboration and exchange of gifts become more intense when groups of lay persons share, by vocation and in the way proper to them, in the heart of the same spiritual family, in the charism and mission of the institute. In this way, fruitful relationships, based on bonds of mature co-responsibility and supported by regularly scheduled programmes of formation in the spirituality of the institute will be established. Naturally, very close collaboration should be worked out with respect for the reciprocal vocations and different styles of life proper to religious and to lay persons.”*⁸

12. It is this twofold call of the Spirit for identity and communion which forms, in a dynamic way, the foundation of the shared mission. This is the conclusion reached by *Vita Consecrata*: *“This Synod, coming after the ones dedicated to the lay faithful and to priests, completes the treatment of the distinctive features of the states of life willed by the Lord Jesus for his Church. Whereas the Second Vatican Council emphasized the profound reality of ecclesial communion, in which all gifts converge for the building up of the Body of Christ and for the Church's mission in the world, in recent years there has been felt the need to clarify the specific identity of the various states of life, their vocation and their particular mission in the Church. Communion in the Church is not uniformity, but a gift of the Spirit who is present in the variety of charisms and states of life.”*⁹

⁸ *Fraternal Life in Community*, n° 70

⁹ *Vita Consecrata*, n° 4

CALL TO IDENTITY

a) Identity of the lay vocation

13. According to *Lumen Gentium*, the vocation of lay people is the quest of the Kingdom of God through the management of temporal concerns. *“But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.”*¹⁰

14. Lay persons are called upon to live their mission as a Church mission which is also Christ's mission. *“The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished... Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself ‘according to the measure of Christ's bestowal’.”*¹¹

15. Lay persons are called upon to manifest themselves, to walk out of anonymity and cease to be faceless Christians. *“The Church's rich variety is manifested still further from within each state of life. Thus within the lay state diverse ‘vocations’ are given, that is, there are different paths in the spiritual life and the apostolate which are taken by individual*

¹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, n° 31

¹¹ *Ibid.*, n° 33

*members of the lay faithful. In the field of a 'commonly shared' lay vocation 'special' lay vocations flourish."*¹²

16. Lay persons must share the wealth of their charisms and ministries with other vocations in the Church. *"Church communion then is a gift, a great gift of the Holy Spirit, to be gratefully accepted by the lay faithful, and at the same time to be lived with a deep sense of responsibility. This is concretely realized through their participation in the life and mission of the Church, to whose service the lay faithful put their varied and complementary ministries and charisms."*

A member of the lay faithful *"can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship, rejoicing in an equal dignity and common commitment to bring to fruition the immense treasure that each has inherited. The Spirit of the Lord gives a vast variety of charisms, inviting people to assume different ministries and forms of service and reminding them, as he reminds all people in their relationship in the Church, that what distinguishes persons is not an increase in dignity, but a special and complementary capacity for service.."*¹³

b) Identity of the Brother's vocation

17. The Apostolic Exhortation 'Vita Consecrata' which came after the 1994 Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life in the Church did make an important clarification concerning the religious Brothers (VC 60)¹⁴ :

According to this text, *"the consecrated life by its nature is neither lay nor clerical"*. Therefore, it has a specific value which is important to know well.

¹² *Christifideles Laici*, n° 56

¹³ *Ibid.*, n° 20

¹⁴ The document of CICLSAL, The Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church, strongly bases its reflection on this number 60 of Vita Consecrata.

It is true that, according to the traditional terminology, we call the Institutes of Brothers, « *Lay Institutes* »¹⁵. « *Nonetheless, John-Paul the Second says, the Synod pointed out that this terminology does not adequately express the particular nature of the vocation of the members of these Religious Institutes. In fact, although they perform many works in common with the lay faithful, these men do so insofar as they are consecrated, and thereby express the spirit of total self-giving to Christ and the Church, in accordance with their specific charism. For this reason, the Synod Fathers, in order to avoid ambiguity and confusion with the secular state of the lay faithful, proposed the term Religious Institutes of Brothers.* »

18. Each congregation is called upon to discover its own identity in the broad spectrum of religious life. *“It is therefore necessary to promote an institute's charismatic identity, especially to avoid a kind of genericism, which is a true threat to the vitality of a religious community.”*¹⁶

To discover and to live the charismatic identity is an indispensable condition for the realization of a true communion of vocations to the service of the mission. *“In order to achieve such an objective, however, it is necessary to have: religious communities with a clear charismatic identity, assimilated and lived, capable of transmitting them to others and disposed to share them; religious communities with an intense spirituality and missionary enthusiasm for communicating the same spirit and the same evangelising thrust; religious communities who know how to animate and encourage lay people to share the charism of their institute, according to their secular character and according to their different style of life, inviting them to discover new ways of making the same charism and mission operative. In this way, a religious community becomes a centre radiating outwardly, a spiritual force, a centre of animation, of fraternity creating fraternity, and of communion and ecclesial collaboration, where the different contributions of each help build up the Body of Christ, which is the Church.”*¹⁷

¹⁵ cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, n° 10; *Vita Consecrata*, n° 60

¹⁶ *Fraternal Life in Community*, n° 46

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, n° 70

3

MENNAISIAN ITINERARY

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1982

19. This was the first Chapter where the subject of *associate members* was raised. There is no mention of it in the document of the Chapter as two major questions were discussed, namely, the priesthood in the Congregation and the new Rule of Life, which monopolised people's attention. But, as we shall see, the Chapter of 1988 affirms that the 1982 Chapter broached the subject.

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1988

20. This is the first Chapter which addresses the idea of the shared mission in a systematic way.

In schema 402 which deals with "Our heritage", it is said with reference to our spirituality: "*to share it eventually with the laity*".

But schema 403 is entitled: "*The associate members*". It contains the following proposal: "*The Congregation of the Brothers of Christian Instruction accepts to associate other persons who so wish, to*

participate in its mission, to share in its spiritual life, and even to share some moments of its community life. Associates are in no way bound by canonical ties to the Congregation of the Brothers of Christian Instruction. They commit themselves in accordance with norms which will be defined by the general and particular regulations of the Congregation.

21. To implement this proposal, the Chapter lays out a series of general and particular rules which can be summed up as follows:

“The Mennaisian family may invite, at different levels, men and women who wish to deepen their Christian life in accordance with the style and the spirituality of our Congregation but in keeping with their state in life.”

“They bind themselves to the Congregation through a personal commitment in accordance with statutes approved by the Provincial council.”

“The Congregation accompanies and supports lay associates in their spiritual and apostolic commitment. It offers associates the necessary formation to know and deepen the Brothers’ spirit and it invites associates to meetings with communities.”

“Both the Congregation and associates are autonomous and independent professionally, financially and civilly.”

The particular regulations stipulate: *“The rules and the statutes should specify:*

- the forms of presentation, admission and formation.*
- the nature and frequency of meetings between associates and communities.*
- the places of apostolic commitment, according to pledge, age and health.”*

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1994

22. Among the four priorities defined by the Chapter, the fourth one reads as follows: *“Our mission in schools: a shared mission.”*

The third paragraph states: *“Intensify efforts underway to share our charism with all members of the educational community and in all places of work.”*

To shed greater light on the subject, part of Cardinal Solano’s speech to the Chapter is quoted:

“Associate to your apostolate the teachers who work with you, your students, the families and other Christians who share your concerns as educators and evangelizers. With you, lay educators discover in your living tradition the spirit which allows them to share your educational endeavours. They are the first witnesses to the actualization of the charism which the founders have entrusted to you and to which they can participate by living up to the demands of their vocation as baptised Christians in the context of your apostolate.”

Among the objectives is the following: *“Intensify efforts underway to share our charism with all members of the educational community.”*

In schools, the following is recommended: *“Assess our relationships with lay persons; share posts of responsibility with them.”*

At the level of the Province: *“Associate lay persons to our spirituality and to our activities, especially through developing the experience of associate members.”*

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2000

23. One of the documents of the Chapter is entitled “A Shared Mission”.

In the introduction one can read: *“The charism of the Congregation is alive thanks to the commitment, alongside Brothers, of young people and adults aware of the importance of their vitality for today’s world.”* When we accept to work and live together in fidelity to the charism, we notice a mutual enrichment and a reaffirmation of the identity of each vocation.

On the way, we find a few reservations on the part of Brothers and lay persons alike. *“The need is felt to define clearly what the shared mission is.”*

24. The orientation taken by the Chapter is the following one:

“Mennaisian Brothers and lay persons are invited to pursue their efforts with boldness, to set out on the journey with confidence, to live the shared mission together in the Church Communion, family of God.”

The orientation is then applied at various levels:

- The educational Mennaisian charism

In this paragraph, one can read: *“At the level of the Congregation and of each Province, a flexible frame of reference should be addressed to communities of Brothers and of lay persons to foster living out the shared mission; specify the various forms which the shared mission can take, taking into consideration different levels of commitment.”*

- Communities and Mennaisian teams

“Invite communities to integrate the shared mission in their community projects:

Propose community meetings between Brothers and lay persons.

Renew vocation pastoral care.

Communication, information.

Provide the means to share experiences among Provinces and sectors.”

- At the level of the Congregation and at the instigation of the General Council, propose the establishment of the international Mennaisian network.

25. The General Chapter has also wished to clarify some traits of the Mennaisian spirituality as elements of a true apostolic spirituality:

« Here are the few characteristics of the Mennaisian spirituality, which seem particularly well developed and experienced these days by every Brother, every community, throughout the Congregation:

- *the search for the will of God in daily life (experience of Gethsemane);*
- *the primacy of God Alone;*
- *abandonment to Providence lived as availability;*

- *humility leading to self-denial in following Jesus who calls us by name to serve the people of our time (cf. D 42, 61).*
- *a desire to resemble Jesus (Mk 10, 13-16) by being a brother “as the service of God’s people, especially the young, with a preference for the poor (C 1)”.*

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2006

26. The second part of the Chapter’s report is entitled: *“At the service of the shared mission: deepening the Mennaisian educational shared mission between Brothers and lay persons.”*

One of the convictions reads as follows: *“In Church Communion, mission is a shared mission. The shared mission is the road to hope and to fecundity for the Congregation.”*

27. The second paragraph of the Chapter’s document mentions three main orientations:

- **The Mission:** *“The Brothers and the lay persons who share the Mennaisian charism live the educational mission as a source of personal sanctification and as fulfilment of their vocation.”*
- **The shared Mission:** *“Brothers commit themselves to the shared mission as a way to achieve communion. They realise that discerning and living the shared mission in everyday situations requires a change of heart...”*

*“Communities are opened to the shared mission for sessions of formation, for sharing peak moments of community living and prayer life with lay people, especially with **the associates**.”*

*“**Associates** are men and women who follow a vocational orientation which allows them to live their Christian life in line with the Mennaisian spirituality and mission. The commitment which they make is public, stable and, in the absence of a recognised association of lay Mennaisians, that commitment is endorsed by the Congregation.”*

“Brothers and lay people commit themselves to presenting all vocations in a positive light, with special emphasis on the vocation to the brotherhood.”

- **Shared Mission and formation:** *“The shared mission can express itself in a variety of ways compatible with personal itineraries and local circumstances. Communities incorporate in the community projects joint sessions of formation with lay people who share our charism.”*

“The General Council will work out a framework of reference for the implementation of the shared mission.”

28. It is this Chapter which introduces an article on the shared mission in the Directory. The number reads as follows: *“The shared mission is a call of the Spirit addressed to the Brothers and to the laity to live in communion with the Mennaisian charism. In the context of the shared mission, the Brother is called to be a witness to the primacy of God, a prophetic sign of fraternity and a living memory of the charism. With lay persons, the community discerns the mission, shares and deepens the spirituality and the sense of the mission, involves itself in experiences of communion and of collaboration while respecting the demands proper to different states in life.”*

INTERNATIONAL MENNAISIAN ASSEMBLY OF 2008

29. *In August 2008, the first Mennaisian International Assembly, bringing together around 80 Mennaisians, Brothers and Lay people, from 5 continents, was the founding event of the Mennaisian family, and gave the first reference text of April 2009.*

(Cf. introduction by Bro Yannick HOUSSAY p.8.)

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2012

30. Most of the documents in this Chapter mention the Brothers and Lay people who are all concerned by the orientations which were taken.

Fourteen Lay Mennaisians were invited to dialogue with Capitular Assembly for two days. The text written following these discussions highlights three orientations:

- Sent to evangelize. A common mission: to witness, to discern, to accompany.
- Formed to witness. A vital choice: to be formed and to form.
- In partnership: Lay people and Brothers. With precise calls:
 - To strengthen the ties in the Mennaisian family.
 - To adapt structures at different levels and create an International commission.
 - To develop communion for the mission.

INTERNATIONAL MENNAISIAN ASSEMBLY OF 2015

31. The 2nd International Assembly of the Mennaisian family was held in Ploërmel from August 16 to 21, 2015 with 90 participants of 25 different nationalities. All the thinking was organized around four main themes: Mission Team - Formation - Organisation of the Mennaisian family and Mennaisian Educational Project.

Following this meeting, the provinces or districts were invited to set up an Animation Commission for the Mennaisian family. At the level of the Congregation was created the International Commission of the Mennaisian family, composed of Lay people and Brothers of the General Council.

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2018

32. The 2018 Chapter involved the whole Mennaisian family in the sense of the orientations that were taken concern both lay people and Brothers, in particular on:

- The educational mission: the call to develop a culture of fraternity.
- Vocation Ministry: a vital importance to the Mennaisian family.
- Formation: to form formators for our common future.

The Brothers and Lay people present for a part of the Chapter also gave specific orientations for the Mennaisian family. We can highlight the following:

- The call to "each Brother and each community to think and live more and more as members of the Mennaisian family – in a Mennaisian family mode" (n ° 16).
- The insistence on the need for "a structure that will bring greater dynamism and life" for the Mennaisian family.
- The specific attention to "Mennaisian Young Adults" within the Mennaisian family, by a specific document.

NEW DOCUMENT OF REFERENCE OF 2020

33. The work of re-writing the Document of Reference, already undertaken by the International Commission of the Mennaisian family before the General Chapter 2018, has been continued to culminate in this new Document of Reference 2020. This text provides clarifications on the composition of the Mennaisian family and takes into account the existence of the Association "Lay Mennaisian Associates", whose Statutes have been approved by the CICLSAL. It also incorporates the organizational elements that have appeared since the publication of the first Document of Reference

4

THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

The Mennaisian family in the Church

34.The Mennaisian family is a spiritual family founded on the charism received from Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, passed on to the first Brothers to be lived, preserved, deepened and constantly developed in the ever-growing Body of Christ. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, People of God, for a particular mission, according to a specific form of living the gospel.

The composition of the Mennaisian family

35.The Mennaisian family regroups:

- The Religious Brothers who belong to the Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Instruction of Ploërmel,
- Associate members belonging to the Association of Lay Mennaisians (LMA),
- Other members, groups, or associations that make reference to the Mennaisian charism.

Paths of life in the Mennaisian family

36. To those who participate in a Mennaisian educational project or who belong to a Mennaisian group, or who simply come into contact with the Mennaisian family, it is possible to follow the following itineraries:

- ***From the educational mission***

Some educators, parents, students, or alumni, etc., who participate in one way or another in the Mennaisian educational mission with a positive and stimulating attitude, who collaborate effectively in the work and develop interpersonal relationships characterized by links of simplicity and hospitality, make the choice to know and live the fundamental characteristics of the Mennaisian identity. Little by little they discover the richness of the proper way of living the Gospel in the light of the Mennaisian charism.

Others, who are not directly involved in a Mennaisian educational work, but who are in contact with Brothers or Laity of the Mennaisian family, find in it an invitation to adopt the basic lines of the charism within the framework of their own Christian commitments. They then decide to participate in forms of community life within the Mennaisian family where they nourish their Christian life.

- ***from the spiritual experience***

Men and women discover in the elements of Mennaisian spirituality a source that nourishes the interior dimension of their lives. They share with a community or a group of Brothers and / or Laity, times of prayer and formation that allow them to know and to incarnate the evangelic mennaisian figure in their own daily lives. The formation itineraries proposed help to deepen this dimension.

They seek to put into practice dimensions of the Mennaisian identity through educational and pastoral commitments included in projects developed in conjunction with their community of reference. These commitments are worked out in

keeping with the orientations of the Mennaisian family in their sector of origin.

The diversity of the members of the Mennaisian family

37. Other than the Brothers, among those who are members of the Mennaisian family,

- Some refer on other realities other than the Mennaisian family. They have life options that do not rely on Christian faith, but which express human values that give strength to the Mennaisian educational project. Others are already engaged as lay people in the Church as belonging to another charismatic family, or an ecclesial movement, or as lay people involved in their Parish.
- Others still feel attracted by the Mennaisian charism without perceiving it as a shared call. They have bonds with the Mennaisian reality; they admire the quality, the reception, the witness and the mission of the Brothers and the Lay people for whom the Mennaisian charism corresponds to a vocation.
- Others, finally, having lived one or the other of the paths presented above, have discovered the Mennaisian charism as the path of their vocation as Laity in the Church and in the world. They feel challenged by the Charism to the point of personally choosing it as a form of life to enable them grow as disciple-missionaries. These lay people can be part of the Mennaisian groups and engage in the Association “Lay Mennaisian Associates”.

The Mennaisian groups

38. In the Church-Communion, the Mennaisian family is a communion of communities. Its members can participate in different forms of community experience:

- **Mennaisian Communities.** They are communities constituted by a community of Brothers and some Lay people who have a common project and periodically share prayer, mission, formation and other community moments.
- **Mennaisian Fraternities.** They are groups made up of Lay people and Brothers, or Lay people only who are connected with a community of Brothers of reference, or a group of communities, or a District or Province.
- **Other Mennaisian groups of sharing and reflection** connected with a Province or a District.

The Lay Mennaisian Associates

Association “Lay Mennaisian Associates”

39. The Association “Lay Mennaisian Associates” brings together the lay members of the Mennaisian family who, through an official commitment, associate themselves to the Congregation.

This Association has Statutes and was recognised by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), as an Association of the Faithful, associated to the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Instruction

«Associations whose members, participating in the world in the spirit of a religious institute; lead the apostolic life and tend to Christian perfection under the higher direction of this institute, are called third-orders or bear another appropriate name». (Code of Canon Law No. 303)

in conformity with n ° 303 of the Code of Canon Law.

The Association is organized in the various

entities of the Congregation (Provinces and Districts) according to the Statutes, in connection with the Major Superiors concerned.

Locally, the groups of Lay Mennaisian Associates may have a civil recognition.

Lay Mennaisian Associates

40. After a process of formation, discernment and with appropriate accompaniment, the Lay persons of the Mennaisian family can decide to officially commit themselves in the Association. They are called “Lay Mennaisian Associates”.

Organisation of the Mennaisian family

41. LOCAL MENNAISIAN FRATERNITY¹⁸

41.1. The basic unit : The Mennaisian Fraternity is the basic unit of the Mennaisian Family. It is made up of Lay people or Brothers and Lay people. The members meet periodically, ideally once a month to pray together and strengthen fraternal bonds. They share in the mission of the Institute, each according to his or her talents, with a focus on serving the poorest.

41.2. The animator and his mission: The fraternity members elect an Animator who serves a mandate of three years. This mandate is renewable once. The animator’s mission is one of service and consists of:

¹⁸ Note : Other realities of the Mennaisian Family exist. (Cf. N°38)

- implementing the proposals of the Province or District
- animating the fraternity whilst fostering unity and the participation of all
- maintaining cordial relations with the community of Brothers and with other Mennaisian groups.

41.3. **Meetings:** Through meetings, the fraternity seeks to express and develop the identity of its members as belonging to the Mennaisian Family, taking into account the following essential elements: sharing of life and mission, times of prayer, formation, celebration, community discernment, organisation and conviviality.

41.4 **Des points d'attention :** Afin de garantir la qualité des liens fraternels, il est important de prêter une attention particulière à ces éléments :

41.4. **Points to consider:** To preserve healthy fraternal relationships, it is important to pay particular attention to the following:

- The reasonable size that facilitates good relationships among the members
- The choice of the animator
- The preparation of the meetings
- The regular and active participation by all members.

42. Commission for the animation of the Mennaisian family of the Province or District

42.1. Composition

The Brother Provincial or the Brother Visitor, with the consent of his Council, in liaison with the Laity of the Mennaisian family, and in consultation with the General Council through the Assistant

concerned, decides to set up a Commission of animation of the Mennaisian family. He ensures a balanced representation.

As an indication, this Commission may be composed of:

- Brothers designated by the Major Superior and his Council,
- Members of the Association “Lay Mennaisian Associates”,
- Lay members representing the groups or realities of the Mennaisian family in the Province or District.

The Brother Provincial or the Brother Visitor who is a member by right.

The procedures for choosing or electing members of the Commission of Animation are defined by the Province or the District.

Where such a Commission does not yet exist, the Provincial Council or District Council will assume the function of leading the MF on a provisional basis.

42.2. Operation

1. The mandate of the participants may be 3 years, renewable once.
2. The Commission elects from among its members one coordinator and two other members who constitute the committee. This committee organizes the meetings of the Commission and ensures the implementation of its mission.
3. The coordinator is the reference person of the Mennaisian family Animation Commission to the authorities who may request for it (Congregation, Diocese, etc.).

4. The Commission may set up working groups from among its members.

42.3. Mission

The Provincial or District Commission is the principal animator of the Mennaisian Family. It will:

1. To promote the Mennaisian charism, notably through joint formation programmes, Brothers and Lay people, and proposals of resourcefulness.
2. To ensure the communion of various groups of the Mennaisian family engaged in the educational and evangelising mission of the youth.
3. To Foster fraternal links between the Lay people and the Brothers.
4. To stimulate the vocational pastoral animation that promotes vocations of Brothers and of the committed Lay persons.
5. To ensure that all groups of the Mennaisian family of the Province and District develop a common culture, through communication and articulation of all animation proposals.
6. To respond to requests from the General Council when it comes to choosing Mennaisian family delegates for the formation or animation initiatives on an international level.
7. To Support links with other Mennaisian family Commissions of the Provinces or Districts of the Congregation, especially those who are on the same continent or speak the same language.

8. To reflect and to set up a financial organization within the Mennaisian family in support of animation projects.
9. To celebrate an annual Mennaisian Family Day.
10. To propose initiatives for the development of the Mennaisian charism of education and evangelisation of young people.
11. To encourage the development of Young Adult Mennaisian groups.
12. Further points to consider:
 - The Commission should oversee the emergence and accompaniment of local fraternities, regularly distributing formation resources.
 - It should collaborate actively in the formation of those who express the desire to live as Lay Mennaisian Associates and promote the development of this Association.
 - The Commission serves as a link with the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family. It makes known the theme of the year proposed by the Congregation and encourages the participation in international formation initiatives.
 - It organises meetings that encourage a spirit of unity among neighbouring fraternities.

International Commission of the Mennaisian family

43. Composition

- Brother Superior General and the Brothers Assistants,

- A member of the Association “Lay Mennaisian Associates” according to the Statutes of the Association.
- 5 or 6 lay people, who are members of the animation Commissions of the Mennaisian family in the Provinces and Districts. The mandate is of three (3) years, renewable once. The criteria and modalities of designation as well as distribution are determined by the International Commission.

The Brother Secretary General of the Congregation acts as its Secretary.

44. Fonctionnement

- Meetings: The Commission meets at least once in person during its mandate and as many times as necessary online.
- The Executive: The Commission designates from among its members an Executive of three members (one Brother and two Lay people). This Executive organises and leads the meetings of the Commission and oversees the implementation of its mission.
- Working groups: The Commission may set up working groups, e.g. theme of the year and formation, accompaniment of the Lay Mennaisian Associates (LMA), the Young Adult Mennaisians (YAM), missionary projects and volunteering, etc. In carrying out their tasks, the members of these groups may call on other resource persons.
- Collaboration: The ICMF works in close collaboration with the Province or District Commissions, and where they do not yet exist, with the Province or District Councils.

45. Mission

The International Commission of the Mennaisian Family animates, in particular, all that concerns the spiritual life, fraternal bonds, apostolic commitment, and formation.

It establishes general guidelines and takes decisions that ensure the proper functioning and unity of the Mennaisian Family

By:

- Fostering communication at the Mennaisian Family level
- promoting communication at the Mennaisian family level
- encouraging formation initiatives and the sharing of resources
- proposing initiatives for the development of the Mennaisian charism for the education and evangelization of the children and youth.

5

THE LAY PERSON IN THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY VOCATION AND IDENTITY

46. This chapter has as its aim to suggest a spiritual itinerary to those who feel called to deepen their presence in the Mennaisian family.

It only indicates some highlights on this path.

«Christ fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. » (GS 22).

«All the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect». (Vat. II, Lumen Gentium, n° 11)

«Lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world. » (*Christifideles Laici*, n° 2)

«All Christians have received this vocation: none of us will enter into the bosom of God, unless he conforms to the image of his Son. » (JMLM, Sermons II, p.497)

«When God says he wants our sanctification, it is as if he said... that may our thoughts conform to his thoughts and that may we be his living image! » (JMLM, Sermons II, p.632)

A Vocation

47. On the way of our religious institutes, in Church communion, a new chapter has opened, with great hope: The Spirit invites the lay faithful to live their baptismal consecration through the charisms that have their origin in the Congregations religious life.

In the groups of those who forge links with the Mennaisian family, some discover a **particular call** to live according to the **Mennaisian charism**. «Under the name of Laity we mean here all the faithful, to the exclusion of the members engaged in a Holy orders and in a consecrated life recognized by the Church; that is to say, the faithful who, after having been incorporated into Christ by baptism, were associated with the People of God and rendered in their own way, participants in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ, and who exercise for their part, the mission devolving on the entire Christian people in the Church and in the world». (LG, n°31, § 1)

48. The Lay person in the Mennaisian family recognizes himself/herself as one called by God to live the following of Christ, in the wake and with the passion of Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes.

He or she actively collaborates in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Touched by the reality of children and young people, his /her

bowels shudder with mercy"¹⁹ before the needs of the weakest and most neglected; he or she becomes good news for them.

This **call** is lived according to the different dimensions of all Christian life: **spirituality, mission and communion.**

Spirituality: A heart shaped by the Spirit

49. The Lay person of the Mennaisian family is called to an authentic Christian spiritual life that is to say to a life according to the Spirit. Walking in the footsteps of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, he/she makes "Mennaisian spirituality", with its characteristic features, a guide for his/her personal life in the Church, to respond to the call to holiness received at baptism.

«To stand always in total dependence of the Spirit of God, and never grieve him: to be attentive to recognize what he asks us to often consult him, and when we are uncertain of the part we must take, pray to him with a new zeal to be the light of our heart. » (JMLM, Memorial, p.15)

Discernment. The Lay person understands the following of Christ as an experience of discernment in everyday life. He recognizes in the fundamental elements of the Mennaisian Charism a means that allows him to discover, read, understand and welcome the calls of the Holy Spirit in view of letting oneself to always be more and more configured to Christ.

¹⁹ cf. Mt 9:36; Mc 6, 34; Lk 15:20 - "The feelings I feel ... take on new strength every day, because every day they are excited by what I hear from all sides, and by the requests addressed to me. by a crowd of venerable and holy pastors whose voice is, if I may express myself in this way, full of tears (...). And I, priest, to whom their soul is entrusted, I who in the day of judgment will answer it before God, I beg you to form as soon as possible the establishment for so long desired, long awaited! If you delay a little, the wolf will enter the sheepfold, and under the eyes of the pastor, will devour the flock. (JMLM, Sermons II, p. 538-539)

Unity of life. His or her spiritual life colours his or her whole existence, giving meaning to everything he/she lives and does, especially for the support of children and more disadvantaged youth. The charism leads him/her to see God in everything and to live the presence of the Lord in prayer and the mission, in family and at work, in the liturgy of the "temple" and in the "temple"²⁰ of daily life.

Guardian angel of the little ones. The Lay person nourishes himself/herself on a double presence: The presence of the Lord, whose face he/she contemplates, and renders it present to the children; and the presence to children and youth. Two presences that penetrate each other and are lived as a reflection of the same love.²¹

Image of Jesus. In his/her family life and work, he/she seeks to be the image of Jesus, to manifest his love, his mercy and his tenderness. He/she also teaches the little ones the simplicity and the humility that allows the reception of the Kingdom and the abandon of oneself into the hands of God.

Abandoned to Providence. Knowing oneself as "received from God,"²² he/she abandons himself/herself in peace to Providence, and cultivates his/her relationship with God by making his/her life an offering united to that of Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Cultivating the inner man. A Lay Mennaisian discovers God in the light of his Word read in Church, and in a continuous dialogue with the world. He/she cultivates the inner life through the experience of interior and exterior silence, to give priority to the Word of God in the face of other words.

Mary, Mother and model of life. In contemplating Mary, Mother of God, he/she is invited to cultivate humility, a fundamental disposition

²⁰ "Your school is a temple ..." (JMLM, Sermons II, p.562)

In Mennaisian spirituality, the presence in the world and the presence to God are reconciled. This is called the unity of life.

²¹ Cfr. Merino-Olabarrieta, *Mennaisian Spirituality*, p.126

²² "He likes to see us sleeping peacefully on his breast: our peace is his glory - this thought is very comforting and the Christian heart that meditates it is delighted. (JMLM, Memorial, p.6), quoted in *Received from God, Mennaisian Studies*, n° 1, p. 11

that Jean-Marie de la Mennais wished for his Brothers. In Mary, faithful disciple of Jesus, a Lay Mennaisian finds a Mother, a teacher and a friend, on the way of his/her identification with Christ.

Mission: Image of Jesus Master in the midst of the 'little ones'

50. As a Baptized, the Lay member of the Mennaisian family is called to participate in the universal mission of the Church as "missionary disciple". Sharing the same charism with the Brothers, he/she engages with them in the mission of education and evangelization at the service of children and youth.

«Let the children come to me». (Mark 10:14)

«Jesus Christ was given to us for King, a teacher and a model; He is our leader; we are his members; We therefore enter in his designs, work on his undertakings, ... to continue his life; in a word, to be consumed in unity with him, as he is one with his Father». (JMLM, Sermons II, p.617)

«You are messengers of love and peace». (JMLM, Sermons II, p.404)

The Lay Mennaisian person identifies himself/herself with the project of God the Father who sends him as a servant, principally, but not exclusively, in the field of Christian education of children and youth, especially the poorest, in communion with the Congregation of the Brothers.

In the family and at work, he/she testifies to the fact that the Lord himself has gazed on him/her and has sent him/her to announce the good news of the Gospel that he/she makes present by the way of living the parables and miracles of the Kingdom.

Amidst the children and youth entrusted to him/her, the lay Mennaisian person strives to be a reflection of the face of Jesus. He/she seeks to make him known by his life of witness in the community.

The Lay Mennaisian person looks at reality with the heart of Jesus, and, like Him, he/she softens the suffering of the most fragile, those who are far away and live on the material and existential peripheries. He aims at responding with creative charity, as an instrument of the mercy of God, in the manner of Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes.

Participation in the mission can take many different forms, but everyone strives to keep abreast with the Mennaisian charism through prayer and action. To live as a missionary-disciple requires availability, discernment and commitment.

Communion: Artisan of communion

51. Member of the Communion Church, the Lay person of the Mennaisian family is called to live more and more fraternal relations and to be an artisan of communion and peace. His membership of the Mennaisian family has a community dimension, whose modalities may vary.

« My children, more than ever, we are but one; carry each other's burdens; that is how to keep the law of Christ (see Gal 6: 2). Let us have one heart to love God and unite all our strength to extend his reign. Courage and confidence, my children. Ah! if we are faithful to the end, our reward will be great in heaven. ». (JMLM, Sermons II, p.532)

The Lay person of the Mennaisian family, united with the Brothers and other Lay people, is a sign of a fraternity inaugurated by Christ.

He/she is an artisan of communion among the Brothers, the Laity, and lay and Brothers together. By his/her words and deeds, he/she engenders communion in his/her own family and in the workplace. With humility, puts his/her personal qualities at the service of the community. He/she does not seek to put oneself first; but rather by putting oneself out of the centre, he/she is a peacemaker.

In the Mennaisian family, the Lay person participates in one or other different community experiences: Mennaisian community, Mennaisian fraternity, other groups ... (See n° 33)

These community experiences can take into account the following elements:

- Share in community prayer on a regular basis.
- Take part in the retreats of the Province or District.
- Join in some Mennaisian celebrations of the local community, the Province or the District and involving oneself in their preparation.
- Participate periodically in a community meeting of Brothers and Lay Mennaisian persons.
- Associate oneself with the Mennaisian mission of the community, each according to his/her talents and being attentive to the service of the poorest.
- Cultivate the spirituality of communion between Brothers and Laity.

***Statutes of the
Association
“Lay Mennaisian
Associates”***

OCTOBER 2020



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Brother Hervé Zamor,
Superior General

to

Mgr José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Archbishop Secretary
Congregation of Institutes of
Consecrated Life
and Societies of Apostolic Life

Rome, March 9, 2020.

Object: Request for approval of the Statutes of the Association « Lay Mennaisian Associates »

Your Lordship,

In response to the Church's call to encourage "*new experiences of communion and collaboration*" (Vita Consecrata, no 55) between the lay faithful and consecrated persons, the Congregation of the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel has under-taken a long journey of deepening its foundational charism by offering it to all those who share its educational mission or who feel attracted by its spirituality. In fact, since our General Chapter in 1988, Brothers and Laity have learned to give each other mutual support on the path to holiness.

Everywhere in the Congregation, the presence of the laity "*has proved to be a source of renewal and fresh commitments, of audacious progress and new fecundity. We give thanks to God for these men and women who have heard the call to live the same charism as us. Our charism is a gift of the Spirit to the Church. It attracted us and it continues to attract lay people today*" (General Chapter 2018, no 16).

On the strength of this long experience of communion and of sharing our charism with the Laity, and in common accord with them, the General Chapter of March 2018 entrusted the general government of the Congregation with the mission of continuing discernment in order to come to "*an appropriate structure that will bring greater dynamism and life to our fraternal communion of Brothers and Laity together*" (General Chapter 2018, no 17).

Thus, after two years of synodal work, the General Council and some lay delegates drew up the Statutes of the Association "*Lay Mennaisian Associates*" whose members, participating in the world in the spirit of our Congregation, share our apostolate and tend to Christian perfection under the guidance of our Institute (cf. CDC, no 303). These statutes were therefore approved by the Superior General with the consent of his council on March 4, 2020.

Consequently, I submit these statutes to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life for approval.

Remaining at your entire disposition, Monsignor, I ask you to believe in my respectful and devoted sentiments in our Lord.

Brother Hervé Zamor
Superior General



CONGREGATIO
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Prot. N. V.47⁻¹/2017

DECREE

The Association *Lay Mennaisian Associates* is an association of the faithful whose members, according to Canon 303, wish to participate in the world in the charism of the Religious Institute of Pontifical Right of the *Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel*, founded by the Venerable Jean Marie Robert de la Mennais.


Sensitive to the call of the Church and eager to realize the call to holiness proper to each baptized person, the members of the Association, present in various nations, intend to live the ideal, the spirit and apostolic mission of the aforementioned Institute according to the specific condition of their state of life.

Considering the request presented on March 9, 2020 by the Superior General with the consent of his Council on the mandate of the General Chapter, this Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, after having carefully examined the Statutes, recognizes the Association *Lay Mennaisian Associates* as “a proper work” of the Institute and declares that it must be recognized by all as such.

At the same time, this Congregation approves the *Statutes* of this Association drawn up in the French language, according to the copy kept in the archives of the Dicastery.

Notwithstanding any contrary provisions.

From the Vatican, July 22, 2020,
on the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene,
Disciple of the Lord.


✠ José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Archevêque Secrétaire


João B. Card. de Aviz
Préfet

Nature and purpose

1. The Association “**Lay Mennaisian Associates**” is an association of the faithful whose members participate in the world in the charism and in the mission of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel, recognized by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life as a work proper to the Institute, according to canon 303 of the Code of Canon Law.

2. The “**Lay Mennaisian Associates**” are Catholic Christians, men and women, who, in response to a personal call of the Holy Spirit, want to live their lives as baptized, in the Mennaisian family, through an official commitment as members of the Association.

They commit themselves to live and announce the Gospel in the midst of the world, by referring to the Mennaisian charism and in privileged bond with the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Instruction of Ploërmel, according to their state of life and their profession. They want to live in availability, simplicity and self-sacrifice.

They thus intend to live their call to holiness according to Mennaisian spirituality, to walk together in fraternity in union with the Brothers and to participate in the universal mission of the Church by associating themselves with the mission of the Institute, in the footsteps of the Founders Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes.

A spiritual life centred on Christ

3. Desirous to be guided by the Spirit and to live a personal relationship with the risen Christ, the Lay Mennaisian Associates undertake to:

- develop their prayer life: Eucharist, personal and community prayer, listening to the Word of God,
- find in the elements of the Mennaisian spirituality a source to nourish their life of faith and their commitment as baptized,
- be open ever more to the realities of the Church and the world, with a merciful heart,

- carry in their prayers, in union with all the members of the Mennaisian family, the little ones, the poor and the abandoned, especially among the children and the youth.

In fraternal communion

4. The Lay Mennaisian Associates are called to live fraternal communion with the Brothers and within the Mennaisian family. Different forms of community experiences, respecting the identity of each one, are possible:

- Pray in community on a regular basis. Share in the recollections and retreats with a community of Brothers, a Province or a District,
- Participate in local or Provincial Mennaisian celebrations.
- Participate at some community meetings with the Brothers,
- Participate in the Mennaisian mission of the community or of the Province,
- Cultivate the spirituality of communion between the Brothers and the Lay people.

The Lay Mennaisian Associates are in relation with a community of reference of the Brothers. There they partake the experience sharing, fraternal support, common prayer and continue formation according to Mennaisian spirituality and for mission.

Membership to the Association is lived through Groups of Lay Mennaisian Associates of the sectors or country. These groups meet regularly for times of exchange, sharing and formation.

The participation to the mission of the Congregation

5. The Lay Mennaisian Associates put themselves at the service of the mission, according to their capacities and availability, for the Christian education of children and youth, especially the poorest, according to the spirit of the Founders.

Participation to the mission can be lived in direct collaboration with the Brothers in a common education and evangelization project or take part in a personal apostolate.

Participation to the mission can take many different forms, but all strive to actualize the Mennaisian charism by their prayer, their action. In the image the founders, the Lay Mennaisian Associates are attentive to the needs of the world and open to the calls of the Congregation and the Church that they strive to discern.

The Congregation can call upon the Lay Mennaisian Associates for a particular mission, including going abroad, but always attentive to their state of life and family situation. These particular missions will be subject of an agreement, valid at the civil level.

The path of discernment and formation to join the Association

6. Becoming a Lay Mennaisian Associate presupposes taking a path marked by stages so as to discern and deepen the innermost motivations of the desire for commitment and to form oneself to live the various dimensions of this commitment.

Each group of the Lay Mennaisian Associates in the different countries or sectors, put in place a formation programme for those who wish to commit themselves by joining the Association. A team of Brothers and Lay people, appointed by the Major Superior, is responsible for the follow-up this formation. The formation path should include:

- An initial personal step demonstrating and expressing the desire to engage in the Association.

- A period of discernment and initial formation:
 - Process of formation within a formation group
 - Formation path: knowledge of the charism in its different dimensions of spirituality, mission, and community experience
 - Reflection and personal prayer with regular times of accompaniment
- The time for decision making and request to take commitment, at least one year after the first step.

7. The application for commitment in the Association is addressed to the Major Superior of the Province or District or to his delegate. The Superior or the delegate then meets the person requesting, and conducts appropriate consultations. He admits the person based on the advice of the leaders of the Group of the Lay Mennaisian Associates.

For the renewals of this commitment, the modalities (request and admission) are specified by each Province or District.

The modalities of commitment, renewal, and leaving the Association

8. The commitment in the Association is at the start renewable each year for three years. Afterwards, the duration is of three years, renewable indefinitely.

The official commitment of a person is normally done in the course of a celebration, with the community of reference or during a meeting of the Mennaisian family. The celebration must demonstrate both aspects of: the commitment of the person and the reception of this commitment by the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Instruction that accompanies and supports the Lay Mennaisian Associates in their spiritual and apostolic itinerary.

The person formulates his or her commitment according to the modalities envisaged by the Group of the Lay Mennaisian Associates, with the following formula:

« In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

I ... (name)... I commit myself for one year in the Association "Lay Mennaisian Associates", to live the Gospel and to work in the Church, inspired by the charism of the Brothers of Christian Instruction according to the Statutes of this Association.

May the Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary help me to be faithful to this commitment that I am freely taking today. »

The Major Superior, or his representative, responds by welcoming and accepting the commitment of the person and expressing the Congregation's engagement.

The commitment is recorded in the register of the Group of the Lay Mennaisian Associates of the Province or the District, and is signed by both the person who takes the commitment, the Lay Co-ordinator, and the Major Superior of the Province or the District.

9. At the end of his/her commitment, the member is free to withdraw from the Association. A member, who wishes to withdrawal in the

course of the commitment, must inform in writing the Major Superior about this decision and motivation to do so.

The decision to send one of the members from the association for serious reason(s) must be taken by the Major Superior based on a justified request of the Co-ordinating Office of the Association; and must be taken in the spirit of charity and clarity. This decision has to be communicated in writing to the person concerned, who will be able to retain his/her right to self-defence before the competent authority, and in a final instance, to the Superior General.

Organization of the Association

10. In each Province or District, one or more groups of the Lay Mennaisian Associates (based on judgement of the Major Superior) bring together the members of the Association. Each group has internal rules (by-laws) drawn in accordance with the Statutes of the Association.

After consultation with the members of the group, a coordinator is appointed for a renewable three-year term by the Major Superior. He is assisted by at least 2 members. Together, they form the Co-ordinating Office which is responsible for animation, information, formation, and links with the Brothers and with the International Association.

11. At the International level, a **General Co-ordinator** ensures the unity of the Association, fidelity to the charism and fraternal relations between groups. He/she is in charge of co-ordinating animation, formation and communication. He/she is the immediate spokesperson of the Congregation for all that concerns the life of the Association.

He/she is appointed to a term of three (3) years, by the Superior General with the consent of his Council and after appropriate consultations. The mandate is renewable once.

The General Co-ordinator is assisted by two (2) other members elected to a three-year renewable mandate by the Co-ordinators of the groups in the Provinces and Districts. One of these two is designated Treasurer of the Association. The eligible persons for these offices are the co-ordinators of the groups.

The Official link to the Congregation and its modalities

12. The Congregation recognizes the Association “Lay Mennaisian Associates” and undertakes to provide spiritual support and accompaniment.

The Superior General is the first person responsible for the Association. He guarantees fidelity to the charism and promotes the growth of the Association. He can delegate an Assistant who ensures the direct link with the Association and promotes mutual relations between the Brothers and the Lay Mennaisian Associates while ensuring the autonomy of the Association.

13. In the Provinces and District, the Major Superior is the first person responsible for the Group of the Lay Mennaisian Associates. In liaison with the Committee (Co-ordination Office) and in respect of the autonomy of the Group, he ensures fidelity to the charism, the growth of the group and the formation of the members. He can delegate this mission to a Brother.

The Administration of property belonging to the Association

14. With a sense responsibility, of belonging and spirit of solidarity, each Lay Mennaisian Associate offers support for the economic autonomy of the Association so that it can accomplish its mission.

The expenses necessary for the animation of the Association at the general level must be ensured by the Lay Mennaisian Associates’ groups of the Provinces or Districts in the spirit of solidarity and sharing.

For the groups, the modalities of participation are fixed in each Province and District, taking into account also the needs of the General Co-ordination (International Committee Office).

Review of the Statutes

The Statutes may be revised at the initiative of the General Co-ordinator or of the Superior General, with the agreement of the latter. After consultation and presentation of the amendments, a vote is organized by the General Co-ordination Committee with the co-ordinators of the groups of Lay Mennaisian Associates of the Provinces or Districts. The amendments are adopted at a 2/3 majority vote and are approved by the Superior General with the consent of his Council. The amendments thus approved, are submitted to the Holy See (Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life – CICLSAL) for ratification.

Note: The texts of the different General Chapters as well as other documents referring to the Mennaisian family (which were present in the 1st reference text) are available on the website of the Congregation. www.lamennais.org

