

In the footsteps of Jesus after the example of
John Mary de la Mennais



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Brothers of Christian Instruction

**In the footsteps of Jesus
after the example of**

**John-Mary
de la Mennais**

Brother Yannick Houssay
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*To the Brothers
and the Laity
of the Mennesian Family*

*Thanks to Brother Miguel-Angel Merino
for helping
in the choice of the texts
of John Mary de la Mennais.*

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Brothers Miguel-Angel Merino, Gil Rozas,
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Introduction

To the thousands of priests gathered in St Peter's square for an evening of prayer on June 10, 2010, Benedict XVI recalled the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. Quoting St Charles Borromeo, he said: "Do not neglect your own soul. If you do not look after your soul, you cannot give to others what you should give them... A relationship with Christ, a personal dialogue with Christ is a pastoral priority."

This book invites you to a personal encounter with Christ that demands a personal commitment in the spirit of John Mary de la Mennais. The 150th anniversary of his death, in fact, gives us the opportunity to strengthen “interior and spiritual bonds” with our founder. He it is who invites us to gaze upon Jesus, to follow him and draw from him renewed apostolic zeal and a greater desire to make him known and loved.

Throughout this book and according to the chosen themes, each text of John Mary de la Mennais is read in conjunction with the Word of God which leads to a prayer. This prayer then broadens into an attitude, a way of being which is like the practical application of the teaching that has been received. A spirituality emerges through the chosen passages. Thus, we are invited to be transformed by the same Spirit that kindled the heart of John Mary de la Mennais.

These texts are meant to be used over a thirty-day period for daily meditation of a word from our founder. The words of advice that follow are offered as examples. Each

person may utilise them as he/she wishes and in keeping with his/her personal grace-given inspiration:

- At a chosen time, in front of an icon and of a lit candle, in the community chapel or the parish church, or yet again at home, we observe a moment of silence during which, peacefully quiet, we make ourselves inwardly receptive to the One who is ever by our side.
- Following this attitude of inner openness to God, we read the quotation from Father de la Mennais. We allow his word to move us.
- We then listen to the related Word of God. We try to grasp its meaning in relation with the text from John Mary de la Mennais. As we look for connections between the two passages, we listen to the Lord speaking to us.
- We peacefully speak with the Lord who is by our side as we would speak with a friend. It is not a matter of feeling but of strong conviction, that through these words and our own, God is with us.

- The short prayer and the text that follow open up to possible applications. They shed light on our way of living with God and our brothers and sisters as we follow Christ after the example John Mary de la Mennais. They invite us to go forth and practice what we have learned.

The chosen texts are few in number. This book is an invitation to make this a regular practice. Readers can go on finding nourishment from John Mary de la Mennais' advice, letters, sermons and, through them, hear the Word that has inspired them or which rises up in our heart as we listen to them.

For the Mennaisian Charism to bear fruit today, we must allow these words to challenge us, to enlighten us and to kindle our hearts. This road to conversion demands a loving, silent and prayerful listening to the Word. The "soft breeze" which the ears of our heart have sensed will take us further into prayer and deeds of salvation.

Such an exercise should awaken in us the Mennaisian Charism, this spiritual patrimony which has been handed down to us. Whether we call this exercise a charismatic reading of the Word or listening to the Spirit who has inspired our founder, labelling it is of little importance. The important thing is to follow Jesus, the Word made flesh, each according to the saving grace that is his / hers, in the footsteps of John Mary de la Mennais.

May the Lord grant everyone who opens these pages a greater love for Him and his brothers and sisters, especially the children and the young people to whom John Mary de la Mennais so desired to communicate the light and the joy of Christ.

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Day 1

GOD ALONE



Let us learn to detach ourselves from everything so that we may depend on God alone. He never lets us down; he is always near us to enlighten, console and strengthen us. If then we are blind, sad and weak, it is because we do not have recourse to him with lively faith and childlike confidence.

(To Miss Amable CHENU. 1813)

"He woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea: 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and they followed a great calm.



Then he said to them, 'Why are you frightened? Have you still no faith?' " (Mc 4, 39-40)

*Lord, no form of distress leaves you indifferent.
If we call upon you, you come to our assistance.
You calm the seas that engulf us.
With you, our hearts rest in peace.
You give rise in us to wonder and joy.
Never are we terror-stricken
with you by our side.
You invite us to love in deed and in truth.*





Let God be our Sole Support.

We are quick to proclaim far and wide that God Alone is our sure foundation. However, when trials come our way, our inner light flutters and helplessness undermines the resources upon which we relied when things went well.

Yet, as John Mary de la Mennais reminds us, God is always by our side and never abandons us. This truth of faith stands up to our impressions. This we have to bear in mind and pay less heed to our moods.

When sadness and bitterness come upon us, let us ignore them, let us not allow them to gain mastery over us. Let openness to others and self-giving prevail.

Relying on God alone implies peaceful attention to the inner voice of the Spirit and the rejection of other influences that invade the fields of our mind, of our memory and of our will.



Day 2

GOD ALONE



Dear friend, it has never happened to me, and, with God's grace it will not happen that I be disturbed by something that does not depend on me; a simple 'God wills it' suffices.

(To Coëdro, 1834)

"Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing.

Why, any hair in your head has been counted.

So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth than many sparrows." (Mt 10, 29-31)



*Lord, you know us,
and you also know
that it is all too often difficult for us
not to be troubled by vexations of all kinds.
Teach us not to feel guilty for ills
that we are in no way responsible for.
Grant us to welcome with peace of mind
whatever annoys or deceives us.
May we gaze upon you confidently
when worries knock at our door.*



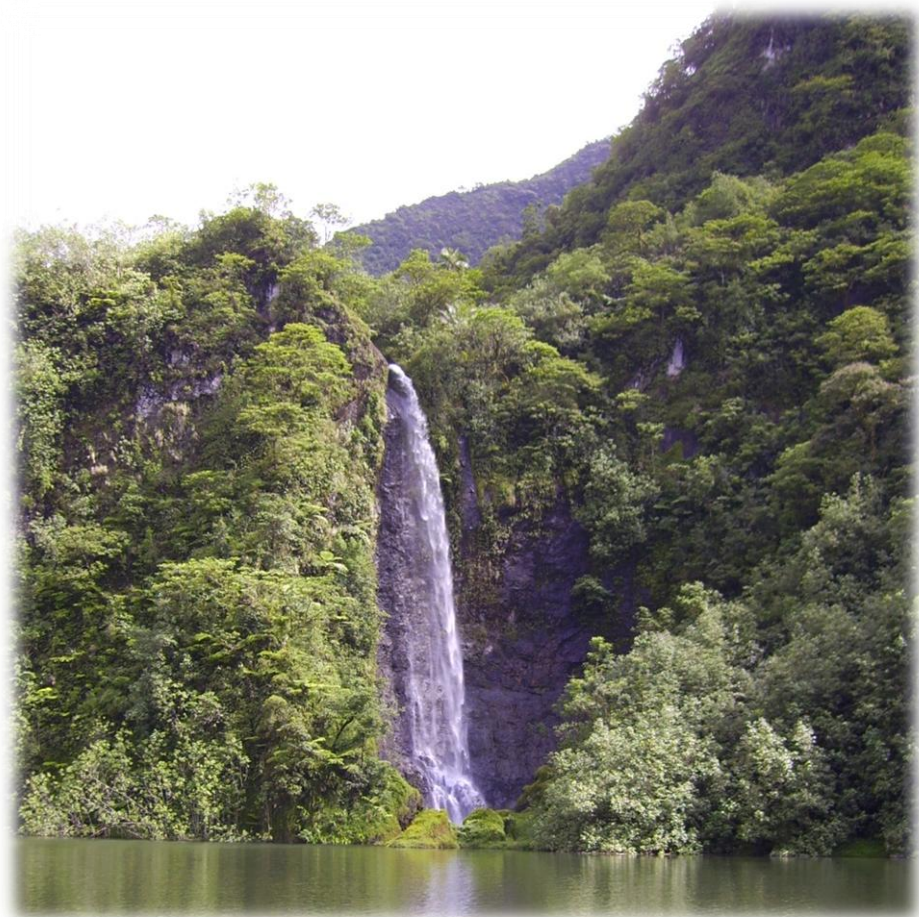


Giving no Chance to Anxiety.

In reality, so many things are out of our hands. So many daily occurrences, including illness, are beyond our control. Openness to events, with their share of contradictions and of happy surprises and bad news, can be a desirable way of life. Life itself can lead us through unforeseeable pathways. For a believer, however, each moment is God's very own.

When facing up to conflict or what appears to be a failure, why be concerned? If we have something to be ashamed of, let us try to right matters and avoid repeating the same mistakes or misdeeds. Let us place ourselves into God's hands. He gives generously to those who are receptive to his gifts.

In the evening, during *lectio vitae*, let us admit that we may have failed to place our trust in God alone. "God wills it." What more do I need?



Day 3

GOD ALONE

Oh! Would to God you put at the bottom of your heart God's peace and the hope of his Kingdom! Would to God you detach yourself from everything to attach yourself to all! ... My God, I have chosen you as my portion, and this portion will not be taken away from me. You alone are something for me; and forever you alone, my God, will be all for me. Life is nothing, reputation is nothing, knowledge is nothing, health is nothing and so is fortune. God alone! God alone!



(M. 90)

"Because of the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, I count everything else as loss. For him I have accepted the loss of all other things, and look on them as filth if only I can gain Christ and be given a place in him, uprightness from God, based on faith... I can only say that forgetting all that lies behind me, and straining forward to what lies in front, I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus." (Ph 3, 8-9a, 13b-14)



Lord, we feel attached to so many things which, when they are taken away from us, provoke frustration and bitterness in us.

Teach us to truly give up everything and to consider as refuse what keeps us from you without reserve.

May I, with John Mary de la Mennais, be able to say: "You alone are mine, forever you alone!"





Choosing What Binds us to God.

Health is nothing, reputation is nothing, science is nothing... , but everything is given to those who seek only God's kingdom and its justice. Everything is offered freely to those who commit themselves to the supreme good that is Christ himself and, in the words of John Mary de la Mennais, whom we have "chosen as our lot".

The disciple of Christ has nothing to worry about. He receives what he needs: peace and hope.

This is without doubt what Father de la Mennais invites us to do when he enjoins us to break away from nothing and to bind ourselves to the One and only. It is not a matter of rejecting everything that is good and beautiful, but of not being distracted by things that have no Gospel value.

Let us cast off bonds that enslave us in order to forge bonds with the One who can give the increase.



BEING IN THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST



God created me for his greater glory; therefore, I must dedicate to him all my actions, consecrate my whole being to him; and I must strive with all my mind to know him, with all my heart to love him and with all my strength to serve him.

(S I 15)

"The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you by us, that is, by me and by Silvanus and Timothy, was never Yes-and-No; his nature is all Yes. For in him is found the Yes to all God's promises and therefore it is through him that we answer Amen to give praise to God."
(2 Co 1, 19-20)



*With you, Jesus, the living One,
I wish to say YES to the Father.
I realise that it is the Spirit in me
who can say that YES.
May I have access to your mystery of love
and speak this YES joyfully,
for the glory of the Father.
Help me also show others, especially children
and young people, the happiness of knowing
you, of loving you, of gaining an insight into
your mystery and of being in your likeness.*





Speaking Christ's unconditional YES.

« My ‘yes’ is not tinged with ‘maybe’ or ‘later’. It is not contorted nor is it delayed. My ‘yes’ is an answer to the here and now.”

“I have been created for the glory of God.” John Mary de la Mennais loved to repeat this along with so many saints. We have been created for the glory of God, and His glory is also our own.

It is in the ‘yes’ of the here and now that I enter the glory of the children of God. Although I cannot measure its extent, “its breadth, length, height, depth” (Eph 3, 18), I am invited to ‘know’ this ‘yes’ of Christ “which surpasses all knowledge” (Eph 3, 19a).

Speaking the unconditional ‘yes’ of Christ at this very moment enables me to enter “all the fullness of God” (Eph 3, 19b).



BEING IN THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST



The religious profession is (...) a participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ since it links you to his divine work of redemption, his charity for men, and his zeal for the glory of the Father... See how great is the mystery that will grow in your soul. God can only love his image in your soul... Religious life consists in working towards perfecting that divine image.

(S VII 2169)

"He said, on coming into the world:
You wanted no sacrifice or cereal offering,
but you gave me a body.
You took no pleasure
in burnt offering or sacrifice for sin;
Then I said, 'Here I am, I am coming,'
In the scroll of the book it is written of me, to do your will,
God." (He 10, 5-7)



*Lord, you have called us to be in your likeness
among the little ones, children and young people.*

*In order to do this, you have willed that we give
up our own life.*

*Today, we renew the gift of our life to you, and
we wish to tell you that we intend to bear witness
to this love of yours towards all.*

*Awaken in us the zeal for the glory of the Father
and the salvation of the world.*





Perfect in Us the Divine Likeness.

John Mary de la Mennais tells us that being in the likeness of Christ is a gift and a mandate.

We have to work at improving what we have received freely.

Through prayer and daily watchfulness, we must become more and more Christ-like: such is our calling. Loving the Father as Christ did, listening to and comforting others as he did, and like him, avoiding to judge or to condemn. Living in humility and simplicity, in the conviction that God provides housing, clothing, food, etc. like Christ, welcoming and helping the poor and the destitute, and healing through a saving word.

Our life must be a way of “perfecting” the image of Christ in us. He will then accomplish in us the same “works” which he did, and even “greater ones” as he promised.



BEING IN THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST

When God says he wants our sanctification, it is as if he said that he would like us ... to be, in some way, ... clothed with Jesus Christ, as the Apostle says. He wants us to follow Jesus Christ in all His ways, to judge everything as He has judged. He wants us to love what He has loved, and despise what He has despised, to hate what He has hated, in a word, that all our thoughts conform with His thoughts, and that we be His living image!



(S VIII p. 2469)

"I have been crucified with Christ and yet I alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who lived me and gave himself for me.



All of you are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus, since every one of you that has been baptised has been clothed in Christ." (Ga 3, 26-27).

Lord, grant us to welcome this « pearl » of great price which is the grace of our baptism.

We have "put on Christ".

What he says of himself is also true of us, his brothers and sisters.

Through him, we radiate your own glory.

In him, we love, we heal, we are merciful.

Forgive our unbelief. Forgive our resistances.

May we be your living image.





Allowing Christ to Live in Us.

Aren't we like those disciples who abandon Christ because his Words are too difficult for them?

Who could pretend to be in the likeness of Christ through his own efforts?

It is only through faith that we can say with St Paul: "Christ lives in me." He, the persecutor, has experienced, through no merit of his, being moved and transformed by the love of Christ.

Christ carries us when the road is arduous; he guides us on the way of the cross; he helps us up when we fall; he gives us free access to the treasures of his Kingdom; everything is working in our favour if we work for the coming of his Kingdom.

Imperceptibly, we are transfigured into his likeness, but on one condition: that we allow him to work his marvels in us.



SAINTHOOD THROUGH MAKING SAINTS.

You have been sent, like the Apostles, to accomplish the words of the Saviour: I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! Love expressed as a zeal for the salvation of souls, should constitute your life's guiding principle and your goal. Everything else, including the search for knowledge, is of lesser importance. Though of value as a means to an end, they are secondary and subordinate to your ultimate, supreme goal...



(S VII 2305)

"Like a mother feeding and looking after her children, we felt so devoted to you, that we would have been happy to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, so dear had you become...



As you know we treated every one of you as a father treats his children, urging you, encouraging you and appealing to you to live a life worthy of God..." (1 Th 2, 7-8. 11-12)

*Heavenly Father, we give you thanks
for calling us
to build up your Kingdom of peace.
Kindle in us the fire of your Spirit;
may it spread throughout the world.
May we bear witness to what we proclaim.
When discouragement threatens us,
come to our help.
Make us holy as you yourself are holy.*





Wishing Ardently to Spread the Word.

"Woe to me if I do not spread God's word," says St Paul. Like him, after the example of Jesus, John Mary de la Mennais ardently wished that the fire of the Spirit spread throughout the world.

There was no tepidity in his life! Difficulties did not dishearten him. He did not seek personal profit. Obstacles did not put him off. A gentle but firm desire to see the Kingdom of God established moved him, to the success of which he applied his energies peacefully and confidently.

Are we not the disciples of John Mary de la Mennais? What are we waiting for to emulate this strong and serene will of his to spread the knowledge of the love of Christ?

We shall obtain mercy if we persistently ask the Lord to increase in us the craving to make him better known and loved.



SAINTHOOD THROUGH MAKING SAINTS.



Yes, you have a beautiful mission, and I bless God for having given it to you, because as you work at the sanctification of the little children entrusted to you, you are also working at your own sanctification.

(To Brother Anastase Gélébart, 1846)

"If anyone gives so much
as a cup of cold water
to one of these little ones because he is a
disciple, then in truth I tell you,
he will most certainly not go without his
reward." (Mt 10, 42)



*Lord, whatsoever we do to the little ones,
we do unto you.
We bless you for having called us
to such a wonderful mission.
You love children so much.
You bless those who give them the bread of your
Word and your living water.
Your blessing makes us holy.
We bless you, Lord.*





Openness to the Blessings of God.

Working towards the sanctification of children makes us aware that God alone makes holy. It teaches us to allow ourselves to be transformed by the One who can transfigure us.

Our mission is very much like that of John the Baptist: introduce Jesus and invite people to follow him. We cannot evangelise if we do not allow the fire of the Spirit to burn in our hearts.

Without humility, there is no possible evangelisation. Without silent listening to the Word of God, our words will never truly reach those who are listening.

The wonder of the message will spread far and wide only if we ourselves have experienced inwardly the wonders of the Word.

A song of praise then rises up in us and transforms the heart “in the night”.



Day 9

SAINTHOOD THROUGH MAKING SAINTS.



You allowed the apostolic spirit to take control of you, that is, an ardent zeal for the sanctification of these poor children towards whom God is sending you.

(To Brother Liguori-Marie Langlumé, 1847)

"I reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my hands.

God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a Spirit of power and love and self-control.

So you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to our Lord..." (2 Tm 1, 6-8)



*Since you are sending me forth,
Lord,
kindle in me the fire of your love.
May fear never hold sway over me.
May your Spirit enlighten my
outlook and transform me
into an ardent apostle.*





Having an Apostolic Spirit.

To be a Brother is to be sent. We are not Brothers for ourselves but for the glory of God and the salvation of youths. The same applies to every baptised person. Brothers and Lay Mennaisians must awaken in themselves the gift which they have received.

We can affirm that this is not a simple proposal left to our goodwill. This is an imperative which leaves us no choice. It has become part of our Christian identity. A Christian who is not an apostle is not faithful to his vocation.

In the words of John Mary de la Mennais, the salvation of a Brother is linked to that of youths. The peace promised by the Lord is not the stillness of a faint heart; it is the burning fire of a heart that is consumed by the love of Christ and the love for his human brothers and sisters. This is what our founder calls an ardent zeal.

Are we ashamed of bearing witness to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?



Day 10

LET LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME



My dear children, whom Jesus, our Saviour, has loved so much, whom he bends down to embrace and bless, come to us, stay with us. We will be the guardian angels of your innocence.

(S, VII p. 2271)

"People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples scolded them, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like child, never enter it.' Then he embraced them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing." (Mc 10, 13-16)



*Lord, you love children
and those who are in their likeness.
They radiate the light of your face,
they are unconditional openness
to the love that is freely given.
Grant us to be among them, in your Name,
the messengers of the Word
who welcomes and blesses,
strengthens and sends forth.*





Welcoming the Kingdom Like a Child.

How difficult it is to become childlike... after the example of Jesus!

In order to do so, we have to contemplate Jesus, to gaze upon him when he speaks with his Father, to grasp the astounding relationship that binds Jesus to Him, to understand – so very little – that he only seeks to do the will of his Father and nothing else.

Therein dwells the secret of the spiritual childhood to which the Gospel invites us.

In reality, it is impossible to welcome the Kingdom if we do not adopt the attitude of Jesus. With him, we learn to do what pleases the Father. Imitating his filial attitude will lead us to the Way, the Truth and the Life.

If we wish to be the “guardian angels of the innocence” of children, we must love the Father like the Son, our older brother, who fashions us in his image by the power of his Spirit.



Day 11

LET LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME.



Oh, my God, complete your work!
Save these children who are so
dear to you! You redeemed
them at the price of your blood. Willingly
would we shed the last drop of our blood
to save them. Poor children, we will love
them even more than the perils that
threaten them.

(S II 820 ter)

"See that you never despise any of these Little ones, for I tell you that their angles in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven.... It is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost." (*Mt 18, 10.14*)



Jesus, you have said :
Let little children come to me,
you have inspired me
the will to lead them to you;
bless my vocation,
be with me in all my work
and pour upon me the spirit
of strength, of charity, of humility...



(According to a prayer which the founder asked the Brothers to recite every day.)...



Giving up One's Life for the Salvation of Children.

Giving up one's life: such is the meaning of consecrated life. Giving up one's life... out of love!

And it is not always easy, after so many years, so strong is the temptation, to take back what we have generously offered in the days of our youth.

In fact, we can give only to those whom we love. We give to God if we love him. We give our life for children if we love them the way Jesus did. To borrow the words of our founder, we must then love children to such an extent that we will give "the last drop" of our blood for them.

If love fades, it is impossible to give ourselves entirely.

God alone can keep alive in us the flames of that desire, but he leaves us free to respond.

If our love wanes, he still knocks at the door and waits patiently for us to open.



Day 12

LET LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME.



When the Word became flesh and lived among us, did he not use his divine mouth to instruct those who followed him? Did he not gather little children round him to teach and bless them? And what of ourselves, his disciples? Should we not imitate his example?

(S II 799)

"Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is in me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.' "(Lc 4, 17b-19)



*Holy Spirit,
you who dwelt in the hearts of our founders,
and who gave our first Brothers
an ardent desire to imitate Jesus
in his words and in his deeds,
pour upon us your gifts.
When we are with the little ones and the poor,
grant us to speak words of blessing
and to do the deeds that save.*





Teaching and blessing young people.

Benedict XVI often insists on the urgency of a true Christian education: “To educate is to train the new generations in such a way that they can forge with the world relationships that favour a strong and meaningful collective memory, a shared spiritual heritage, a true wisdom which, because it recognizes a transcendental purpose to life, informs the mind, affections and judgment.”

Far from being imposed from the outside, such an education, says the Pope, is an answer to the “thirst in young people’s hearts”, to the questions that they have about the “meaning” of life and to their need of “true human relationships which help them feel that they are not on their own in the face of life’s challenges”. It is also an answer to “a more promising future owing to surer and more reliable relationships that show consideration and respect for all, through the proposal of stable values that lead to lofty by attainable goals”. (*May 2010, to the Italian bishops*)



HUMBLY SEEKING TO DO GOD'S WILL



Make sure that you remember this, perfection... consists in being humble, self-effacing, supple in the hand of God; being full of tolerance and fraternal love for our confreres, considering oneself as being the least of all and the most imperfect of all. For you, it especially consists in being obedient in all things and doing so with love, simplicity and serenity.

(S VIII 2489)

"Humility towards one another must be the garment you all wear constantly, because God opposes the proud but accords his favour to the humble. Bow down, then, before power of Good now, so that he may raise you up in due time; unload all your burden on to him, since he is concerned about you."
(1 P 5, 5b-7)



*Lord, you alone
can give success
to the work of our hands.
Teach us to surrender ourselves
to your will.
Grant us the humility of Mary
and her faith in the effectiveness of your Word.
May the humble love of your will
grow in us;
our hearts will then be in peace.*





Quietly Doing What Pleases God.

One day, Father de la Mennais wrote: “We all have a certain dose of self-love; it is well-behaved and docile when we cajole it; but should we contradict it, even slightly, it sulks and shouts...” (*To Chevalier, 1837.*) Even as we seek to do the will of God, don’t we at the same time secretly wish to gain men’s favours. “Who among us can do without other people’s approval?” asks our founder.

In the Gospel, we read that our Father in heaven sees in secret and rewards those who love in secret. Mary has taught us how to love in such a way.

“The works of God grow in the shade and it is during the night that the dew from heaven falls,” John Mary de la Mennais wrote. (*To Miss de Lucinière, A II 238.*) Let us do great things simply and quietly, always showing much indulgence for our brothers and sisters.



HUMBLY SEEKING TO DO GOD'S WILL



I have learned with great joy that you are leading the life... of a true religious, and that the good Lord has deigned to bless your work... In particular, be more than ever determined to progress in virtue and to grow in humility. Make sure that you are not boastful, and remember that the greatest saints before God see themselves as the most insignificant of all.

(To Brother Paul Lagarde, 1850)

"So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, ..., make my joy complete by being of a single mind: ... Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others..." (Ph 2, 1-3)



*Lord, why should we set such great store
by our self-image and give so little importance
to beaming forth your own.*

*Grant us the humility which has nothing to do
with low regard for self*

*but which opens our whole being
to the unfathomable mystery of your glory
imbedded in the inner recesses of our heart.*

*May we understand that the Father,
who sees in secret, will reward us.*





Beware of Vainglory.

Our founder invites us to the humble performance of our duty.

The right attitude is found in the Gospel and among the poor in heart who we meet therein. Those who remain untouched by “vainglory” are those who know how to give glory and honour to the author of all good things.

Zacchaeus’ life changed after he met Jesus. His heart was full of praise for the Master of his life. The lofty Samaritan woman hastened to tell the good news of Jesus who revealed her to herself. She proclaimed the glory of the long-awaited for Messiah. The cured blind man returned to kneel before Jesus who had restored his sight. The light of Jesus’ glory proved enough for him. No other glory could hold his attention.

To keep from vainglory, let us also recognise the Lord in our brothers and sisters. Let us give thanks for the wonders that he works in them. Humility and true joy are by-products of brotherly love.



HUMBLY SEEKING TO DO GOD'S WILL



Neither I, nor yourselves, know what God's plans are for the congregation, but I do know that for him to bless it and for it to continue, you must all be filled with the spirit of faith, humility, simplicity and obedience: I never cease asking him for this on your behalf.

(To Brother Julien Kerdavid, 1844)

"You should all agree among yourselves and be sympathetic; love the brothers, have compassion and be self-effacing. Never repay one wrong with another, or one abusive word with another; instead, repay with a blessing. That is what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing. Who among you delights in life, longs for time to enjoy prosperity? Guard your tongue from evil... Turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it." (1 P 3, 8-11)



*Lord, you do not judge as men do.
You extend your blessings
to upright and simple hearts
who thirst for justice and wisdom.
Brothers who help each other,
in their everyday humble tasks,
fulfil your will.
Grant us to believe and to love,
teach us humility and obedience.*





Longing for a Spirit of Faith and of Humility.

God wants us to be firmly grounded in the world, bringing to young people the kind of education that will help them commit themselves confidently to the future. In order to achieve this, we must build a world where the little ones receive consideration, where personal interests do not blind us to the interests of others and where the Word of Jesus is a light that shows the way.

However, who can build the Kingdom? Only those whose simplicity allows them to be truthful in everything, who shun deceit, who bless and do not curse, who avoid hurtful words and who think thoughts of peace.

In order to build the Kingdom, a spirit of obedience must sustain us. Let us recall that to obey God is to want to do his will, it is a willingness to listen to him, and to him alone. A heart that listens has progressed from “for me” to “for you”, and generates peace.



TRUSTING IN PROVIDENCE



A soul that is docile and flexible in the hands of God ... that believes that it is He who guides men and their counsels, far from being irritated by contradictions and unduly agitated by the continual bursts of impatience and resentment, enjoys a peace that nothing alters. It always blesses and adores the designs of Providence with delightful joy and tender love.

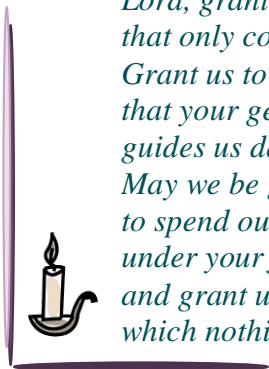
(M. 119)

"I say to you and attest to you in the Lord,
do not go on living the empty-headed life
that the gentiles live.... (Ep 4,17)

Now you are light in the Lord; behave as
children of light... You must recognize what is the will of
the Lord... be filled with the Spirit..." (Ep 5,8.18b)



*Lord, grant us the wisdom
that only comes from you.
Grant us to understand
that your gentle and helping hand
guides us day in day out.
May we be granted the joy
to spend our days
under your fatherly guidance
and grant us the peace
which nothing can alter.*





Being Docile in the Hand of God.

Why are we sometimes inwardly agitated and anxious? What arouses in us such fear that makes life painful at times? Why don't we feel like praying? On certain days, how does everything that has to do with our mission or our faith seem such a heavy burden?

Far from pitting optimists against pessimists, – the ones refusing to see obstacles, the others seeing them everywhere, – it is a matter in this instance of a battle of minds, a struggle of faith.

To emerge victorious from this struggle, we must, in the words of John Mary de la Mennais, be “profoundly convinced” that the Lord watches over everything and sees to it that everything is working for the benefit of those who seek the Kingdom. Far from being forever troubled by fluctuating and superficial feelings, we know we can trust in the strong and peace-loving hand of God.

Where do we stand in this regard? Are we really docile in the hand of God, always trusting in his Providence?



TRUSTING IN PROVIDENCE



Be careful not to mistake God's voice for the voice of your own desires. So that you may be able to discern one from the other, pray much and always submit yourself to the judgment of those who have the grace to be able to distinguish between that which comes from Heaven and that which comes from the spirit of lies, who often appears in the form of an Angel of light so as to seduce us.

(S VIII 2286)

"So be very careful about the sort of lives you lead, like intelligent and not like senseless people. Make the best of the present time, for it is a wicked age. This is why you must not be thoughtless but must recognize what is the will of the Lord... Sin psalms... always and everywhere giving thanks to God who is our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus-Christ. Be subject to one another out of reverence of Christ."(Ep 5, 15-17, 20-21)



*Lord,
teach us to discern your will
in the midst of so many appeals
that sidetrack us from true wisdom.
How easy it is to take our own desires
for inspirations from your Spirit!
Grant us to discern
and to understand
the gentle music of your Word..*





Discerning in Keeping with the Wisdom of the Spirit.

How can one avoid taking personal wishes for the will of God? Discernment is a difficult skill. “Be watchful over your conduct,” says St Paul who invites us to live like wise people and not like foolish people. Foolish people, blinded by their instant desires, can no more listen to the voice of the Spirit who, silently, invites them to choose what is right.

But then, how can we not be deceived by the wiles of the “spirit of deception”? John Mary de la Mennais replies: “Take great care not to lose that freedom of spirit... without which we can do no good. In order to retain it, one must be intimately united to God and walk in his presence with a heart in which peace reigns.” (M 16)

To avoid being deceived by misleading spirits, our own spirit must be free from constraints. Union with God achieves this. He calls us to be in his likeness; he will also grant us his light to do good.



TRUSTING IN PROVIDENCE

We must calmly let ourselves be carried in his arms, and cast our solitudes, sufferings, and regrets in his bosom, and unite ourselves to him, more than ever before, by the indissoluble ties of love.

(To Querret – 1814)



Let us be devoured by Providence; we would be unworthy to support Her if we did not put our will entirely in Hers, without keeping back anything of ours.

(To Brother. Polycarpe 1837)

"Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have money, come! Buy and eat; come, buy wine and milk without money, free! ...

Listen carefully to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me: listen, and you will live. I shall make an everlasting covenant with you..." (*Is 55, 1-3*)



*Lord, what are those succulent dishes
that you wish to gratify us with?
Come to the help of our mediocre faith.
We are so hesitant to believe
that your hand sustains us daily
and that you wish to give us
so many wonderful and good things.
Open our minds and our hearts
to the potent beauty of your Providence..*





Being Aware of the Love of God for Us.

“God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being; but this universal principle of creation is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love,” writes Benedict XVI in the first encyclical, *Deus Caritas est*. Thus we can understand the expressions which John Mary de la Mennais uses: “allow ourselves to slip quietly into his arms”, “allow ourselves to be consumed by Providence”, “his left arm supports my head and his right arm embraces me” (cf Ct 2, 6).

“This close connection between *eros* and marriage in the Bible has practically no equivalent in extra-biblical literature,” writes again Benedict XVI. The God of Jesus Christ is Love. He is the source of all love.

Each one of us is the lost sheep that has been sought after and brought back in his arms. Not only must we be thankful for this, but we are also called upon to proclaim it to all so that they may have life!



BEARING THE CROSS WITH JESUS.

My children, you are having to fight very hard during these difficult times... How are you going to sustain your vocation, on which your own salvation and those of your poor little children depends? How will the beautiful and great endeavour to which you have dedicated yourselves support itself? Should you count on your talents? ... No, for that would be a vain hope; listen rather to these words from the Holy Spirit: it is our faith that will defeat the world, and this faith of ours is founded on knowing none other than Jesus Christ, the crucified Christ.

(S VII p 2294)



"As for you, my dear son, take strength from the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Bear with your share of difficulties, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. It is the farmer who works hard that has the first claim on any crop that is harvested. Think over what I have said, and the Lord will give you full understanding." (2 Tm 2, 1.3.6-7)



*Lord,
make us joyful
and fervent apostles,
especially when bearing witness
to you and your Gospel
is difficult
and discouragement assails us.
Always be near to us
when the cross gets heavier.
Be our strength and our victory.*



Placing our Faith in Christ.

Whoever wishes to be a disciple of Christ must know that he'll have to struggle and to suffer with him; otherwise, the Gospel would be a mere collection of wonderful sayings. In the Gospel, however, our own drama is being played: the struggle between good and evil, between love and hate, between truth and deception.

We have “to fight great struggles”. We have to bear our share of sufferings like true soldiers of Jesus Christ. If we think we can avoid trials, we are not on the side of Jesus, we are self-serving.! We shall then attract only those who shun the hard labour of the ploughman who sows at the sweat of his brow, looking forward to the fruits of his harvest.

The apostle of Jesus must fight the good fight. He cannot rest until his Master is known and loved. He cannot rest by the wayside as long as the Good News has not been proclaimed and the “little ones” have not been evangelised. “Our faith shall conquer the world.”



BEARING THE CROSS WITH JESUS.



This book is not like other books that are written or explained laboriously by human beings. It is open to all, and everyone can read therein, in some way, the secrets of God, without necessarily straining one's mind to understand them. By casting a glance at the cross, the least of the faithful sees at once to what extent God has loved him.

(S VII 2191)

"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; and not by means of wisdom of language, wise words which would make the cross of Christ pointless. The message of the cross is folly for those who are on the way to ruin, but for those of us who are on the road of salvation it is the power of God." (1 Co 1, 17-18)



Lord, may we learn
the language of the cross.
Teach us to gaze upon the tree
on which you offered yourself out of love.
Grant us the grace
to understand the message
that so many do not comprehend,
you who loved us
until death on the cross.



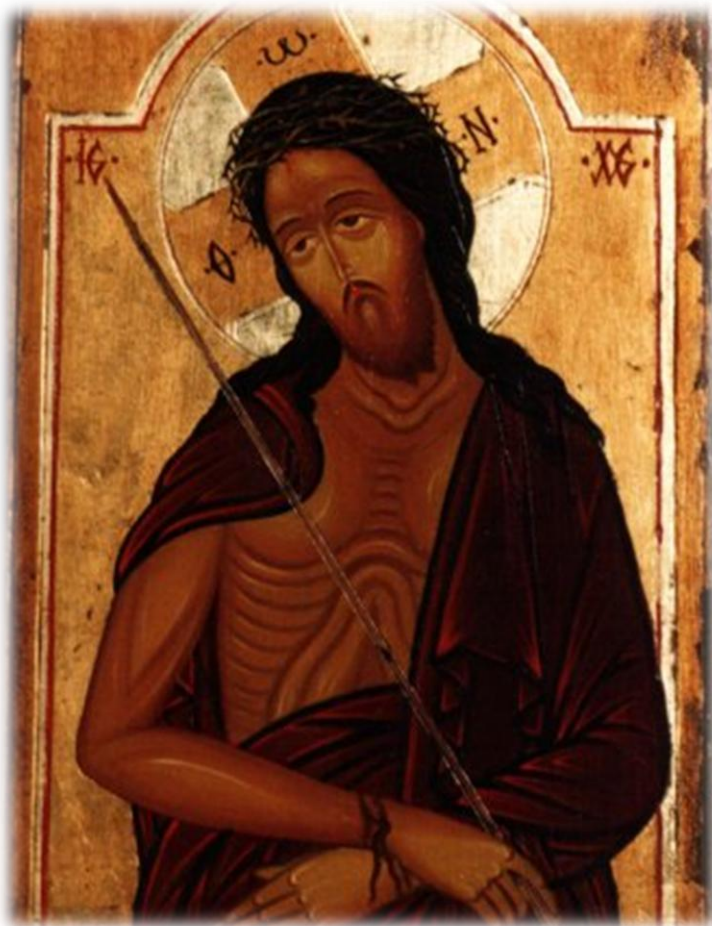


Grasping the Language of the Cross.

“Let not our theology be the product of arrogance of reason which would obscure faith and bypass the true reality of God,” Benedict XVI told priests gathered in Rome (June 2010). Our God reveals himself to little ones, to those who are poor in heart, through the language of faith.

Mary and John at the foot of the cross bear witness to this. They belong to the family of Jesus because they have a heart that listens and eyes that see the Love expressed through the transfixed heart of Jesus crucified. Surprising and admirable poverty of the Son of God! In the words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta to her sisters: “We too have to experience poverty if we wish to be true bearers of the love of God.”

The cross is the language of love which keeps nothing for itself but which gives itself completely. The “little ones” of this world will be the great ones in the Kingdom because they have grasped the meaning of the language of the cross.



BEARING THE CROSS WITH JESUS.



After all, we are the disciples of that Jesus who lived poor, who was humiliated and condemned to die on the cross. Let us consider ourselves blessed when God calls us to carry the image of his betrayed, outraged, and crucified Son. Let us live only by pure faith, and touch the earth with only our feet. Let us lift up our hearts and minds to heaven.

(S VII 2247)

"Then, speaking to all, he said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it. What benefit is it to anyone to win the whole world and forfeit or lose his very self?' (Lc 9, 23-25)



*Lord,
you call us your disciples.
But disciples are not greater
than their Master.
If you carried the cross,
we too have to carry it.
Grant us to be in your likeness
and lovingly welcome contradictions,
humiliations, sickness and trials
as a grace to perfect your image in us.*





Carrying the Cross with Jesus.

We know how this language of Jesus, inviting his disciples to follow him carrying their cross, has disheartened a number of them. In the life of the Church, numerous are those who preferred to withdraw instead of following in the footsteps of the Crucified.

We have only two alternatives: either we accept Jesus as our Master and we know that we have to carry the cross with him; or we forsake him, we adopt another master and run the risk of losing ourselves! God vomits the lukewarm: “So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth!” (Revelation 3, 16)

To enjoy the light of the resurrection, we have to make our own the wisdom of the cross which is folly for the world. The only road that leads to Trinitarian Love is that of poverty of the heart and of the Son’s spirit of obedience. Happy are those who embark on this journey: they will gain knowledge of its secret and achieve openness to Love.



***SELF-GIVING GIVES
RISE TO PEACE AND UNIT.***



My Brothers, you have understood that when Jesus Christ gives us his peace, he does not do so in the way that the world would. And so, to find rest for your soul you must detach it from itself, so to speak, so that henceforth it will no longer live its own life, but rather that of Jesus Christ.

(S VII 2377)

"The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you. Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." (*Jn 14, 26-27*)



Lord,
the world does not give peace.
Peace comes from you.
When you give us peace,
you send us forth,
through the power of your Spirit,
to take it to others.
We are messengers of peace.
Uphold our zeal.





Discerning where our Peace Comes from.

What kind of peace does the world give? It is the peace of the strongest which is obtained through overtaking others and lording it over them. Others then become adversaries instead of friends and brothers. This pseudo-peace is self-serving, avoids fighting for others and takes refuge in self-protection. Such artificial peace is the world's daily fare. This kind of peace provokes conflicts, gives rise to disorder, anxiety and mistrust and is achieved at the expense of others.

What are the signs of God's peace? It sprouts in hearts that have a great love of justice and, to use an expression of our founder, in souls that deny themselves. Such peace opens the heart, is selfless, confers serenity and proper self-esteem. It gives rise to thanksgiving and to an appreciation of every good gift in others. Such peace comes from having achieved self-mastery. The beneficiaries of this peace are the poor and the pure of heart, the meek, the merciful and those who place their trust in God alone.



SELF-GIVING GIVES RISE TO PEACE AND UNITY



You have the desire to walk in his footsteps, to be gentle and humble of heart following his example, to be obedience like him to the point of death, according to the will of our heavenly Father. Peace be with you! Your spirit cease to be like... clouds of smoke dispersed by the wind. May peace reign in your heart... whose feelings and series will always relate back to God! May this deep peace envelop your senses.

(S VII 2375.)

"An angel of the Lord stood over the shepherds and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified...

And all at once with the angel there was a great throng of the hosts of heaven, praising God with the words: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace for those he favours'." (Lc 2, 9.13-14)



*Grant to us, Lord,
an ardent desire to be holy
and the docile
and firm will
to be in your likeness.
Peace will then dwell in us,
we will partake of your own feelings
and your love will light our way..*





Wishing for the Peace that God Gives.

What more can we wish for than peace should suffuse our whole being? But how can this be achieved?

This depends very much on how ardently we desire it. During her long night of the faith, Mother Teresa of Calcutta felt within her this desire: “I profoundly wish for God – I desire to love him – to love him very much!” Where in her heart was the peace of God? In the immensity of a love which, in spite of suffering, could not be extinguished and gave off a fragrance of joy.

Peace upon you! says our founder. This peace is decidedly not that of the world. It does not retreat into itself but is always accompanied by unconditional self-giving. Total self-giving to God and to others. It forgives offences, it never judges and never condemns! It is merciful. For in God, there is no peace without love.

Is this language too hard to accept? Humble and simple souls understand it.



SELF-GIVING GIVES RISE TO PEACE AND UNITY



I am thirsty, if I may say so, for your happiness and for your salvation. You and I make but one body; we have but the same interests, the same desires and the same goal... Oh! Let us unite ourselves more and more in this thought... Let us have but one heart and one soul. May this heart, may this soul burn with all the divine fires of charity. And, after having been thus united on earth, we shall also be united for all eternity in heaven itself: Fiat! Fiat!

(S VII 2374)

"I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me. May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me that they made be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you loved me." (Jn 17, 20-23)



*Lord,
you promised us unity
which is the greatest gift of your grace.
Thus united,
we are carried away
into the very heart of Trinitarian Love,
burning hearth of divine charity.
May we bear witness to this Love today..*





Being Craftsmen Unity.

Life's fecundity derives from the ability to forge bonds of charity and of joy. To his Brothers gathered together, the founder would say: "I thirst for your happiness and your salvation. We are but one body." Such is the secret of true love. Unity is the fruit of the Holy Spirit who, in the heart of disciples, seeks the welfare and the happiness of others.

Our human communities, our families, our religious communities, our parishes should be places where charity radiates as a result of this profound communion of hearts. These communities should partake of the common pursuit of the will of God and of an inner and deep thirst for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind.

The most perfect witnessing and the most fruitful apostolic action spring from this intimate union of hearts at the centre of which is the Lord. Let us be "perfect in unity".



IN CHURCH- COMMUNION



Times are bad: pray and console the Church with the good odour of all the virtues. Henceforth, urge one another to use the days you still have to pass on earth to sow much in order to harvest abundantly in heaven. In order to attain this end of our common hope, and which is the objective of our painstaking works, strengthen yourselves more and more in grace, in peace, in charity and in the humility of our Lord.

(The last Circular to the Brothers, Christmas, 1860)

"Si as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like a sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length. By it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place [...] so send them away [...]'. He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves'." (Mc 6, 34-37)



*Lord,
you call us to rise
and to sow abundantly
the Word which bears fruit,
the true bread of which
so many youths and adults are in need.
Wake us up and send us
spread love and peace
on the thoroughfares of the world.*





«Let's Sow Generously» *the Word that Saves.*

Let's sow generously so as to harvest abundantly in the Kingdom, not perishable fruits, but fruits that last for eternity, not for us alone but for everyone.

It is the vocation of the Church to be a people that espouses the gaze of the Master, Jesus, and that goes to the assistance of those who stand by the wayside, staring into space, looking for the Love for which they secretly thirst.

It is the vocation of the Church to give a drink to those who have no glass of water to quench their thirst, to give food to the hungry, to heal the wounded, to comfort the despised.

We must then listen to what Jesus says to the Church since we are this Church on the move.

“You yourselves give them to eat.” In other words: “Pray and console the Church”, “sow abundantly”, “confirm yourselves in the peace, charity, humility” of Jesus, even if “it is getting late”, even if you would rather rest.



IN CHURCH- COMMUNION

May the Lord deign to make you men according to his heart, devoted to his Church, detached from self, poor in spirit, humble, zealous, ready to undertake anything and to suffer anything in order to spread his word. You should be ready to extend his kingdom and light in the world that divine fire that Jesus Christ brought, that fire, purifying and nourishing, that immense, unspeakable love, which is celestial life. You have been called to something great; therefore, have this lofty vocation before your eyes always so that you may try to be worthy of it.

(S VII 2297)



"I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!" (Lc 12, 49-50)



"We know, brothers loved by God, that you have been chosen... You took us and the Lord as your model, welcoming the word with joy and the Holy Spirit in spite of great hardship..." (1 Th 1, 4.6)

*Lord, make of us
men and women
according to your heart.
Thus, may this ardent wish of our founder
be fulfilled in the whole of the congregation
and in the hearts of Lay Mennaisians.
May we be worthy of the vocation
to which we are called.*





Understanding the Beauty of our Vocation.

The diversity of vocations embellishes the Church and forever renews her youth. That diversity is her treasure and her vitality. Jesus is surrounded by men and women in different states of life, and so it has been throughout the history of the Church. We pray to saints who were married, religious, priests, bishops. All are called to be humble, zealous, poor in spirit, selfless. All are called to spread the Good News and to kindle the fire Christ's love in the world.

Today, Father de la Mennais still says to laypeople and to the Brothers: "You have been called to something great... work at becoming worthy of that calling."

The pursuit of holiness is not optional. Jesus invites us all to be holy, even if our roads differ. He calls each and everyone in a very personal and unique way. He thus wants the Church to be the expression of the rich variety of his Incarnation and of his Redemption. To love our vocation is to love Jesus who calls us and to answer that call out of love.



IN CHURCH- COMMUNION



We must love the Church with all our heart, with all our will and with all our strength as we love Jesus Christ whose Spouse she is and who forms with her but one body and one flesh.

With all our heart, let us deeply feel her evils, grieve at her loss, and rejoice at her victories. . Alas, among her ministers, how few love her so!

(S, VIII, 2497-2502)

"I formed you, you are my servant Israel, I shall not forget you. I have dispelled your acts of revolt like a cloud and your sins like a mist. Come back to me, for I have redeemed you. Heavens, shout for joy, for the Lord has acted! [...] Shout for joy, you mountains, forests and all your trees! For the Lord has redeemed Jacob and displayed his glory in Israel". (Is 44, 21b-23)



*Lord,
your love for the Church is eternal.
Sinner that she is, she is the spouse
whom you have redeemed.
You are the head of the body
of which we are the members.
May your Spirit inspire us
to love her with all our strength.
Pour your blessings upon those whom
you have chosen as pastors for your people.*





Loving the Spouse of Christ

« Work with renewed zeal to establish the foundations of a new Church. » Thus says John Mary de la Mennais. If he loved the Church, he did not ignore its distress, was deeply moved by it, but his love was the stronger for it. It can be said that his heart encompassed the whole Church. He was at one with the Church. He gave up his life for her for he knew that in that way, he was giving up his life for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind.

To love the Church, Spouse of Christ, is to love Christ himself. In the Church, John Mary de la Mennais rejoices at the voice of the Spouse in whom he believes with all his heart, to whom he has consecrated all his energies and whom he loves tenderly and deeply.

He knows that the Lord loves the Church. In this way, he makes his abode in the heart of Christ and, contemplating the fire of that love, he discerns the wisdom and the holiness which Christ has given his Spouse, “refuge of sinners”.



PRAY ALWAYS

Let us pray, therefore, pray without ceasing. But, you may ask, is that possible?... Well! If you think this then you haven't understood what prayer really is, this inarticulate, inner prayer that withdraws, so to speak, into the depths of the soul. Ah! This prayer is never troubled by anything. Nothing distracts it, neither noise, nor our various activities, ...nor sleep... You want to know how one might pray without ceasing? You should also ask how one might love without ceasing, for prayer is nothing more than the expression of love, and love is the most beautiful and the most perfect of prayers.

(S IV 1478)



"All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God; for what you received was not a spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children or God." (Rm 8, 14-16)



*Lord, we do not know how to pray.
Give us your Spirit
so that he may give birth within us
to the cry of love
gushing forth from the heart of your Son, Jesus.
In him, we may call you: "Father!"
May we understand the truth of that Name!
Make us realise that to love
is to live in You,
and that to pray is to be in Love.*





To Love and to Pray are One .

Nothing can disrupt a silent and intimate prayer. In what does such a prayer consist? It is the love of the “Spirit that helps us in our weakness” and who, in us “intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings” says St Paul (Rm 8, 26).

We do not know how to pray and neither do we know how to love in truth. We should begin each day with asking the Spirit to teach us how to love and to pray for one cannot exist without the other, just like the two facets of the commandment of love: love of God and love of neighbour.

However, the road to prayer is full of pitfalls. One needs perseverance and patience. Gradually, the Spirit purifies our prayer, internalizes it, makes it more humble. He opens our heart to true love which is not self-centredness but openness to others. Only then do we learn how to pray always, how to love constantly.



PRAY ALWAYS

Speak to the one who is the very expression of God's strength and virtue; he has come to dwell in you, so as to be united with you in the same spirit, by the grace of intimate union and through the outpouring of ardent love. He knows your weaknesses and your urgent needs, he knows... your suffering, your temptations, your worries and your former infidelities. He sees all that is most secret in your soul. Therefore, implore his mercy and goodness, for he can refuse you nothing, given current circumstances.



(S IV 1485)

"Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person's side. (Ap 3, 20)



"Now while he was with the mat table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him... (Lc 24, 30)

*"O Lord, you examine me and you know.
You know when I sit down and when I get up;
even from far away you understand my motives.
You knew me thoroughly;
my bones were not hidden from you,
when I was made in secret
and sewed together in the depths of the earth.
I will give you thanks because your deeds
are awesome and amazing."
(Ps 139, 1-2; 15-14)*





Opening up to the Divine Presence.

The Spirit of the Lord, “the power and the virtue of God himself”, is in us through the grace of baptism. He it is who embraces us with kindness and loving care. He draws us to him like a father enfolds his children in his arms.

“The divine kindness is peace, profound peace, merciful peace, reassurance. It is a kind and motherly hand that knows, that comforts, that heals without hurting, that places things in the right perspective. It is the gaze of a mother on the new-born. It is attentively and discretely listening ... always taking the best course for the good of mankind. Divine kindness is as firm as the earth on which everything rests. It is reliable and constant as the word of the father that is evenly steady.”¹

Such is He who opens our hearts to his divine presence. Let us not shut him out, let us not grieve him. Rather, let us be overcome by “the grace of an intimate union and the outpouring of an ardent love”.

¹ Maurice Bellet



Day 30

PRAYING INCESSANTLY WITH MARY



The Most Holy Virgin, [...] is at this very time praying with us, and if we put no obstacles in the way of her prayers, we will undoubtedly obtain through her the most excellent and precious graces.

(S VIII 2430)

"So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, they went back to Jerusalem... and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying...

With one heart all these joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." (Ac 1, 12a.13a.14)



*Mary,
full of love,
help us be humble and faithful,
simple and trusting.
Obtain for us to be moved
by the Love of the Father.
By your intercession,
may the gifts of the Spirit be renewed in us;
may we become missionaries
of Love and Peace.*





Imitating the Faith of Mary.

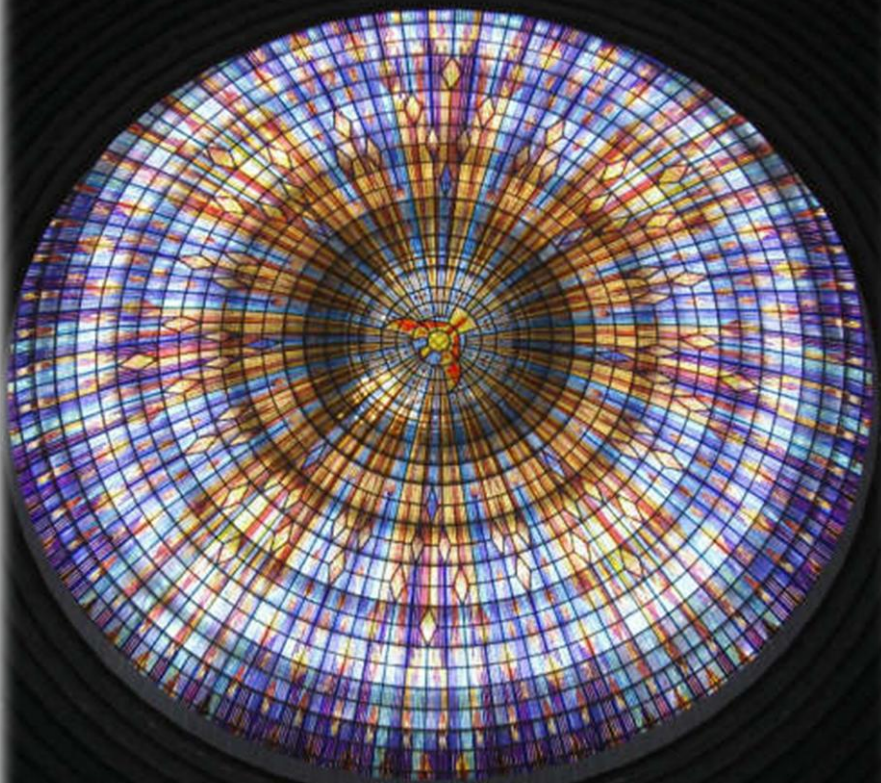
Mary has never ceased believing in the accomplishment of the Word of God. Through her loving listening, she incessantly kept and meditated the words and the actions of her Son.

She knew that “nothing is impossible to God” as confirmed by the angel Gabriel.

Elizabeth had proclaimed her blessed, “she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled” (*Lk 1, 45*).

At the foot of the cross, Jesus led her to the night of faith. Silently, she shared in the sufferings of her Son. Her faith did not waver. She remained opened to the unspeakable love of God for his People.

Day after day, she stands by our side. If we so wish and if we ask her, she comes to the assistance of our lack of faith. She wraps us up in her maternal arms and she teaches us. To the poor in heart, she gives the treasures of the Love that she has received from God.





PROVIDENCE OF MY GOD

To end our journey with John Mary de la Mennais, here is a prayer taken from a sermon to the Daughters of Providence. Praying it will inspire in us a spirit of peace, of self-giving, of confidence, of joy and of love which will take us to the very heart of the founder. Through these words, it is the Spirit of the Lord who, in him, and in us, prays.

*Providence of my God,
O Mother that I have invoked so often,
and to whom I have offered,
consecrated and dedicated this house
and all the sisters who, by your grace,
are gathered here;
Providence always so good, so wise,
so full of mercy and love for your poor creatures,
we adore you, we bless you,
and we abandon ourselves unreservedly to you:*

*Make of us what you please.
We have no other wish
but to do your will in all things:
in humiliations, in grandeur,
in poverty, in wealth,
in health, in sickness,
in life and in death.*

*Providence of my God,
protect your children,
strengthen them, guide them
be their defender, their leader,
their light, their counsel,
their consolation, their treasure,
their joy, their hope.*

*God Alone in time!
God Alone in eternity!*

(S VII p. 2165)



Rome, September 8, 2010

On the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary,
and the anniversary of the birth
of John Mary de la Mennais in St-Malo.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Yannick Houssay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY
Superior General

