

LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

Dear Brothers, Dear Lay Mennaisians,

Here is a new letter, written by the office of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family. It reaches you at the beginning of Advent, at a time when we are preparing to celebrate Christmas, but also to enter with the whole Church into the Jubilee Year, as "Pilgrims of Hope". We therefore wish you already a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2025.

Pilgrims in Mennaisian Family mode

Mrs. Yvette Méus, Lay Mennaisian Associate of Haiti and member of the Bureau of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, reviews with us the journey of the Mennaisian Family and invites us to continue it, on the path of prayer, in the light of the last Chapter.

Rereading our pilgrimage



Our journey began with the 21st General Chapter in 1982, where reflections were initiated on the association of the Laity with the Mennaisian charism. It continued until the 28th Chapter in 2024, which amended Chapter 4 of the framework document by specifying the organization of the Mennaisian Family and recalling the lifestyle that must now be ours: being together, Brothers and Laity, in "Mennaisian Family mode", to serve the young people of our time the good wine of education.

What a journey we have come!

- ⦿ from the first questions to respond to the call of the Holy Spirit, through the Church's invitation to conceive of the mission as a "shared mission", to the consultations of the Brothers and the Laity via a survey gathering their opinion on this idea;
- ⦿ from the letter from Brother Yannick, then Superior General, designating our Evangelical Family as the Mennaisian Family, to the writing of a reference text for its organization;
- ⦿ from the first international session in Ploërmel in 2008, marking the official birth of the Mennaisian Family, to that of 2015 creating the International Commission;
- ⦿ from research into Mennaisian identity to the Church's approval of the statutes of the Association of Mennaisian Lay Associates (MLA), through the intermediate General Chapters from 1988 to 2018.

All these steps, guided by the Spirit of Light, have constituted a fertile ground for the development of this movement desired by the Church.

On the path of prayer

The path taken by the Mennaisian Family has not always been easy. The pioneers of this new ecosystem within the Congregation of the Brothers of Christian Instruction have undoubtedly faced great difficulties, sometimes making the path winding, even steep. However, they have drawn strength from prayer and abandonment in the hands of Providence, thus finding the courage to move forward, attentive to God's plan for our spiritual family.

This openness to the recommendations of the Church and this capacity to let ourselves be transformed by the Spirit show that, since always, we are "Brothers and Laity, on the path of prayer", hoping in God alone for the realization of his promises. Today, how can we become fully what we already are? Yes, we are pilgrims on the path of prayer, but with the grace of God, we can still grow in this dimension.

Let us take the time to revisit our relationship with personal and community prayer and ask ourselves the right questions:

- What needs to be improved in the way we pray?
- How to maintain a certain constancy in prayer?
- What kinds of prayers do we address to the Lord?
- What are the best times for me to pray?

With humility, let us recognize our limits and return to the school of Jesus, like the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray!" After a year dedicated to prayer in the Church, this Christmas 2024, we will enter the Jubilee Year. May God grant us fidelity to his grace, so that our life and that of the Mennaisian Family may be punctuated by prayer.

On the way to our General Chapter 2024

Six months after the last General Chapter, it is with a heart full of hope that we welcome its decisions for our spiritual Family for the next six years. In Mennaisian Family mode, we are invited to:

- ✓ Transmit the Mennaisian charism.
- ✓ Promote the vocations of Mennaisian Brothers and Lay Associates (MLA);
- ✓ Strengthen co-responsibility within the Mennaisian Family;
- ✓ Make Jesus Christ known and loved by children and young people.



Trusting in God's Providence, we commit ourselves to moving forward on the path indicated by these four guidelines. However, only an authentic relationship with God and with one another can help us collaborate effectively to implement these directives. Together, in prayer, let us remain attentive to the voice of the Lord and, with his grace, deepen each day our knowledge of God, ourselves and others.

This mutual knowledge is essential to understanding, to mutual aid, to the acceptance of our differences and to the discovery of our riches and our limits, indispensable for the mission that we share. Thus, living in "Mennaisian Family mode", far from being a utopia, will become our distinctive sign, our DNA, at the heart of the people of God to whom we are sent.

In light of what has just been presented, everyone can reread their own journey within the Mennaisian Family. This rereading can also be done in a Mennaisian fraternity or group, in thanksgiving for the path travelled.

Prayer, a personal dialogue with the Lord

In the context of the Jubilee, our theme of the year invites us to be pilgrims on the path of prayer. The catechesis of Pope Francis on this subject offer us an interesting guide to deepen our intimate relationship with the Lord. Mrs. Martha De La Cruz, Mennaisian Lay Associate of Mexico and member of the Bureau of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family, shares with us what she has learned from it for her own spiritual journey.

Following the example of Jesus, we can open our hearts to the Father, in a space of intimacy, in the joy of benevolent silence and in the peace of abandonment. We can look at Jesus and ask him, like his disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11):

1. First of all, Jesus sets himself aside to establish his relationship with his Father. We too must distance ourselves from the world, create an inner space for ourselves, enter into the silence that will reveal to us the Presence of God.

"In silence, many voices that we hide deep within ourselves can appear: the most buried desires, the truths that we persist in stifling and so on... In silence, God speaks. Each person needs a space for themselves where they can cultivate their own inner life, where actions find meaning again."¹

2. Jesus responds to the deep desire that we express to him, as his disciples: to enter into this relationship of intimacy with God. It is he who tells us to call him "Father" (Lk 11:9). With the simplicity of a child, we are invited to call him "Abba". If we are children of the Father, then we are brothers and sisters of Jesus, and we enter into relationship with all creation, while being face-to-face with the Presence.
3. By calling him "our Father," we draw ever closer to the heart of God who resides within us and who "knows what we need even before we ask" (Mt 6:8). At any time, we can open our hearts to him in this benevolent space and experience moments of silence to listen to his Word.
4. Jesus abandons himself into the hands of the Father before ending the day. It is also a beautiful thing for us to abandon ourselves into his hands to enter into sleep. If we are agitated, a little preoccupied, may the Holy Spirit transform us from within and lead us to this abandonment: "Father, let your will be done."²



To extend this reflection, why not take up the texts of Pope Francis' catechesis on prayer?³ and make them our own for a better commitment as a pilgrim on the path of prayer?

¹Pope Francis. Catechesis - 13: Jesus, Master of Prayer, November 4, 2020.

²Idem

³Pope Francis, 38 catecheses on prayer (<https://www.lamennais.org/documents-theme-dannee-tema-del-ano-theme-of-the-year-2024-2025/>)