

Called

to Be Servants

of Hope

*General
Chapter
2024*


La Mennais

Table of acronyms

Ecclesiastical texts :

CIC Code of Canon Law

EC Economy at the service of charism and mission, CICLSAL

EG *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis

LG *Lumen Gentium*, The Church, Second Vatican Council

VC *Vita Consecrata*, Consecrated life, Pope John Paul II

Texts by Jean-Marie de la Mennais

CG General Correspondance (VII Volumes)

S Sermons (II Volumes)



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Called to Be Servants of Hope

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Called to Be Servants of Hope

Introduction

Mary!
 You were there
 To gather the words
 Of the covenant,
 You were there
 To delight the guests
 With a word!
 This morning,
 So that the feast may blossom,
 Awaken in us the Spirit of Easter!



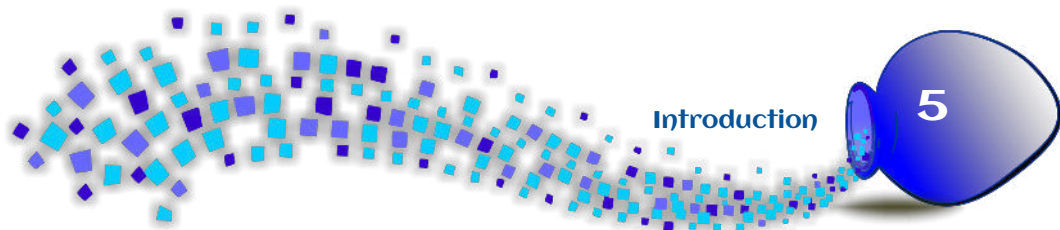
This first stanza of the Lauds hymn of the Common of the Virgin Mary sums up very well the importance of the presence of the Mother of Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana, but also at Ariccia during our General Chapter and in our daily lives. Mary was, is and always will be at our side, asking her Son to anticipate his hour so that we can continue to serve the good wine of the Gospel to today's children and young people.

This Chapter document brings together texts with different statutes and objectives.

At the beginning, you will find two important messages: one from Pope Francis to the members of the Chapter, and the other from the Capitulants to the Brothers and Lay people of the Mennaisian Family. These two exhortations invite us with the same heart to:

- cultivate *"a passion for service, humility, trust in God and the joy of being servants of his tenderness and mercy"*;
- always start afresh and refocus *"unceasingly on what is essential: Jesus Christ"*;
- make our new Rule *"a way of life, a way we can live together every day"*.

The text concerning the Rule of Life is not, in the strict sense of the term, a Chapter document, as it was neither voted on nor presented to the Chapter. But it is still very relevant, reminding us that our Rule of Life is the Chapter



document par excellence, because of the time devoted to it before, during and after our Assembly.

The texts of the three other sections : Decisions of the General Chapter, Servants of Hope and "In Mennaisian Family mode", were the subject of exchanges around the tables in the search for consensus, then of votes in plenary sessions. They present avenues for discernment and decisions with a view to preparing the future of the Institute, on the one hand, and on the other, they provide guidelines and lines of animation for the next six years.

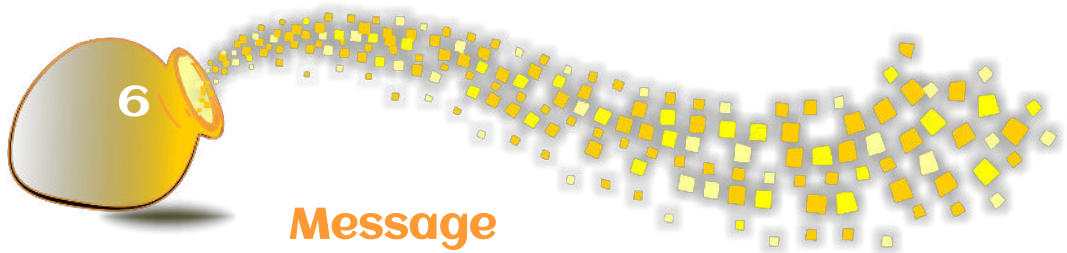
The entire Chapter document has now been handed over to us. Its fruitfulness will depend largely on us. Let us decide to make it our own. Let us accept it as the expression of God's will for us here and now. Let us learn, at the school and invitation of Mary, to do whatever the Lord asks of us through this Chapter. This is the call to live our daily lives with joy and fidelity, if we want to be servants of hope!

God alone in time!
God alone in eternity!

Brother Hervé Zamor
Superior General



Called to Be Servants of Hope



Message of Pope Francis to the Members of the General Chapter

Dear Brothers,

I welcome you on the occasion of your General Chapter. I greet the Superior and every one of you, and I express my closeness to all the Brothers throughout the world.



I give thanks to the Lord for the work of His Spirit, manifested in your charism, namely *the evangelization of children and the young through education*. This Chapter of yours comes in the wake of the bicentennial celebrations of the Institute, and offers you the opportunity to return to the fundamental insights that guided Venerable John Mary de La Mennais and Father Gabriel Deshayes.

Today, their work is present in several countries of the world, because they believed that everything is possible for those who entrust themselves totally to the Lord and put themselves at the service of the integral human development of each person. We must never forget where we come from and always keep in mind the motivations for our actions.

Dear Brothers, you work in regions of the world where poverty, youth unemployment and social crises of every type are rife. I therefore urge you to be fathers for those to whom you are sent, fathers who reflect the loving and compassionate face of God. In a world in continual change, you generously put yourselves at the service of the young, attentive to their aspirations and at the same time always focused on Christ, the supreme rule of your life.

Your vocation drives you to go where others do not, in the periphery, towards people who form the category of the rejected, those who are wounded by life, and victims. May your presence be a wellspring of hope for many. In your spirit of fraternity and welcome, may they recognize another face of the humanity disfigured by wars, indifference and rejection of the weakest. Those children, those youngsters, those people also have dreams, but nowadays, for

many reasons, those dreams are shattered. May you help them to revive their dreams, to believe in them and to fulfil them!

Dear Brothers, the Church is a family and, in the variety of charisms and vocations, we all cooperate for the salvation of humanity. In this wondrous mystery of communion, I can count on your filial trust and your attachment to the ministry of the Successor of Peter. I encourage you to work in close collaboration with the dioceses where you are in mission and with the faithful People of God; to banish from your life any spirit of pride, closed-mindedness, division and gossip. Indeed, “being Church means being God’s people, in accordance with the great plan of His fatherly love. This means that we are to be God’s leaven in the midst of humanity” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 114).

At the end of your Chapter, you will renew the consecration of the Institute to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. May your pedagogy always be inspired by She who, with her total “Yes”, consented that God’s salvific plan for humanity be fulfilled in her person. May she help you to cultivate the zeal to set out to serve, to cultivate humility, trust in God and the joy of being servants of his tenderness and mercy. Please do not lose your joy!

I heartily bless you and your confreres all over the world, as well as the young people you accompany. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

Pope Francis
2024, April 22



Called to Be Servants of Hope



Message from the Brothers of the Chapter to the Brothers and Lay People of the Mennaisian Family

We, the Brothers of the Chapter, gathered with Mary like the servants at Cana, address this message to you, as we share the good bread and wine of the "Good News".

An experience to share...

Above all, it has been a long EXPERIENCE that we have lived through TOGETHER.

A spiritual experience: We saw an initial sign of hope in the fact that the Chapter began with the Holy Week and the joy of Easter. The three days of retreat, coinciding with the three days of the Holy Triduum, immediately turned us towards the One who is at the heart of our consecrated life: "Do whatever he tells you!" (Jn 2:6) and "Go and find my brothers and sisters" (Jn 20:27).

A fraternal experience: Rich from our cultural and generational diversity, we have lived out what each Brother lives daily: prayer, work, sharing, in a climate of simplicity and openness. A climate that undoubtedly owes a lot to the awareness of our respective fragilities, considered with lucidity and hope.

A synodal experience: Our ways of working have allowed us to "*walk together*" as Pope Francis invites us to do. Older Brothers, younger Brothers and Lay people (at the start of the Chapter) were able to listen to each other, discuss together and bear witness, each person bringing the originality of their own point of view, their lived experiences and their hopes.



2024 General Chapter

Paths to travel...

For the Mennaisian Family: A fundamental text as a "compass" for the journey.

The reference text of the Mennaisian Family has been re-read and updated by the Lay people and Brothers together. A change of perspective is desired: it is better to start from below, from the local perspective, so as to ensure a closer accompaniment, animation and monitoring of our Fraternities. Several elements were emphasized as being necessary for us to make Jesus Christ and his Gospel better known: in particular charism, vocations and co-responsibility.

For the Congregation: Some inspiring calls and invitations recognized as "paths" for the future.

On the basis of the report of the Brother Superior General, which realistically presents our current situation, we have highlighted certain priorities for the future: **formation** programmes to be reinvigorated, spiritual **accompaniment** to be more widely adopted, a **missionary dynamic** to be pursued, **international collaboration** to be developed more and more. We are therefore invited to make personal and community review a regular practice so as to enable better discernment.

We have received contributions from the Brothers and communities in the months leading up to the Chapter. In the light of their many contributions, and enriched by our fraternal experience, we propose to everyone an itinerary of life to make us servants, pilgrims and prophets of hope. We will bear witness to this at the heart of our mission and educational communities.



Called to Be Servants of Hope



Message from
the Brothers...

A Rule to live by...

A Rule to LIVE by, a Living Rule FOR LIFE.

CONSENSUS has been our method of reviewing and rewriting the Rule of Life. We are also called to use this search for “common ground” to inspire our daily lives. This experience, based on active listening, positive criticism, and genuine discussion, was intended to allow a more faithful expression of our realities. Above and beyond the juridical and canonical constraints, it was a question of finding the most appropriate words for today and for expressing our very diverse situations. We have carried this out whilst constantly refocusing and referring back to our fundamental touchstone: JESUS CHRIST.

Our wish: That for each Brother and each community the Rule may truly trace a life-giving path, one to be lived out daily. "I am the WAY!"

Our call: That every Brother and every community will welcome, celebrate, and re-read this Rule often so that it does not remain just a book on a shelf. "I am the TRUTH!"

Our hope: That the Rule of Life may be truly lived out and shared from day to day. "I am LIFE!"

We, the Brothers gathered in the Chapter have, at Jesus' request, filled our jars with WATER like the servants of Cana: the water that flows from our reality and our poverty.

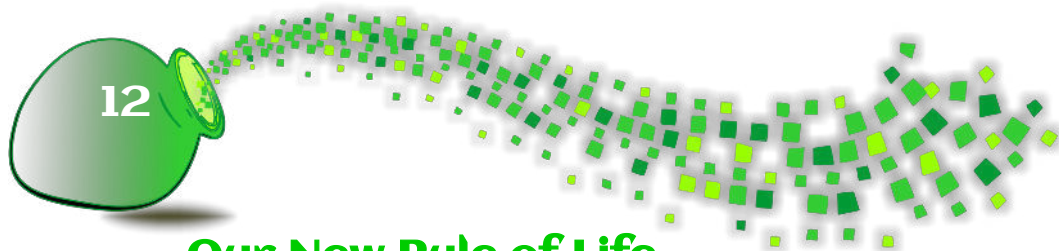
"With Him, through Him and in Him", the CHRIST, it is now up to each Brother and each community, to serve this water changed into “good WINE” – the wine of faith, love and hope – in the joyful context of our gifted daily lives.



2024 General Chapter



Called to Be Servants of Hope



Our New Rule of Life

More than fifty years after the Chapters of 1968 and 1970, and forty years after the definitive adoption of the Rule in 1982, the Chapter of 2024 will certainly have been marked by the adoption of a "new" Rule of Life for our Congregation.

A long process of preparation

As each Brother is well aware, the work of revising the Rule of Life did not begin in March 2024. Following the decision taken by the Superior General and his Council, in close collaboration with the Major Superiors, an international commission of nine members set out to work at the beginning of 2020. During the COVID period, it quickly had to find an appropriate method: study of the texts in three sub-commissions, sharing and consensus-building in commission, for each of the 15 chapters finally retained for the Rule.

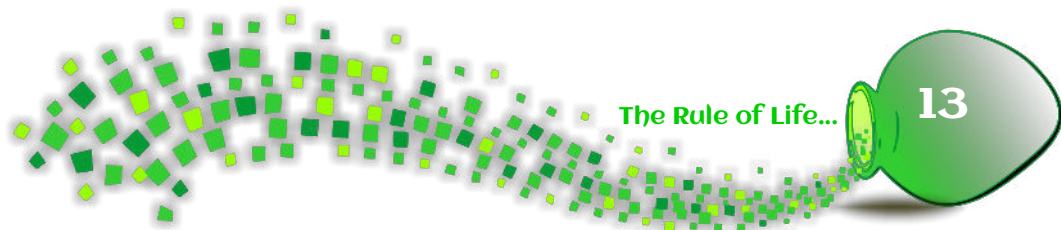
At the end of 2022, a new stage could begin: that of consulting all the Brothers in the communities on the themes that most directly affected their lives. At the same time, consultations were also organised for the more specific chapters on formation and the government of the Institute.

After integrating the reflections and contributions of the Brothers, a first *Instrumentum Laboris*, including all the draft texts, was presented to the Brothers delegated to the Chapter a few months before the meeting. This was done remotely, making the best possible use of current means of communication.

Seeking consensus

The consensus-building method chosen for the Chapter was based on working in "tables". Each of the six groups, grouped by language, was invited to work in turn on each number of all 15 chapters of the *Instrumentum Laboris*. Based on the feedback, the Commission of Secretaries had the difficult and delicate task of finalising a new consensus text to present to the General Assembly.

Submitted to the General Assembly, the new draft could be further enriched by duly supported and voted amendments. This consensus-building process



paid off handsomely, with each article approved by a large majority, and very often unanimously.

A "new" Rule of Life

Pending the approval of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life (DIVCSVA) before publication, our new, shorter Rule of Life offers us a more readable, dynamic and meaningful plan:

I. A religious Institute of Brothers

1. The nature and spirit of the Institute

II. The Brother, a consecrated person

2. Religious consecration
3. Religious obedience
4. Consecrated chastity
5. Evangelical poverty

III. The life of the Brother

6. The fraternal community
7. The life of prayer
8. The apostolic mission

IV. The Brother's itinerary

9. Initial and ongoing formation

V. Organisation of the Institute

10. The service of authority in the Institute
11. The local community
12. The provincial and district government
13. The general Chapter
14. The general government
15. The temporal goods

A Rule of Life to Be Lived and for Life

"Drawing its inspiration from the Gospel and the intuition of the Founders, transmitted and enriched by the living tradition of the Congregation, the Rule of Life of the Institute is for each Brother a sure guide on the path he has chosen" (Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 1,12).

"Look upon the Rule as the expression of God's will, and its strict observance as the surest means of pleasing him and sanctifying yourselves" (Rule of 1825).

Let us prepare ourselves to welcome our Rule, to read it frequently, to study it and to meditate on it in order to assimilate its riches and its spirit. With our Brothers in community, let us make it a way of life.

Called to Be Servants of Hope

Decisions of the General Chapter

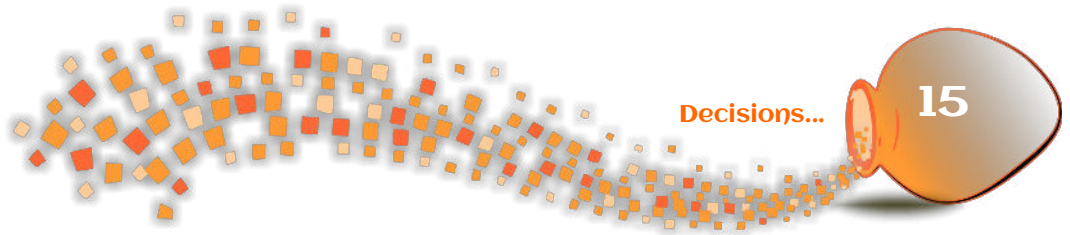
I. Points of discernment for the General Government

In the course of their work, and following the report of the Brother Superior General, the members of the General Chapter took time to listen to and enlighten each other in four specific areas:

- 1. Initial formation:** Given the shortage of formators and the large number of formation centers, what direction should be taken? Are groupings of formation structures feasible and desirable at postulancy, novitiate and scholasticate levels? How should formators be selected and trained?
- 2. Young Brothers:** How can we support young Brothers in their first years of religious life? In which communities should they experience their first insertion? What support and training should be offered?
- 3. Mission Ad Gentes:** How can we respond to the calls of our time to bring the Good News of Jesus to new lands? How can we help Provinces and Districts to make their own contribution?
- 4. The question of an international Mennaisian community** in connection with ongoing formation. Places like the Motherhouse in Ploërmel are a source of inspiration for Lay people and Brothers in the Mennaisian Family. How can we make them places of life and formation? What decisions should be taken to offer the best possible Mennaisian formation to all?

In an effort to answer these questions, the Chapter has submitted a written document containing recommendations and orientations to Brother Superior General and his Council.

It will be up to the latter to take up these recommendations, study them and draw the best decisions for the animation of the whole Congregation and the Mennaisian Family for the next six years.



II. Economy and Charism

"In consecrated life, the management of the economic affairs is in harmony with the charism, the mission and the guidance of poverty. Management decisions that ensure these dimensions must provide adequate forms of community life, avoiding the delegation of economic decisions only to a group or a single person.

It is up to the General Chapter, which "has in the Institute the supreme authority according to the constitutions" (Can. 631 § 1), to establish the fundamental ways of proceeding in economic administrative matters and to elaborate a charismatic plan of the Institute which also provides corresponding directives" (EC 58).

Taking into account the revised Rule of Life (in particular Chapter XV, Temporal Goods), the orientations of the Church (CICLSAL, Economy and Charism (EC), 2018) and the current situation of our Congregation (Treasurer General's Report), the Chapter takes the following decisions and orientations. They will always be implemented in conjunction with the Major Superiors and the Institute's Economic Affairs Council.

Financing of the General Administration

5. Permanence and generalization of Province and District contributions (redevance)

The contribution (redevance) remains a means of financing the General Administration. All the entities of the Congregation contribute to it.

6. Creation of a General Administration Fund (GAF)

A fund has been created to contribute to the financing of the General Administration. It is being introduced gradually. Only the interests can be used to supplement the contribution.

The International Solidarity Fund (ISF) continues to finance formation.

7. Allocation of the proceeds from sales of the Congregation's assets in Rome to the GAF

The proceeds from the sale of the Castel Gandolfo and Rome Sant'Ivo properties, after repayment of debts, could provide a good starting base for the GAF.

8. Subsequent contributions to the GAF

The General Chapter mandates the General Government to complete the financing of the GAF by:

- a contribution from the stable patrimony of the Congregation (real estate and financial assets);
- a contribution from other sales made by the Provinces or Districts;
- a special contribution from the Provinces and Districts on the proposal of the General Government.

Transfer of the Generalate House and Archives

9. Transfer the Generalate from Rome to Rennes

The Generalate in Rome is currently too large for our Congregation. It generates very high operating costs.

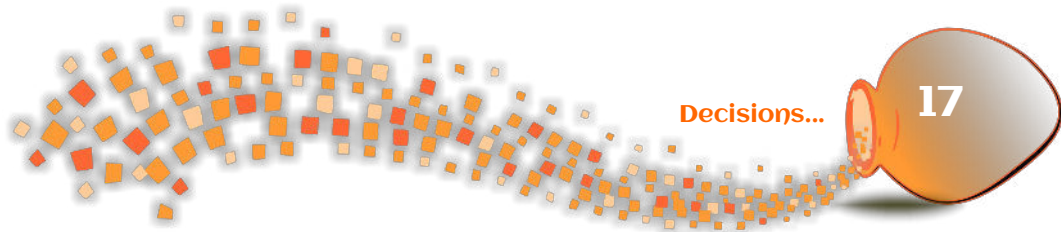
After studies, alternative solutions in Rome have proved difficult to implement. They would be very costly and would not allow for many operating savings.

The Chapter therefore decided to transfer the Generalate to Rennes (France) in a house that already belongs to the Congregation and that meets the needs of the General Administration.

The location in Rennes, near Ploërmel, will bring us closer to the Mother House and make it easier to organise Congregational meetings and formation courses for the Brothers. It also paves the way for our future presence in France, where our roots are.

10. Transfer the Archives from Rome to Ploërmel

The Archives in Rome will be transferred to Ploërmel, which will allow that they be combined with the Archives of the Congregation already present at the Mother House.



Economy and the Management in the Congregation

11. Economic Directory

"The main directives and guidelines for action in keeping with the charism of the Institute, its mission and the vow of poverty, are defined and specified in the Institute's Economic Directory" (Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 15, 5.3, Cf. EC 58).

The Chapter entrusts the drafting and implementation of the Institute's Economic Directory to the General Government. It will be *ad experimentum* until the next Chapter.

12. Stable Patrimony

"The Stable Patrimony consists of all the movable and immovable assets which, through a legitimate assignation, are intended to guarantee the economic security of the Institute. For the goods of the whole Institute, this assignation is made by the Brother Superior General with the consent of his Council" (EC 38, Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 15,4).

The General Chapter entrusts to the Brother Treasurer General the mission of "proceeding to a general identification of the properties of the Institute destined to guarantee its subsistence and to facilitate the realisation of its institutional ends" (EC 38).

The Superior General and his Council will proceed, in agreement with the Major Superiors, to the assignation of the properties of the stable patrimony of the whole Institute (EC 38, RV Ch 15).

13. Thresholds for administrative acts

"The General Chapter must establish the maximum sum for acts of extraordinary administration by the Provinces" (EC 58).

The Chapter approves the amounts that make it possible to identify extraordinary acts of administration according to Provinces and Districts, or countries. Updating these amounts is the responsibility of the Superior General (Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 15, 9.2).

In order to comply with Church law and the Rule of Life, but also to avoid serious damage to the Congregation, Major Superiors must scru-

pulously respect these rules concerning acts of extraordinary administration (Rule of Life Ch. 15, 9, EC 59). This applies not only to the houses, but also to the works linked to the Congregation.

Orientations for the Provinces and Districts

14. Monitoring of accounts in accordance with the Congregation's directives

"For Institutes operating in several countries, it is advisable to adopt appropriate accounting methods to enable data to be compared and, if necessary, aggregated" (EC 91).

With the help of professionals and in conjunction with the Economic Affairs Council, the Institute has undertaken the task of grouping and harmonising the various accounts of the Provinces and Districts, including the communities. This work must continue. These entities must regularly provide the statements of accounts and tables of situations requested (Rule of Life Ch. 15, 6.1), including the works.

The various entities must carefully follow up the titles of ownership and archives. Regular inventories will be provided to the General Treasurer's Office. The original documents are archived by the Province and the District and copies, at least digital copies, are sent to the General Treasury.

15. Decision to share resources effectively

"The Brothers share their goods in common; this pooling and sharing of goods is an essential element of religious poverty. It enables the Brothers, aware of the close ties that unite them, to practise solidarity and to ensure the life of the Institute and its works.

All that belongs to the Brothers by reason of their work or that they receive as gifts, pensions, insurance, or in any other way, belongs by right to the Institute and must therefore be faithfully and promptly handed over, according to the norms proper to each Province or District" (Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 5, 8).

Aware of the essential nature of the sharing of goods for the life of communities, Provinces or Districts, and the Congregation as a whole, the Major Superiors are particularly attentive to this. Together with the Province or District Chapters, they specify the practical details of this sharing at all levels and ensure that they are implemented.

The Major Superior must remind the Brothers of their obligation to remit their salaries, allowances or pensions to the community. He will enter into dialogue with Brothers who are not living up to this commitment to invite them to change their behaviour. If the problem persists, the Major Superior will proceed with canonical monitions that could lead to dismissal from the Congregation (CIC 696).

16. Self-financing

In conjunction with the Economic Affairs Council and the General Government, where this has not yet been done, the Provinces and Districts adopt measures likely to help them achieve self-financing in the medium term.

17. Formation for the bursars

"The General Council and the Superiors (...) give careful attention to the formation of bursars and other members of the Institute who have responsibility in economic matters" (Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 15, 5.2, EC 97).

The Major Superiors ensure the formation of bursars at all levels. They will pay particular attention to the crucial moment when one takes up the duty as bursar of the community, as also for bursars (treasurers) of the Province or District.





Servants of Hope : animation of the Institute

***"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee.
The mother of Jesus was there."***

At the wedding in Cana, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there (Jn 2:1). "Moved by pity," the Second Vatican Council tells us, "she brought about by her intercession the beginning of the miracles of Jesus the Messiah" (LG 58). This shows us her role in the history of salvation at her Son's side, in the Church, yesterday and today. For us consecrated religious, Mary's presence is of fundamental importance "both for the spiritual life (...) and for the consistency, unity and progress of the whole community" (VC 28).

The Virgin Mary always had an important place in the life of John Mary de la Mennais. He left us his example, together with a direct call for us to give her an important place in our lives as religious. This call is repeated throughout our history:



"You should have a deep devotion to the Immaculate Virgin because she is the Mother of God, a filial love because she is your Mother, and a boundless trust in her for the double reason that she is both the Mother of God and your Mother" (Rule of 1876).





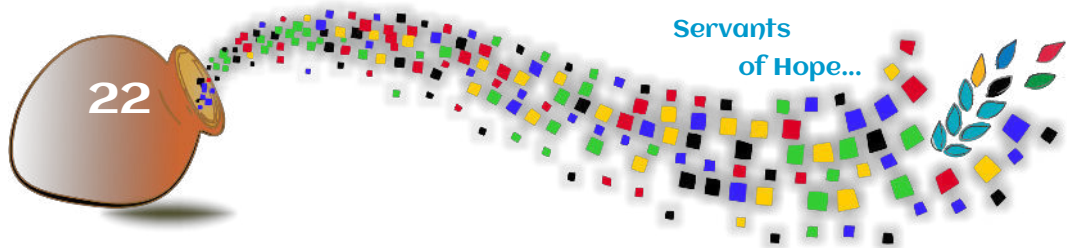
18. Living out our consecration to Christ with Mary

Following in the footsteps of the Founders, John Mary de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, and of the Brothers throughout the history of the Congregation, we wish today **to strengthen our attachment to Mary** as mother and model in our lives as consecrated persons (VC 28).

1. Let us renew our consecration **to Jesus with Mary** in every situation, so that our lives as Brothers may be **beacons of hope**.
2. Let us rediscover the place of Mary in our following of Christ, in order to live with her our Mennaisian charism in all its dimensions.
3. Let us celebrate **a Marian Year** during which the Superior General will offer us a circular to help us live out the Rule of Life with Mary, the model of our consecrated life.



Called to Be Servants of Hope



"They have no wine!"

At Cana, Mary turned to Jesus and explained to him the situation affecting all those attending the wedding: "They have no wine" (Jn 2:3). Through her intercession, she will lead her Son to radically transform this situation of lack and concern into a moment of grace, salvation, and life.

As a Congregation and as a Mennaisian Family, we experience over time fatigue, fears, fragility, sadness, indifference to the misery of others, lethargy, apathy, and unfaithfulness. We are few in number, we are affected by ageing and departures, we are saddened by the small number of vocations or in some cases their total absence. Our jars are empty!

Children, young people, and families live in a world affected by poverty of all kinds, by violence, war, and loneliness, by anxiety about the future of humanity and the planet, by a lack of meaning and an absence of hope.



Rule of Life

"To keep the strength of his initial impulse intact, the Brother often renews the joyful gift of his whole being. He asks the Holy Spirit to open his heart to this faith that makes him see the world, its people and events through the eyes of Christ" (Rule of Life, Ch. 1, 4).



John Mary de la Mennais

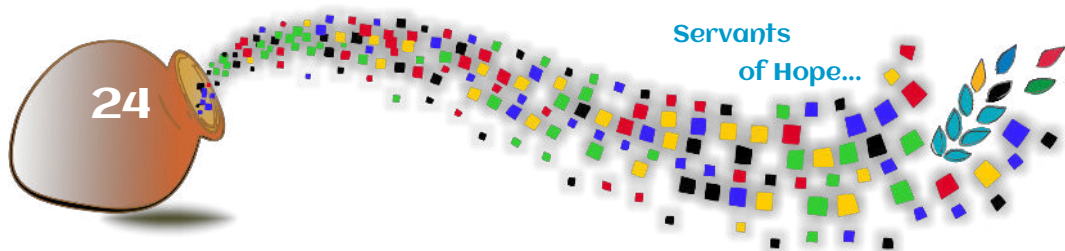
"But when I cast my eyes over these pupils brought together by Providence, when I consider the immensity of the needs of this vast diocese, and compare them to its resources, my heart is saddened and broken, and I am tempted to say to Jesus Christ, like his apostles, in a similar circumstance, "How can such a small amount suffice for so many people?" (CG I, 338).



19. Developing a compassionate heart

1. As Brothers, we should identify, **accept, and even welcome our poverty**, shortcomings, and weaknesses, in order to present ourselves to the Lord just as we are through the hands of Mary, in total humility and simplicity, trust and peace.
2. Despite our weakness, in this world at the school of Mary, let us **open**:
 - **our eyes** that we might discover the needs of our Brothers, of the Mennaisian Family, of children and young people and of those around us;
 - **our ears** to hear the cries of all those who call out for help;
 - **our hearts** to empathize with the sufferings of those who carry a heavy cross;
 - **our hands** to serve those left by the wayside.
3. Together with Mary and following her example, carried by faith, hope and charity, **let us turn to Jesus** to present to him the frailties and infirmities of our brothers and sisters, especially the poorest and most destitute.





"Do whatever he tells you."

Mary recommended that the servants do whatever her Son tells them (Jn 2:3): let us listen to and put into practice the Word of the Lord.

This was the attitude she practised throughout her life. Jesus himself praised his Mother as one who listens to the Word and keeps it (Lk 11:28).

Following in Mary's footsteps, welcoming and putting into practice the Word of the Lord involves us in a threefold movement: listening, discerning and acting.

Pope Francis



"We need to listen to the proclamation of the God who comes to us, to discern the signs of his presence, and to commit ourselves to his Word by walking in his footsteps. Listening, discerning, walking: three verbs for our journey of faith and for the service we perform ..." (21/12/2023).

Rule of Life and John Mary de la Mennais



"Following Mary's example, the Brother listens to the Word, treasures it, meditates on it in his heart and puts it into practice" (Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 9, 10).



"To know Jesus Christ well, we must search the Scriptures, and it was He himself who gave us this advice ... Every Word must be meditated on, tasted and savoured with delight" (CG I, 58).





20. Listen to and put into practice the Word of the Lord

Above all, we are called **to listen to Jesus**. This implies a process of spiritual renewal so as to encounter him in prayer, reading and meditating on the Word of God.

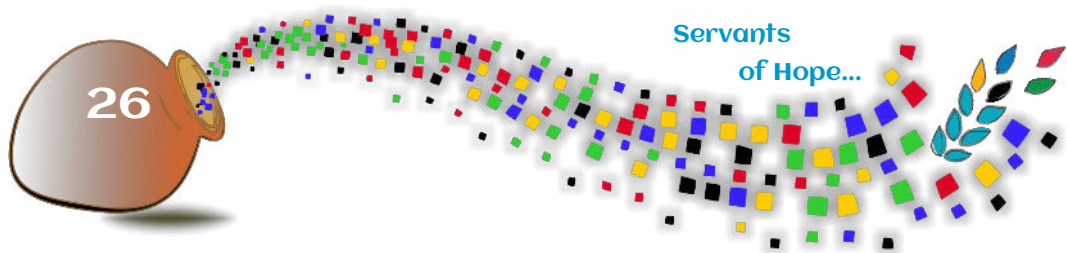
1. In order to "start afresh with Christ", let us create **a climate of silence and interiority** in our communities that encourages an encounter with God, particularly in prayer and lectio divina, in order to welcome Christ and bring Him to the world.
2. Let us **practice discernment** personally and in community, as a Congregation and Mennaisian Family, that we might discover, through listening and dialogue, what the Lord expects of us and the paths we must follow in the Church and the world of today.
3. Guided by our **Rule of Life** that we read and meditate upon, **let us commit ourselves** to the path of love of God and of others, so that we might do what Jesus tells us in an attitude of availability and openness, generosity and total self-giving.

Today, as at Cana, **Jesus needs servants** so that his "hour" can come and his salvation be made manifest.

4. In our Provinces and Districts, let us find **new ways to awaken and accompany Mennaisian vocations**.



Called to Be Servants of Hope



“Fill the jars with water”.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water" (Jn 2:7), and they filled them to the brim. Through the obedience of these servants to Jesus and their direct action, John the Evangelist offers us an example of service. Thereafter, Jesus would very often invite people to serve, right up to his last supper, when, by washing the disciples' feet, he showed himself to be a servant, thus demonstrating that he had not come to be served but to serve.

Following the example of Mary, the "Handmaid of the Lord", who crossed mountains and valleys to serve her cousin Elizabeth, we are invited to undertake a similar journey, to leave our comfort zones and go and serve wherever the Lord sends us.

Rule of Life



“Mennaisian education aims at promoting the whole person, body, spirit, and heart, and his or her fundamental dignity as a person in the image of God” (Rule of Life 2024, Ch. 8, 14).

John Mary de la Mennais



“May the Lord make of you men after his own heart, devoted to his Church, detached from yourselves, poor in spirit, humble, zealous, ready to undertake anything and to suffer anything to spread his word, to extend his kingdom and to kindle in the world that divine fire which Jesus Christ came to bring” (S II, 549-550).





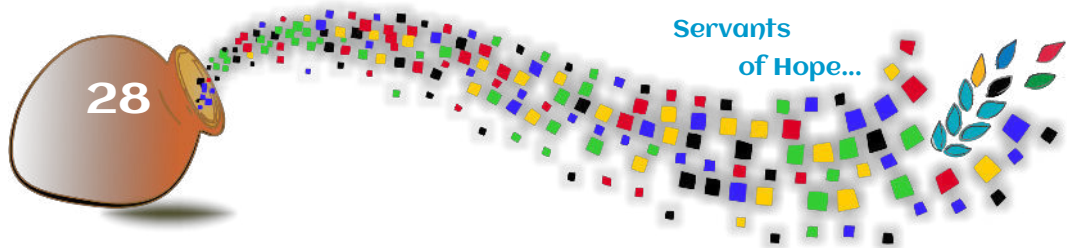
21. Called to be servants of hope

We are called ***to service in the everyday events of our lives.***

1. **In our communities**, let us put ourselves **at the service of one another** in our daily lives, caring for one another and building true fraternity. Let us live a form of free and disinterested service so that we can welcome others and carry out our daily tasks with joy.
2. Called **to the service of educating** children and young people, let us manifest **in our educational communities** our readiness to help them, listen to them and support them by offering them an integral formation that involves the head, heart and hands.
3. **In the service of the least of all**, and following in the footsteps of our Founders, let us care for all those who face different kinds of poverty. Let us make our educational communities safe havens for young people, especially the most disadvantaged, those who need care and attention, who need a welcome and a listening ear.



Called to Be Servants of Hope



"Now draw some out and take it to the Master of the feast."

After filling the jars with water, the servants were invited to draw some out and bring it to the host (Jn 2:8). But in doing so, they discovered that it was no longer water. It was excellent wine! Henceforth, the mission is to serve the Gospel and bring the joy of the Good News to others.

We are called to be witnesses of Gospel fraternity in a world that needs it more than ever. For us, the new wine is the joy of living together in fraternal communion. In doing so, we will be "the ones who call", we will be prophets and signs of the Kingdom of God.

By drawing the new wine and bringing it to the guests, the servants participated in the manifestation of Jesus as Christ and Saviour, and they did so together. They became missionary disciples, witnesses to the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. The wine is not meant to remain in the jars; it is to be distributed, enabling the wedding feast to take place, as a symbol of the covenant between God and humanity.

Rule of Life



"Following in the footsteps of Jesus, the Brother is a witness to universal fraternity. He makes his witness perceptible, especially through the quality of his human relationships and the joy he radiates in serving God and His people" (Rule of Life, Ch. 8, 8).

John Mary de la Mennais



"Do not regard yourselves as profane teachers, but as missionaries charged with establishing the Kingdom of God in souls: this is indeed your vocation, and it is by making saints that you will sanctify yourselves..." (CG V, 209).





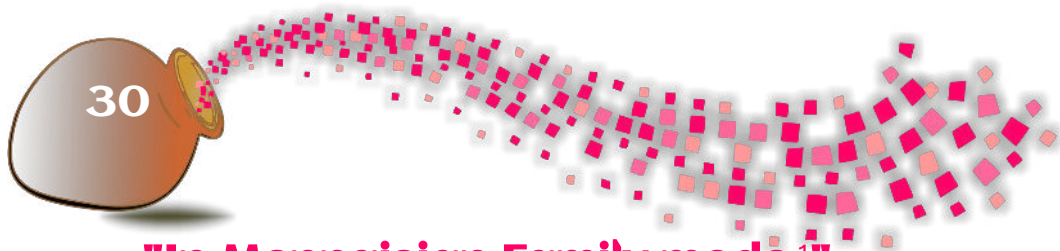
22. Sharing the good wine of Gospel fraternity

We are called to be **bearers of the Gospel and witnesses of fraternity.**

1. Let us share our experience of fraternity as Brothers through being **servants, pilgrims and prophets** of hope, and let us radiate this fraternity in our educational communities.
2. Let us ***work for the development of the Mennaisian Family***, a sign of hope for children, young people and families. Let us live out together in our communities, fraternities and Mennaisian groups a spirituality of communion, manifesting our commitment to education, to the service of the poor and the proclamation of the Gospel.
3. Let us boldly pursue **our missionary activity** by sending Brothers to live in international communities, carrying the wine of the Good News beyond the borders of our local realities and countries.



Called to Be Servants of Hope



"In Mennaisian Family mode"¹

"But you have kept the good wine until now" (Jn 2:10).

Following the example of the servants at Cana, as we, Brothers and Lay people, respond together to the Lord's call, the good wine of our charism is served to all the guests at the wedding. Fraternity, which is both our mission and our vocation, is converted into service and dedication, especially towards the poorest children and young people. Our joy and enthusiasm become a call and a challenge to those around us. This is what it means to be servants of Hope and to live "in Mennaisian Family mode". May the Lord, who asks us to fill the jars with water and allows us to keep the good wine until now, bless our Family by sending down the dew from heaven that will make the work of our hands fruitful!

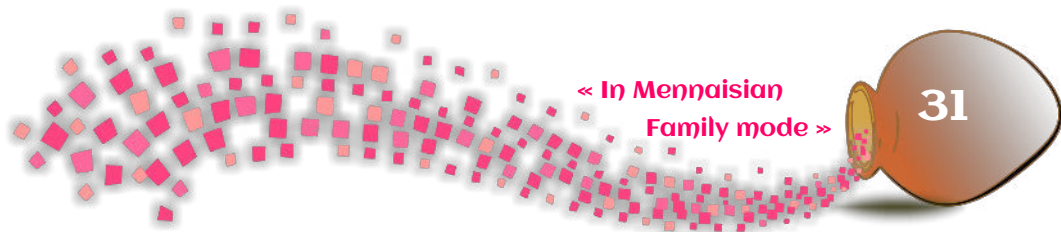
23. To transmit the Mennaisian Charism

→ Courses of action

- 1. Form Formators**, Brothers and Lay people, whose mission is to pass on the Mennaisian Charism and to enable a lived experience of the charism in its spiritual and missionary dimensions. An appropriate formation programme for Brothers and Lay people will ensure for its participants a lived spiritual experience and the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and understanding of our particular way of living and being.
- 2. Discern the feasibility of creating international Mennaisian communities** where Brothers and Lay Mennaisians share together times of prayer, experiences of fraternal life and apostolic mission, whilst respecting the complementarity of their respective vocations.



¹ These orientations were voted on by the brothers and laypeople present at the Chapter



24. To promote vocations of the Brother and Lay Mennaisian Associate

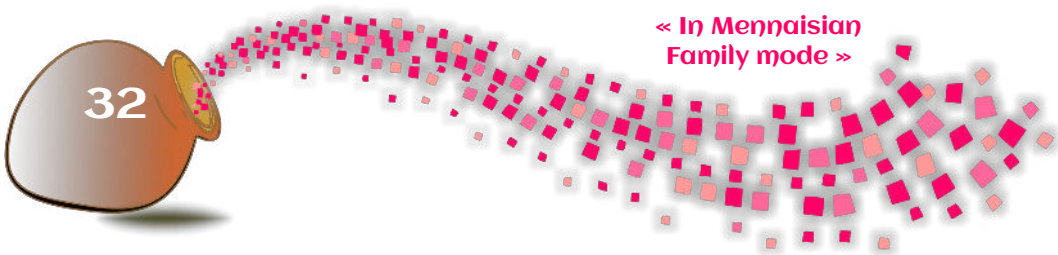
→ Courses of action

1. Develop, *in Mennaisian Family mode*, in each Province or District, a vocational pastoral programme which invites people to go out, to dare to call, to accompany and to propose vocational experiences.
2. Promote in the Provinces and Districts programmes of formation and discernment for those who wish to become Lay Mennaisian Associates.
3. Establish the Association at the Provincial or District level and the International level in accordance with the Association's Statutes.

25. To promote co-responsibility in the Mennaisian Family

→ Courses of action

1. **Animate and accompany the emergence and development of local Mennaisian groups: Fraternities, Lay Mennaisian Associates, Young Adult Mennaisians, etc.** Provinces and Districts in the same language sector or geographically close to each other, can work together with the objective of animating and accompanying local Mennaisian groups in a spirit of co-responsibility.
2. **Open**, if possible, in the Provinces and Districts, **new missionary projects** at the service of the poorest, led by Brothers and Lay people.
3. **Involve more** the Lay members of the Mennaisian Family as formators in the animation of formation sessions.
4. **Encourage greater networking and communication at the service of the mission:** sharing of formation tools, educational and solidarity experiences.
5. **Promote and support volunteer experiences** and exchanges that enable young people to discover the meaning of Mennaisian life and commitment.



26. To make Jesus Christ known and loved by children and young people

→ Courses of action

1. Propose spiritual experiences for young people based on listening to the Word of God (e.g. Lectio Divina), silence and personal prayer.
2. Create opportunities for young people to meet today's witnesses and missionary disciples.
3. Offer to young people experiences of apostolic and missionary service and commitment.
4. Form and accompany Young Adult Mennaisians (YAM) based on the three pillars of the charism (spirituality, fraternal bonds and mission).



Lay members
of the International Commission
of the Mennaisian Family present
at the Chapter

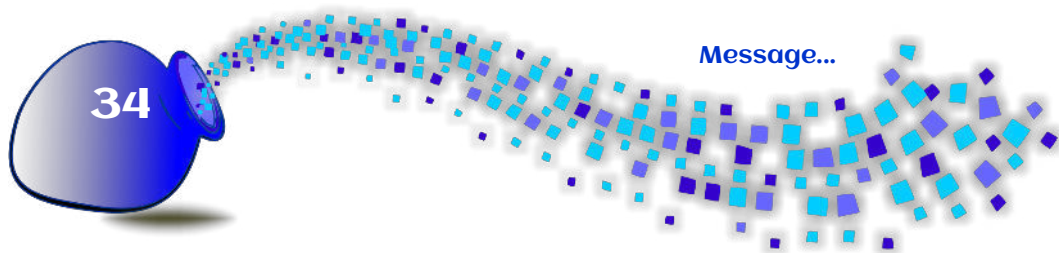
Message of Brother Superior General

Good news: God has visited us! We have listened to him and met him. He has manifested his glory to us. At Mary's invitation, we filled our jars with water (Jn 2:7). What a beautiful experience of synodality where, rich in our diversity and talents, we contributed to the celebration of the New Covenant! What a profound spiritual experience, in which God transformed our frailties into solid fraternal communion, and our timidity into courageous audacity to face the future. Magnificat, because God is at work in our Institute: His Spirit has given us the gift of listening to one another, of seeking consensus and of listening to the cries, sometimes barely audible, of those who cry out for help.

Yesterday's Cana! Cana today! But it's the same Lord who accepts to anticipate his hour to respond to our needs and frailties. And he is always ready to answer our prayers when we cry out to him with faith, hope and perseverance.

At Cana, water was transformed into good wine to the delight of the guests. At Ariccia, our new Rule of Life, the fruit of a genuine synodal process, outlines the way for each Brother to savour, like a fine wine, the gift of fidelity and the joy of perseverance. This is the secret if we want holiness to be the most beautiful face (EG 9) of our Institute. Only the Rule of Life, read, meditated on and lived with joy and fidelity, will make us better. Is it not a lamp for our footsteps, a light for our journey in the footsteps of Christ? By fulfilling everything it tells us, it will lead us to Jesus, just as Mary did for the servants at the wedding feast at Cana. The more we put into practice what she teaches us, the more we'll fill our jars with water, so that the Lord can, in his own time, transform it into good wine for the feast of the New Covenant. Thus, by

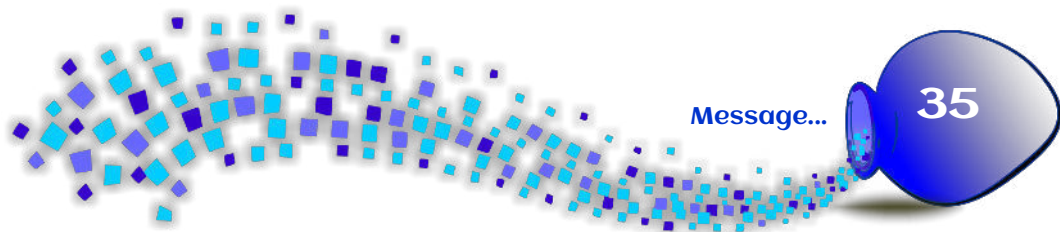




initiating us into the life of the Mennaisian Brother in its threefold dimension: prayer, fraternity and mission, our Rule fulfils its role as mother. By accompanying our growth in the consecrated life, lived in Mennaisian colours, it fulfils its vocation as educator. Mother and Educator, our Rule of Life, if guarded as our most precious treasure (Mt 13:44) and the fine pearl (Mt 13:45) of our consecrated life, will teach us to grow in grace and wisdom before God and man (Lk 2:52).

At Cana, Mary and Jesus lent each other mutual support to make the miracle possible. This is the path that the Brothers and Lay people of the Mennaisian Family are invited to follow so that the good wine can continue to bring joy to the children and young people of our educational centres. Without the Lay people or without the Brothers, our jars will not be filled to the brim. It is together that we are called to serve the new wine of the Gospel, in this co-responsibility that consists of living more and more "in Mennaisian Family mode". In order to continue to fill our jars together to make Jesus Christ known and loved by children and young people, we commit ourselves to forming Brothers and Lay people capable of transmitting our charism, and of daring to call new servants. The miracle of fecundity is always possible, but on one condition: that we return to the Source to recover the original freshness of the new wine of the Gospel (EG 11).





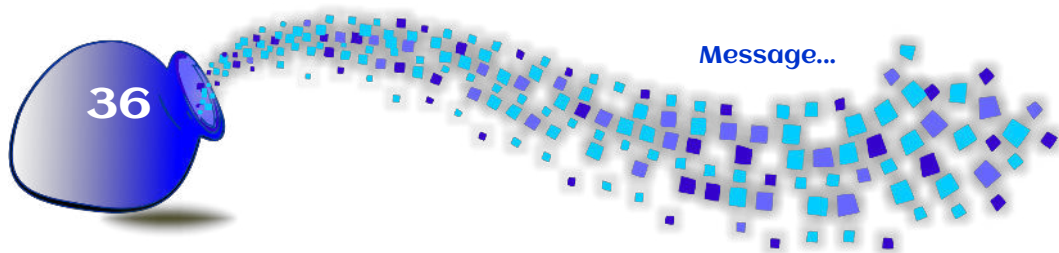
At Cana, Mary, a thoughtful, compassionate and attentive woman, invited the servants to listen to and put into practice the Word of the Lord. Jesus asked them to fill the jars with water and bring the good wine of the New Covenant. Today, the Mother's recommendation and the Son's command constitute for us a whole programme of life and daily commitment if we want to be servants of hope. Following the example of Mary and the instructions of Jesus, we want to go out into the deep and risk everything to follow the One who is the only Way to go, the only Truth to accept, the only Life for which it is worth giving everything. We are ready to leave the sand of our habits or the firm ground of our certainties to rely on God Alone, our only wealth. We commit ourselves to offering our generosity and readiness so that our fraternal life in community may be a source of joy for ourselves and for those around us. We want to overcome our fears, abandon ourselves to Providence and always start afresh from Christ, trusting that everything else will be given to us over and above (Mt 6:33). This is the way to get back to what's essential and to put Christ at the centre of our lives. We are determined, like Mary, to let the Spirit take us under his shadow. Because without his help and presence, we are sterile; we dry up, we lose our daring, our dynamism, our creativity.

It is prayer that will move our Institute forward. It is the proclamation of the Word through the witness of our lives that will make us missionary disciples. It is service to the poorest of the poor that will help us to be faithful to the calls of the Spirit and to our founding charism.

At Cana, Mary and Jesus were not indifferent to the needs of the newly-weds. In 2024, here and now, what are children and young people hungry for?

Saint Teresa of Calcutta rightly said that loneliness is one of the greatest poverties of our world. And what if Jesus were counting on us today to distribute the bread of presence by creating links with those who are weighed down by the burden of isolation and abandonment? Isn't that what he invites us to do when he tells us the parable of the Good Sa-

Called to Be Servants of Hope



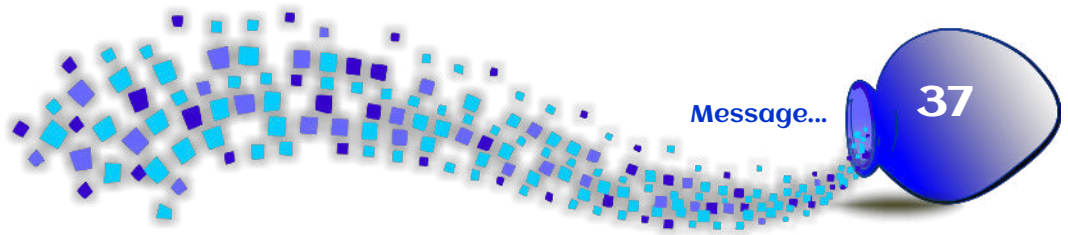
maritan who approaches and takes care of the man left half dead by the side of the road (Lk 10, 25-37)?

When we look at the rise of racism, intolerance and armed conflict in the world, how can we not think that all these difficulties stem from a profound lack of love? Indeed, our hearts have become hardened: there is no longer any room for patience, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, free service or compassion (1 Cor 13, 1-13). So the greatest danger we face today is not to love. Only love that is broken and shared will help us to welcome others as brothers or sisters (Mt 23:8). Our world is so hungry for this revolution of tenderness that Pope Francis often talks about!

If we look at the friends of God, the witnesses to the Gospel in history, the saints, it is easy to realise that, for each of them, the Word of God has been decisive. Saint Anthony, struck by a passage from the Gospel during a Eucharist, left everything for the Lord. Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus discovered her vocation by reading the letters of Saint Paul. Saint Francis of Assisi became a disciple of Christ after reading a passage from the Word of God in which Jesus sent his Apostles on a mission. These are lives changed by the Word of the Lord. Today, children and young people need these new saints who proclaim the Gospel through the witness of their lives.

At Cana, Mary anticipated the embarrassment of the newlyweds; she acted by asking her Son to anticipate his hour. Her intercession totally changed the course of the couple's history. So, by choosing to transfer the Generalate to Rennes and the archives to Ploërmel on the one hand and, on the other, by deciding to create a Fund for the General Administration, we are trying to imitate the thoughtful attitude and courageous daring of Mary, the Patroness of our Institute. This twofold decision, painful and difficult, will help our Congregation to embrace the future with hope, confidence and simplicity. I dare to think that future generations will thank this Chapter for daring to pour new wine into new wineskins (Mk 2:22), in order to place the economy at the service of the charism and the mission.

At Cana, Jesus asked the wedding servants to draw the new wine and bring it



to the master of the feast (Jn 2, 8). Following in their footsteps, we are sent out by the Lord to bear witness to the joy of the Gospel. The feast can go on, for there is no longer any shortage of wine. From now on, our mission is to serve the new wine of the Good News. So initial formation, the accompaniment of young Brothers, the *Ad gentes* mission and the international community in Ploërmel are all projects which, if they are well carried out, will help our Institute to prepare new servants ready to serve wherever the Master sends them.

Now the time has come! Strengthened by this magnificent synodal experience that was our General Chapter:

- We are ready to draw and bring the new wine of our Rule of Life to all our Brothers.
- We want to live more and more "in Mennaisian Family mode".
- We commit ourselves to listening to and putting into practice the Word of the Lord.
- Confident in Providence, we are determined to embrace the future with hope.
- We are happy to serve children and young people the new wine of the Gospel.
- We choose to live our consecration to Christ with Mary.

God alone in time!

God alone in eternity!



Brother Hervé Zamor
Superior General
2024, April 24

Called to Be Servants of Hope

Prayer for the consecration of the Institute to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Virgin Mary, our Mother, we come, following in the footsteps of Brothers Étienne Barbier, Bernard Gaudeul and Yannick Houssay, to renew the consecration of our Institute, the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel and all the members of the Mennaisian Family, to your Immaculate Heart.

Mary, full of grace, we come to you with confidence. Take us in your arms, give us rest and peace. Open your heart to us and help us to live with you and in you. By confidently placing our whole being in your hands, we want to welcome you in a deep and lasting way into our daily lives.

Mary, blessed among all women, by receiving the word of the angel, by your 'yes' and by your obedience, you gave us Jesus Christ. Give us the grace to be open to the work of the Spirit, and to be available as servants of the Lord, according to his word. May our hearts, by your example, be animated by a spirit of charity, humility, zeal, gentleness and renunciation. Through our words, our actions and our encounters let our life be modeled on yours that we may bring Jesus to others.

Mary, humble servant of the Lord, in you and through you, his grace has worked wonders. Help us to live with a humble and poor heart in the image of your Son Jesus, whose birth, life and death were, so to speak, a great act of humility.

Mary, Morning Star, as you presented your Son Jesus, Light of the nations to the temple, carry us in your arms and lead us to Him, with your



kindness, your love and your tenderness. We surrender ourselves to you. We offer you our hearts without reservation. We want to belong to you forever. Guide us with maternal kindness every day of our life.

Mary, first disciple of your Son, at Cana, you intercede for us and, by showing us your Son, you say to us: "Do whatever he tells you". Give us your assistance and help us, by your example and your call, to be faithful disciples of the One whom you have carried in your womb.

Mary, standing at the foot of the cross, it is you that Jesus gave us for Mother. Intercede for us; help us to be faithful to our commitments. Intercede for the Church and for the Congregation. Watch over the Mennaisian Family. Take care of the children and youth. Support them, encourage them, strengthen them, and nourish them with joy, love and hope.

Mary, full of glory, all generations declare you blessed. Help us to love God as you have loved him, so that we may one day share with you the joy promised to good and faithful servants.



2024, April 24

Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome,

Prayer inspired by the words of Jean-Marie de la
Mennais

