

## **Interview with our moderator -Michel Bernard de Vregiles – for this beginning of 2021**

LE : Hello Michel Bernard

MB: Hello Louis -Etienne

LE: we are happy to be able to do this little interview with you. It's a first and then maybe there will be others with many other people...It has been two years since you were elected general moderator of the community. How are you doing?

MB: Listen, I am very well. I'm very well, I'm happy in my mission which is not always comfortable, but there you go. Very happy in my mission

LE : And how is your family?

MB: My family is also doing well - this is an important point, especially in the initial discernment when we ask ourselves the question: are we making ourselves available or not? But in fact, it's going very well. It was a family discernment, including with the children, since you know that we have six children and six grandsons. The grandsons were not included in the discernment of course but everyone is doing very well. You must pay attention to the agenda, especially now. We're not in circles so we have to put everything on the agenda and when I have family time, I put them on the agenda so that things go peacefully.

LE: So you're a full-time moderator. And Catherine ? Can you remind us ?

MB: Yes, I am a full-time moderator, so I am indeed an employee of the Emmanuel community. I've been an employee of the Emmanuel community for about six years now. Before that I worked in big markets distribution for 13 years and then in logistics for 18 years. And Catherine is responsible for the chaplaincy of an hospital, the hospital of Chinon in Touraine.

LE : And you live...?

MB: In l'Ile Bouchard

LE : Thank you! So first question : what does a moderator do concretely ? How does he occupy his week, what does he do with his days?

MB: In fact, I like to recall a sentence that touched me in a text by François, which speaks precisely about pastors. He talks about the bishops, and so he says that the shepherd must be in front of his flock at certain times, who must be in the middle of his flock to know the smell of the sheep, and he ends by saying that he must also be behind the flock for what they may have difficulties, but he also says because the flock itself has a sense of smell to find new paths.

I think that today a general moderator of the Emmanuel community, makes a lot of that. He is certainly not the one who has the infused science, he is certainly not the one who knows from the start where we must go, but he is the one who must listen. A lot of listening to his brothers and sisters and then to guide, to moderate to discern with them, this is what the Lord is calling us to. Because concretely what is important when we discern? It is to do the will of the Lord, so here we try, in community, to live it.

LE: So, what is it concretely? Travels, meetings?

MB: Yes, then I would say that there are several levels. Already very quickly, the government of the Emmanuel community is an International Council that is elected, for which I am responsible. It meets every month. Every month afterwards there may be specific questions and I am in contact with the members of the Council.

Then there is the Council of the Fraternity of Jesus, which meets three times, four times a year and is responsible for the retreats that are organised within the framework of the Fraternity of Jesus. There is the Council which was new and that was something important at the beginning of my mandate, which is the Council of the Clerical Association of the Emmanuel Community which concerns our

brother priests and our brother deacons. And then the last authority, which is very operational, I would say, is what we call the International Bureau. So, what is the International Bureau? They are my delegates for the zones, since we have six zones at the international level. So I have delegates who follow the zones plus all the persons in charge of the international transversal services typically perhaps the best known such as Love and Truth or the question of the Young People, topics that concern everyone, who are what we call transversal services, and who also meet every month. So this is really the government, the community, and then of course there is the relationship with our pastors, with the bishops, with the Church, with our dicastery's, since we depend first and foremost on the Dicastery of the Lay Family and Life of Cardinal Farrell, and also on the dicastery, the Congregation for the Clergy with Cardinal Stella.

LE: And so, in concrete terms, do you travel a lot or are you more at home?

MB: Yes, I travel a lot. So obviously we are in the same situation as you know from COVID, but indeed. Well, before I was delegate of the moderator, my predecessor and friend Laurent Landete, for France and now that I am the general moderator, normally I should. I travel, under normal conditions, I travel much more to go and see the communities abroad: first the members themselves, obviously, and then the different projects that one can have.

LE: One or two trips per term?

MB: Yes that's right. Well, there are no rules, but it's true, yes, it's in that order.

LE: But it helps to put things in perspective. We'll come back to everything you carry in your heart. We're going to start with a message, a letter you wrote, or rather a video message addressed to the members of the Emmanuel Community, it was in November 2020. At a time when we are in a serious health crisis and shortly after the publication of the Pope's encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* (All brothers). But you had, well, I think I know that you hesitated to speak, and this is what you say in your message. But why did you hesitate?

MB: Perhaps I hesitated because I thought that everyone already had a lot of things to say, that today you can't turn on a radio, watch TV, look at your screen without hearing about the current situation, so a lot is always being said and I thought that it's not necessarily useful. Is it necessary to say a word also to address the brothers? In fact, many have asked me, and friends have also asked me "what does the community say?" "I like to remind them that the Emmanuel Community is in the church and therefore there is no magisterium of the Emmanuel Community. We are in the church, we are at the service of the church, we are on mission. So I say to myself, should I speak or not? and it is true that I was very touched by this encyclical of the Holy Father, of Pope Francis, because I wanted to make my brothers want to read it, to meditate on it, to work on it, because it seemed to me that this encyclical responds to our present situation. Now we are in a particular situation, it is not a question of being catastrophic. Humanity has already lived through many difficult periods, but we are nevertheless in a tested period and trying period at the international level, at the world level, which is nevertheless quite new, especially with globalisation, in which we are at the economic and also at media level. And it seemed to me that the Holy Father in this encyclical brings us back to the essential which is obviously the Christ, but in the way of living it, in the implementation through this fraternity that it is necessary for us to live with each other whatever our convictions may be. Many passages of this encyclical have touched me and so it is true that I finally decided to address my brothers and then to take up certain passages again, in any case to encourage them to read and meditate on it.

LE: Yeah, you use this beautiful expression, you say that *Fratelli tutti* is like a providential antidote to the evils we are living through today.

MB: That's it, that is what it is, precisely today and we are only at the beginning; well, I was going to say unfortunately but I don't know. In any case, we can see that sociologists and doctors are already

seeing the collateral damage of what we are going through, and the fact that we are wearing masks, this social distancing, as it is called, when the term itself is already a bad term because it shouldn't be. A corporal distancing, perhaps, to avoid the transmission of the virus but it shouldn't be a social distancing, but it is becoming one and we can see that it will be one of the difficulties and one of the collateral damages of what we are going through. There will be a before and an after. I mentioned this in another short message I sent for March 25th, but the difficulties we encounter will leave their mark and at the same time we know that in God everything is grace and therefore the question is how to live this time, how to live our difficulties by being very attentive to God and by living it as a sign of the times; there is something biblical in what we are living.

LE: The very name of this letter, All Brothers, from the Pope made you think of Pierre Goursat...

MB: Yes, because I believe that deep in our charism, Pierre Goursat, who is the founder of the Emmanuel Community and who in '72 with Martine Catta, lived a weekend of prayers in the Paris region and accepted a prayer known as the prayer of the outpouring of the Spirit, which in fact consists of asking for a renewal of the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit. They live this prayer, and they say, although they were very different, from very different backgrounds, of very different ages, Pierre was much older than Martine, and they actually say at the end of this prayer: "we recognised each other as brothers and sisters". And at that moment, without knowledge, the Emmanuel Community, spiritually, was born.

So afterwards they started a prayer group, the prayer group grew, and then you can read about the history of the community on the internet, I'm not going to develop. But the group grew, and it became the Emmanuel Community.

So at the heart of our charism there is this question of fraternity and moreover in the Emmanuel Community. So the ordinary members of the Emmanuel Community commit themselves and the commitment they make is renewable every year, but within it there are members who are called into the Fraternity of Jesus and this is a consecration of the members of the community who feel this call to truly give their lives for the fruitfulness of the Emmanuel charism and this is a definitive consecration. At the heart of our charism there is this dimension of fraternity, which is obviously in line with what the Pope's encyclical says. So we have to live it among ourselves but obviously much more widely.

LE: You say that the word of the Pope is a prophetic and you also say how much you are struck by the continuity of Pope Francis with his predecessors John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Personally, I would not necessarily say that but....

MB: Yes, perhaps that's precisely why I wanted to insist on this, because in this encyclical Pope Francis is very much in tune with his predecessors. And it is true that it is very I would say a deep sorrow, to see that often our present Pope is perhaps not welcomed, received as I think he should be. It is also linked to the current media world. We no longer talk about debates, we talk about polemics. In fact, I am struck by the fact that as soon as a subject arrives somewhere, there is no debate, we must create a polemic. There is a polemic and therefore one goes from polemic to polemic, and this is also true for the Holy Father. As soon as he expresses himself, one has the impression that some people are more ready to find out what is wrong with what is said than to understand what God is telling us through this man whom He has given us. In concrete terms, and here it is the Catholic who is speaking, but finally I think that the Holy Spirit was not mistaken on the day of the election of Pope Francis.

My reflection is "he is bothering me, he is pushing for conversion", that's what is important as a question, and it's not to have a filter right away to try to spot points that seem to be out of line with what his predecessors were. By the way, I don't know if I'm allowed to advertise, but I'm reading a book by Yves Chiron, who is a Catholic historian, which is called "François phobias" or "François bashing". It's very interesting because it has the vision of the historian and takes up all the great moments of François' pontificate and it's very factual, and you can also see how the media sometimes, or journalists, there I'm addressing a journalist a little through you because you know

the little discussions we've had on the subject. And in fact, unfortunately, sometimes we take an answer, we go out of the context and in fact afterwards it creates a buzz, is transcribed and finally we make the Pope say what he didn't say. There are a lot of very exciting points in this book on this subject.

LE: So you're inviting us not to get discouraged if sometimes we're confused, to dig deeper and try to understand more.

MB: I think above all that it's still a call to conversion.

LE: That's difficult...

MB: But yes, I know starting with myself. In this encyclical, he has the second part, it is precisely the Holy Father who makes a whole reflection, a deepening of this parable of the Good Samaritan. And I was very touched by the way in which the Pope takes up this parable and above all he puts it into perspective and puts it back into the context of the times. And he shows us so much how there was something scandalous in this parable in relation to the context of the time that I obliged myself to do so... I said to myself "if it would be today what would the characters be?" And I couldn't help thinking that the wounded man might be a bishop, that the one who comes to look after him might be a Muslim brother etc etc etc

Sometimes you read the text, or at least I speak for myself, with a certain habit. But here I am rereading this text now, thanks to the Pope, in a very renewed way, which I believe opens my heart to the other, whoever he may be.

LE: So, still in this same message you make several quotations from this letter. A first on the family. The Pope says "my first thought goes to the families called to a primary and inescapable educational mission. They are the first place where the values of love and fraternity, conviviality and sharing, attention and care for others are lived and transmitted.

MB: Yes, because the family is really the heart, the cradle of human life, it is the place in God's plan where one is formed. For example, typically when we speak of Francis there was controversy about questions concerning *Amoris laetitia*, in any case, some notes of this encyclical. I believe that the Pope says this, and we can see it in the encyclical, and I quote, (It is an encyclical *Amoris Laetitia* I do not say something wrong?)

LE : It is a synodal letter

MB: He really reiterates the importance of the family and we can see that it is at the heart of the family that man grows, that this fraternity is born and grows through parents, through brothers and sisters, through those with whom we come into contact. So the family is fundamental, it is essential.

LE: On the dignity of persons, you also mention the fact that we are called to ensure that each person lives in dignity and with appropriate opportunities for his or her integral development.

MB: Absolutely. In any case, it is central to the whole teaching of the Church, and that is the dignity of the human person. We are created in the image of God, so whatever the situation in which we find ourselves, and the Pope has several passages on the subject, and whatever the depth of sin in which we find ourselves, we are created in the image of God and we are truly called to conversion in order to find this heart that will join the heart of God who will join this kingdom to which we are all called, which is already beginning here on earth, and that is extraordinary.

LE: And you also evoke the phrase where the Pope says gratuity exists, the importance of gratuity.

MB: Yes, that it is perhaps a word that is a little harder to hear today. We are in a highly commercialised context. Well, as I said earlier, I did 13 years in mass distribution, so I'm also well placed to see a little bit of the mechanics of commerce and the mechanics of buying and selling, prices...., so there's a tendency to always commercialise things in their approach. There is the giving side, and it is true that this question of the gratuitousness that God himself shows us since we know

that God did not need us, God created man out of pure love. It is truly the only creature that he wanted for himself and therefore it is this love with which God created us that we must ask ourselves for this conversion of heart in order to also live our relationships in gratuity. This is not easy; it is a daily struggle.

LE : That too is a conversion. It obviously evokes the whole quest to live this fraternity, the struggle against intolerance and fundamentalism. He says and you quote "let us live and teach the value of respect, love capable of assuming any difference the priority of the dignity of every human being over his ideas his feelings his practices even over his sins whatever they may be".

MB: That's difficult too. It requires a profound conversion

LE: But in fact, because of intolerance and fundamentalism, we can imagine quite well people who are intolerant or fundamentalist elsewhere, while in others, we think of terrorism, we think of certain hard-line secularists. That's why the Pope seems to say that between Christians this exist as well.

MB: It's true that one can very quickly be caught up by that, one can very quickly have convictions and it's very good to have convictions, but in the end it overshadows the dignity of the other, makes us think that one is right and that in any case it's wrong is not to have the openness of heart, of intelligence to hear what the other tells us, to move forward with him to build with him, and so the Pope insists a lot on that. This does not in any way take away the fact that not respecting the other, on the other hand, is a profound sin. We recently had debates in France on the question of caricature, and I think that we must nevertheless say things clearly: freedom of expression must include respect for the other, must include respect for the other, and that is what it is all about. We need to teach it to our young people and to our children. It is precisely knowing how to listen to others, knowing how to respect their convictions, knowing how to respect their beliefs, and I believe that in this area, as someone recently said, on this subject, the question is not to forbid caricatures, certain humour, and company for reasons of freedom, which I understand completely, but to forbid oneself. It is to forbid myself from insulting Louis-Etienne if I do not agree with him, that's better to respect him, that's all there is to it.

LE : Thank you

MB: Does that reassure you?

LE: Obviously. The Pope has spoken a lot about the poor since the beginning of his pontificate. He still speaks a lot about them in this letter. Sometimes he has irritated or annoyed some Catholics to talk about them all the time, he also talks a lot about migrants. How do you understand this insistence of the Pope?

MB: But here again, to repeat what I said at the beginning of our interview, first you have to be attentive because there are things that are always put forward and which are not necessarily always neutral. I think above all that when something annoys us, we have to accept to dig deeper to see if it's not that it touches a point of conversion and that, as it's more difficult to live, it's simpler to kick the issue and say it annoys me. There are times when it annoys but you have to dig deeper. And this question of the poor, this question of really being open to other cultures to other people... I have been very touched in the context of my responsibility in the community, for example by our brothers and sisters on the journey. I also see what some people experience daily, being in a very difficult situation, not being welcomed, being rejected, being criticised, being raided by the police, etc.... And I'm not saying that there are never any worries and that can be true but what I mean is that through this culture, through this brothers and sisters that I know much better now, that I think I know a little better anyway...well it has touched me a lot.

And when I was elected, in fact what happened was that I had to go to a retreat in Paray-le-Monial on a camp with our brothers from the journey. And when I arrived, so I was elected moderator and I had promised them that I would come in July, so I went to eat with them. That's because I had

decided, and I had it in my heart at that time, that even as general moderator I had to continue to be on the front line with them. This is important because they also need this brotherly love, they need to be known and for the Emmanuel community this was very important. So I am very happy because I am always the one who is in direct contact with them to accompany them on this journey, because when I say that we accompany them and they accompany us too and God knows all that I receive when I am in their midst.

LE : Thank you Michel Bernard. We can make a little return now too if you want of course the news of the community in link with the life of the church. A few small questions first the current events in the church have been marked in recent years by the crisis of abuse which has shaken the church very, very strongly. How did you experience this? How is Emmanuel affected and what is the Emmanuel community doing?

MB: How did I live? I believe with a lot of pain, suffering like many. I even began my mandate like that. The first text I was asked to write, I was told, here you really must write. It was right in the middle of a crisis of abuse and it was very difficult for me. It was a great suffering. I said to myself, it's hard to start my mandate like that. And what is a great mystery, the mystery of sin, is to see the depth of the evil that could have been inserted like that, even in men of the church, including Christians, Catholics, and believers. We said to ourselves, but how is this possible? This is really the great mystery. So, after the despondency I would say, and here again I give thanks to God for Pope Francis who really took things in hand, like his predecessors because there too we would like to make you think or say many things, but in fact Benedict XVI had already worked a lot on the subject. Pope Francis continues to work, has really taken a lot of initiatives to work in these areas and above all to ensure that there was his great letter to the people of God to ensure that this does not happen again.

So there have been a lot of initiatives in the church and as much as I was deeply saddened to see how much church people, Christians and Catholics had been concerned by this sin, I am happy and thankful to see now how the church has grasped the question is that it is the work in truth.

And so within the Emmanuel community we have also obviously worked a lot on the subject, we have created within the community a Commission for the fight against abuse and therefore with a listening cell with a discernment commission...

I discovered many things myself when I went to Rome since there was a day that had been organised by the dicastery by Cardinal Farrell, the lay dicastery of family and life. There was a day that had been organised for the leaders of communities of movement on the subject. I came back deeply marked and at the same time determined and touched to see the determination of the church in this matter and the fact that never again we can let this happen.

LE: You have met victims, people who are concerned...

MB: Yes, yes, so on several occasions I've already had the opportunity to get feedback, testimonies from victims that make you dizzy. You have to say things as they are, which makes you dizzy ... and then what is terrible in this case once again is that when it is the image of God that is concerned, when it is God himself, when it is a man of God who sins, the depth of the wound is immeasurable, it is a wound of the soul, of the deepest part of the person and that is why it is unbearable. It is unbearable

LE : And so there the work that is done by this Commission allows us to say that...

MB: The first thing was obviously to say a lot of expression, and even the associations that referred to it as free speech...the question is to allow victims to speak, when there are victims. And that afterwards, of course, they can be sheltered when necessary, or psychologically accompanied, etc. Those responsible for these abuses must also be accompanied, and here we return to what we said earlier in Fratelli Tutti, no matter how deep our sin is, we are loved by God and therefore we must first and foremost take care of the victims, of course, but also of those responsible. And then



afterwards we have to work and we do many hours of rereading when we are confronted with cases of this kind to say to ourselves "but finally what did we miss? what did we not do and what would have made us too never have to come to this point?" And this has repercussions in training, repercussions in follow-up, repercussions in the process. Every year, in the summer when I was talking about the different government bodies, every year in the Emmanuel Community there is a summer seminar in which the government bodies are brought together to work on the big issues. And in fact for two years in a row we have been working, among other things, but very much, on the subject of abuse, first of all on the issue of child abuse, paedophilia, etc.. But this year we have been working on the issue of abuse of power, abuse of conscience, spiritual abuse, because, as the Pope says, sexual abuse is in fact the result of abuse of power, abuse of conscience, spiritual abuse....

LE : And as a result, there are subjects that are being particularly worked on at the moment.

MB :Yes yes yes we continue in all areas and is again the question of the exercise of authority. How is authority organised in a community like ours? What are the points of attention we should have here? There are great classics of the kind, for example, when we loop the loops between what is the order of human follow-up of the spiritual follow-up of a person and then what is the order of government? You can't be responsible for everything. We have seen this in certain communities that even exploded afterwards, where the leader of the community is at the same time the spiritual leader or even the confessor. Afterwards it's impossible, and that's when you open the door to dramatic situations.

LE: And as a result, the community has a listening cell. Concretely, because we don't necessarily always measure, how does it work? How do you work with the church and how do you work with the civil authorities?

MB: First of all, we worked immediately with the church, i.e. the French Bishops' Conference had already done a lot of work, so we were going to see how it worked? What were to be set up, these listening cells, how did it go? I talked about my training day in Rome too, where I still received a lot. So we set up our own structure and then on the one hand we set up a listening unit where victims or at least people who consider themselves victims can come and give their testimony etc. and then afterwards, depending on the case, we obviously do what is necessary, including within the framework and above all within the framework of the legislation in force. That is to say that we have been led to report to the public prosecutor when necessary.

LE: Very good, it is a prayerful intention because I know that you carry this strongly in your heart and there are still things to be done in the coming years

MB: Yes, absolutely

LE : Precisely as a result of this letter from Pope Francis, the community has joined a rather original initiative called *Promesses d'église* (Promise of the Church), which brings together various movements, including Secours Catholique, the CCFD, the Apprentis d'Auteuil, the DCC, and others. The MCC, the Chemin Neuf, the Emmanuel. Why the Community joined

MB: First, I am very happy about this initiative. In any case, in France, when I was the moderator's delegate for France, we used to get together with leaders of different movements and associations once a year, if only to get to know each other. Because in fact very often we realise that we don't know each other. So there, very quickly we can have preconceived ideas,... in short, we don't know each other. And it's true that there with all that we have lived through, with the question of clericalism, so there too we should clarify things, but which may in any case be a deviation and which the laity themselves may have, including in the exercise of authority...And in fact we said to ourselves, but finally how can we move forward with the Church? Especially how can we move forward with our pastors, with our fathers and brothers bishops? And so, as a result, this initiative was really born there again, we can say under the impulse of Pope Francis. And these movements,

these associations... it is interesting to know that the first term used, as you well know Louis-Etienne, was "let's repair the church". In fact, when we say let's repair the church, we have the impression that we're standing there, that we have the solutions and that we're going to explain to the other what he has to do for it to go well. But we are the first to be concerned. If the church has to be repaired, it is first and foremost because we too are not up to the task, we must humbly admit it. And so it's to tell each other how we are progressing together. And then it evolved to become this beautiful term which is *Promesse d'église*, where we don't have what we know on the one hand and what we don't know on the other. All those who are responsible on one side and those who are not responsible on the other. We are in church, we move forward in church, each according to his call is also each according to his mission, his function as for example the bishop who has a particular charism, which is linked to the apostolic charism. Therefore, each one must remain in his place, but we must move forward together.

LE: Excellent. Last year there was another subject, a polemic about conversion therapies on sexual orientation, and the Community was accused of supporting conversion therapies to change the homosexual orientation of people. What exactly is the situation and, above all, how is the Community reflecting on these pastoral issues around homosexuality?

MB: It is a very sensitive subject, very delicate as soon as we talk about it, and we often want to freeze ideas, we want to freeze people. What the Community has done is first is that it really started because, as many of you know, those who listen to us, we have our sessions at Paray-le-Monial which has existed for about thirty years, and welcomes 25 thousand people about every year and in which we welcome people who are for the great majority practising believers and who want to nourish their faith. So there are teachings, there are sharing groups, there are working groups and it is in this framework that for three years we have actually thought about homosexual people, we said to ourselves "but how can we welcome these people? They obviously want to, because we had demands and also because we are in the freedom of God's children. Those who are living this is those who want to go on their way or in any case who want to participate in a session such as ours, there was a request and then again we joined Pope Francis. Everyone must feel welcomed or must be able, if they want to walk with the Lord, to find places to live this journey, to begin it. Everyone according to where they are and according to what they are good at. And so at the time we asked *Courage*, which is an association that was born in the United States, so I know that, and we are perfectly aware that there have certainly been big excesses there. But the objective was really, in any case, for what concerns us quite humbly, this welcome, and I am not saying that we do it perfectly. And here too we must recognise the weaknesses, the difficulties. But what is very unfortunate is that as soon as we try a subject, in fact afterwards, I said it again earlier, and that even though the media are sometimes not for nothing, we lock people in boxes.

So some people are happy to try to put us in a box: for example reactionary... well what I haven't already heard about the Community?

I mean it's just how I'm going with it. What makes me happy is that, since then, it's true that the programme on Arte, which in brackets also shows when I was talking earlier about sin and in an abyssal way, we really see it in this show, it's obvious and we humbly acknowledge it. And with people it is when we immediately make bridges, amalgams by saying well that's what happens in Paray-le-Monial with the Emmanuel Community. No! no.

So what is needed now is, I deeply hope, that we manage to move forward in a peaceful and relaxed way on the question by simply welcoming those who want to walk with us. What we have done in the community is that we are in the process of setting up a group that is reflecting on this question of welcoming the people concerned and once again only those who wish to walk with us. No one has imposed anything on anyone in this subject as in all the others.



LE : This year the Pope launched a Laudato Si year in the midst of the Covid crisis. How has the community committed itself to this path of conversion to an integral ecology proposed by Pope Francis?

MB: Laurent Landete, my predecessor, who is now the director of the Collège of Bernardins, was very much involved in this project. He is still very much invested in these areas and it is true that he helped the entire Emmanuel Community to welcome him and to receive him and to meditate on him. I believe that now we are really at a stage of deployment which I think should be given special attention. Because in fact we are at a time when we talk a lot about ecology, but there are also, or there can also be ecologies that I qualify as ideological, which are in fact very closed because in fact behind them lies ecology, and we talk about integral ecology, but the question is the place of man in all this. Because we are still in God's plan, we must not forget this.

I was scared a few years ago - a small personal testimony - when I took my daughter to a hospital to see the anaesthetist and then when we start talking to the anaesthetist he says to me "but how many children do you have? ». I tell him 6. And then the man's face closed completely. He says to me "6? but that's frightening". I said, "What do you mean, it's frightening? ». And he starts to explain to me "but you don't realise the carbon mark etc.". »

I was becoming, I'm going to use a harsh word, but I say it anyway, a criminal. I had six children; in fact, I was marking the world more than the others with a carbon mark. It scared me. These are completely frightening excesses that you can see in certain areas. And then you have the opposite, the one who will tell you "well, what they say about carbon pollution and all that is a load of rubbish". No! I believe that there is a balance in all this, but at the centre of it all is still creation. It's God's creation, so these implants of love, at the centre of which is the human, and we must never forget that. I believe that this is really the responsibility of the Christian, the responsibility of the believer.

Incidentally, we had a conference with Monsignor Jordi at l'Île Bouchard on December 8, and at one point he had this rather hidden phrase where he said, "we hear a lot about saving the planet. Very well, but the planet will save itself. But we must also save humanity. This is the question anyway: the place of mankind in all this because we come to reason completely backwards. This is what I experienced on the day I shared with this famous anaesthetist.

LE: The link to Monsignor Jordi's lecture will be included as a commentary on the video description.

MB: Ah yes, it was exciting in many ways. I strongly advise anyone listening to us to go to the site of the Sanctuary of Ile Bouchard to listen to Monsignor Jordi's lecture again. There is also a vision I find very enlightening of the current situation in which we find ourselves, of France and of the world in general.

LE: Then there was also the youth synod, which was a great moment in the life of the Church. Is there still a lot going on among the young people in Emmanuel? Or are there questions about the ESM? I would like you to enlighten us if you have any news.

MB: Yes, we can say some news about the ESMs, but already more broadly, we can say that the question of young people is fundamental because young people are the future, and I would even say they are our hope. This is also what the Holy Father says. This is what his predecessors before him said. Pope John Paul II's WYD was an incredible stroke of the Holy Spirit. We can see, by contrast, that the fact that we haven't had a WYD for several years, for a whole host of reasons, makes it clear that young people need this time and that the Holy Spirit is blowing during these WYDs. In fact, afterwards there was the Holy Father with Christus Vivit who spoke to the young people and things are moving, that's extraordinary! So in the community there are a lot of missions, a lot of initiatives that are taken. On the question of the ESM it is a little bit particular.

The schools of evangelisation are in fact an intuition that is very old historically. The Community had set up a school of evangelisation in Paray-le-Monial, which was later spread to other continents such as Germany and Manila. This intuition is to welcome young people who take a year to be formed. So

it's in a context where there are trainers, a team and then we train them humanly, theologically... We can see that the world is changing, young people are changing. And so two years ago, we decided to rethink the question of rediscovering zone by zone how to continue these ESMs. Should we continue them? Should it be continued in this form? And if so, how should it be deployed? So that's the work that's going on. I know that some people, at least within the community, have been worried for a while, saying "that's it, we're closing all the ESMs". But no, the question is not whether we close or open, it's discernment, that's all. It's to say to ourselves: in relation to today's society, in relation to today's young people, how do we continue to feed, to train these young people, and so there you have it, the work is in progress and it's going very well. What we see, for example, is that young people today, I think, have a much greater need to be interactive, compared to the training they receive. They need experience, testimonies for example, so this means that we are in the process of thinking within the framework of these schools about how to transplant them with strong experiences. I am thinking of some of our associations such as Le Rocher for example, living a strong experience in a city. They need to be participative whereas perhaps historically we were a little more involved in training. Besides, the word school says something.

Moreover, there is a lot of humour, but one day a bishop told us, "In the Emmanuel, you want to put everyone in school: schools for couples, schools for young people and schools for the elderly", which is not completely false. We are going to stop putting people in school and then we move forward with them, and so we must constantly accept to question ourselves because that is what life in the Spirit is all about.

LE: The status of the Clerical Association... Well, there was a Clerical Association that was erected shortly before the beginning of your term of office, whose statutes are *ad experimentum*. What is at stake for the Community in the years to come?

MB: The stakes are enormous, so in fact we need to understand a little bit of the history. The Emmanuel Community, as I said earlier, was born with lay people. An assembly of prayer that grows, it gradually becomes what today we call the Emmanuel Community, which has been recognised by the Church and has therefore been confirmed in its own charism. It is first and foremost a community of lay people, and within these lay people, and especially young people, vocations are born. So the priests of Emmanuel arrive. Except that canonically, historically by the intuition of our founder they are diocesan priests, so they depend on their bishop, completely normal and at the same time they are members of the Emmanuel. But we arrived at a moment, since today there are 290 priests all over the world, so it's becoming quite important and we were coming to certain tensions because between the supernatural authority of the bishop over the priest who is completely normal in the diocesan context and the membership in the Emmanuel Community there are tensions. When one is a member of Emmanuel, it is necessary to be able to live out this charism, that is to say, if I am called to be a priest in the Emmanuel, I must be able to live out the charism of the Emmanuel, I must be able to live out my mission, my vocation as a priest with my brothers. And there, canonically, the Emmanuel priest did not exist one could be confronted with difficulties in the journey, in the relationship with a bishop because canonically the Emmanuel priest did not exist. Hence all the work that has been done over the years. It is true that it was Laurent, my predecessor, who carried the boat a lot with the teams, with the brothers around him, but I was there too, especially in the last few years.

And thanks to the Church, thanks to God in fact we have had these new statutes of a Clerical Association of the Emmanuel Community which gives canonical status to our brother priests and our brother deacons. So it's extraordinary because it really allows that canonically, recognised by the Church, the Emmanuel priest, the deacon of Emmanuel, exists. Let us give thanks!

This is the first part. The second part is that it is also a challenge for us, I believe, and it is being sent back to us a lot. As general moderator now, I can see through the questions of friends, through the questions of the bishops, through the remarks, I would dare to say the expression, we are expected at the turning point. That is to say that this charism is a gift from heaven, but we have a strong

responsibility for it. We must continue to implement it, to deploy it and therefore it passes through what we always call the communion of states of life, because in the Emmanuel Community there are all states of life. I said the laity, and within the laity there are single people, there are consecrated women and consecrated men, there are priests and there are deacons, so there are all states of life and those that profoundly unite us is the communion, we spoke about fraternity a moment ago. That's why it spoke to me all the more when the Pope brought out *Fratelli tutti*, the Fraternity of Jesus is what unites us all. That is to say that all the members of the community can have this call in the Fraternity of Jesus, and the priests and deacons who are therefore members of the CCC enter into the CCC at the moment when they consecrate themselves in the Fraternity of Jesus, which is first of all a profound baptismal consecration. In fact, we are all baptised first and foremost, and so we walk together.

Pierre Goursat liked a well-known image, the image of the pebbles that when they are in a bag sometimes rub against each other and it is by rubbing against each other that they become smooth and then they work well together. This is also what we were called to live among ourselves in our different vocations. And so the arrival of the CCE, of the Clerical Association of the Emmanuel Community, is above all not there precisely to isolate priests and deacons, but on the contrary, because communion is not confusion, therefore on the contrary so that each one fully in his vocation, at the heart of the Emmanuel, can live his vocation with his brothers and sisters. So once again, this is a real challenge for the future.

LE: Here are some news; can you tell us what progress has been made in the cause of Pierre's canonization, the founder of Emmanuel?

MB: It is a great joy for me to confirm and to tell those who are listening to us that Pierre Goursat's cause is advancing, that we have just lived through a stage that is major since we are in what is called the Roman phase. That is to say that for a process of this kind there is first a phase which is called diocesan, where the diocese discerns and says yes, it is worth discerning and going further. And then there is what is called the Roman phase, so it is the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints that takes care of it. The postulator for Pierre Goursat, the person who follows and makes the file, is Father Francis Khon, who is one of the first parish priests of the Emmanuel Community, he was the parish priest of the Trinity, it was the first appointment in a parish. It was very touching. He knew Pierre very well. So Francis Khon, our brother priest, worker and postulator for the cause of Pierre Goursat, has just finished what is called the *Positio*. This is the reference document that will be used by the congregation to make its discernment. It is being printed, so now I am speaking to you it is perhaps not yet done, but we are not far from it, and as soon as it is printed - for the record, it is about forty copies - then it will be passed on to the level of discernment with the theologians, and then afterwards the cardinals will make their pronouncement. Really, I urge everyone to pray for the beatification of Pierre Goursat and to pray to Pierre for graces from him. In any case, we are in a very important phase that we all rejoice in the community.

LE: So we don't know the outcome today?

MB: Oh no no no no, we don't know the outcome. It's in the process of discernment, that's all. At the very beginning, when it was a question of introducing Pierre Goursat's cause, which you know, was a man of extreme humility, there was a brother who said, "I'm afraid he won't allow it to happen". So I don't know if it will go through with it, we'll see.

LE: Very well. For the ending, I propose that we entrust ourselves to the Virgin Mary and that we entrust your mission, your family to the Virgin Mary and then all the people we've been talking about.

MB: And in entrusting to her, I would also like to say that the Blessed Virgin, who has many different names, is Our Lady of Hope, because she is in fact our hope today in a very troubled world. And when we speak of the promise, in fact it is the hearts of Jesus and Mary, the united hearts of Jesus

and Mary, the immaculate heart of Mary, the heart of Jesus. God sent his son to save us and he does so. So whatever the circumstances in which we live today, let us move forward with confidence, let us move forward in hope, the Lord is with us, the Blessed Virgin is with us, Heaven is with us, so we are going to ask them for this grace by praying now.

Hail Mary, full of grace

The Lord is with thy

You are blessed among all women

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God

Pray for us sinners

Now and in the hour of our death, amen.

LE : Thank you Michel Bernard

MB: Thank you Louis-Etienne