



Thursday, June 8, 2023

n° 6

JOURNAL OF THE CHAPTER

The Kingdom of God is at hand.

Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel.

34TH GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE ASSUMPTIONISTS - JUNE 01-25, 2023



For seven days, 14 lay Assumptionists took an active part in the 34th General Chapter. Before returning home, they shared with us their discoveries and convictions.

The religious who remain for another 15 days of reflection and work will in turn consider how to live even more fully this Covenant, a sign of the times and a sign of the Kingdom for us.

«Carried by the charism and spirit of Father d'Alzon, lay Assumptionists commit themselves in alliance with religious to bring about the Kingdom». (Rule of Life 57)

We are called to live and work in the light of the same charism. The Alliance is also a «place» of our interdependence in formation and missionary initiatives. In what other areas can we help each other to extend the Kingdom of God?

EDITORIAL

The Alliance, a sign of the Kingdom

BY BENOÎT GRIÈRE, GENERAL SUPERIOR

For a week, we shared the work of the Chapter with our brothers and sisters of the Alliance. A time of grace, of authentic synodality, where we were able to discover the diversity of faces and commitments. Journeying with the Assumption is clearly a grace for religious and lay people alike.

As I've already said, «the Alliance is irreversible». Emmanuel d'Alzon wanted a Congregation where lay people and religious were united for the coming of the Kingdom. Today, more than ever, it's up to us to move forward together as signs of the Kingdom.

Fraternity is a witness we can bear in a world divided by war and marked by inequality. Our brothers and sisters insist that we have a treasure: the charism of the Assumption. This treasure belongs to us insofar as we are capable of sharing it.

The Assumption has not said its last word. If we live the Alliance in a resolutely Catholic spirit - bold, generous, selfless - we have before us an immense field to harvest. The workers of the Kingdom, religious and lay, are available: «Here I am, Lord send me!»



« We wanted to paint « Laborers of the Kingdom Together » on the occasion of the first meeting with the lay people in 2009 in Goma. »

Some proposals from the lay delegates to the Chapter

- **Create a formation module on the Alliance for religious to strengthen the Alliance.**
- **Ensure that lay AA receive serious formation and preparation for their commitment. Implement a formation plan that takes into account local realities.**
- **Invite lay AA to the local Chapter for matters that concern them and/or to certain community meetings dealing with matters common to lay and religious.**
- **Strengthen the organization of regional, vicarial, provincial, continental and intercontinental meetings to consolidate the spirit of the body and the exchange of experiences, using modern means of communication.**
- **Ask the International Lay-Religious Alliance Commission to organize an international forum.**

Photo: Didier Remiot

«Our presence at the Chapter comes to an end. Seven days of shared fraternal life in a serene atmosphere. Seven days of listening, of discovering the very diverse and rich realities of our Congregation. Seven days of exchanges that have already brought out the priorities for the future...

The word «Alliance» quickly took hold. It is taking shape, taking form and provoking debate. We realize how misunderstood it sometimes is, and try to understand where the reluctance to use it comes from. It doesn't mean the same thing from one continent to another. Clarification as to the type of membership requested by the Superior General seems essential for better understanding and greater deployment.» Geneviève Couturier, France



«As Father General said, 'the Alliance is irreversible'. There's still a lot to do and a lot to work on. We are on our way. Together, lay people and religious. Let's not forget that the Congregation was born in a school and with lay people. As Father Iulian said in his meditation: «Patience, God takes care of everything».

Living through this Chapter has enabled me to learn more about the Congregation and its complex reality. We have a great challenge ahead of us: 'Interculturality and integral formation that includes lay people and religious. I'm going back to Argentina, but my heart remains here, united in prayer.»

Maria Paula Totino, Andean Province

“Words that resonate with me because of my participation in the General Chapter are multiculturalism, fraternity, and Kingdom (within us and around us). We have experienced the life of the Lay-Religious Alliance with all its beauty, co-responsibility, and yes - complexity.

I treasure the time that I have spent with my sisters and brothers. I will return to my home in the United States with greater appreciation for the family of the Assumption, and with greater fervor to spread the charism of Father d'Alzon.”

Patricia Haggerty, North American Province



«Chapter rhymes for me with retreat: offices and daily mass. I'm always struck by the beauty of the men's choir I join. This prayer carries and nourishes the exchanges. The other side of the Chapter is the wealth of encounters and exchanges, and the discovery of everything that's going on in the Congregation. The realities are so different, yet so similar! It's the same charism expressed in different cultures. Bénédicte Fauvel, France



“Up to date we have interacted alot both with lay members and our religious brothers. The interaction has opened doors for the young East Africa Province. I have a lot to take back home. May God bless you all.” Marisella Nyaga (Nairobi)

«This Chapter is a great opportunity for us to truly live and share that «the Kingdom of God is at hand». It's a time of exchange and focus on mission, work and prayer for the Congregation. It is important that the network of Assumption laity around the world grows in the hope of being peacemakers. We pray that all lay Assumptionists around the world will have a stronger conviction to live the charism and spirituality of the Assumption. Cuckoo to the laity of Madagascar! Cuckoo to the Assumptionist laity of the world. Union in prayer.» Agnès Vololoniaina and François Zafimakason, Madagascar



«Unlike other Assumptionist events, participation in this General Chapter definitively marks my being and my work in the Catholic Church. From each of you, I bring the greatest gift Emmanuel d'Alzon could have given me. Happy. Committed. Grateful to find in the Assumption the best path for this Synod of Synodality.» Maria del Carmen Martinez, Mexico

We are happy to be Assumptionists» (Fr. Benoît Grière). Our life witness must speak «Assumptionist». Hence the question: «Am I where I need to be? Am I what I should be? The Covenant is lived in very different ways in the world. Living the unity of the charism in multicultural diversity is our richness at Assumption. As a result, we must learn to read the signs of the times well in order to discern common calls and missions for lay and religious Assumptionists with a view to greater Assumptionist visibility in certain milieus, to extend the reign of God in the society in which we live: men and women of our time and of our milieus.» Stella Kahambu



Analogy

FROM FATHER MICHEL KUBLER,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
CONGREGATION

«Our exchange on religious reluctant to covenant with lay people makes me think about how Christian Churches can relate to each other. Basically, there are several possible stages on our road to unity:

- Degree zero» consists in thinking that my group (the Catholic Church or, in this case, religious) is the sole repository of revealed truth and the means of salvation.

- A 1st step is taken when I recognize that the other group may have bits and pieces of this truth and these means... but I'm the only one to have them in full!

- The next step is to recognize that the other group has received gifts from God that I don't have, or don't have in the same way, and to agree to share what the other group lacks.

- Unity will come when, not only do I accept that I am poor in the bits of truth and ways of salvation available to the other, but that I lack the other as such: I vitally need what he has, and above all what he is as an image of God.

«That they may be one... so that the world may believe» (Jn 17:21)

Insecurity in Kivu: a forgotten genocide and a prophetic sign for the Assumption

BY ERIC KIHUNDU, FROM GOMA (DR CONGO)

For over thirty years, the people of Eastern DRC have been facing an unjust war. It has led to massive population displacements and numerous massacres.

Children, born into war, grow to adulthood without knowing the meaning of peace. For them, peace comes when they escape death by abandoning their natural environment. A child in Kivu doesn't know what it means to «have a peaceful night or the warmth of a roof». He is constantly exposed to the elements... A mosquito net, mounted on four tree branches as pillars, is sometimes the only shelter against mosquitoes, but it does not protect against rain and cold, nor above all against hunger and thirst. Not to mention the lack of sanitary facilities! The population of Kivu lives under the terror of the rebellion. How can they survive and exorcise their hatred at the sight of an infant sucking the breast of its mother's corpse, of a husband whose wife is raped before their helpless eyes, of a woman pregnant by her executioner, who coldly slaughtered her beloved husband? This population resists, survives, with a life expectancy of 24

hours... Yet they are God's children and deserve our attention.

Couldn't the Assumptionists, religious and lay, become more of an OASIS OF PEACE by resolutely committing themselves to justice and peace with concrete actions, and thus bear witness to the «hope of the Gospel»? Isn't this a great cause for the Congregation, with its moments of prayer for peace, an aid program for the displaced, and lobbying on an international level with other NGOs and Congregations?

«We are not spectators. Peace-building concerns everyone: we need to dare to take a more creative stand against war. Don't be indifferent: information is vital. Prayer is a cry for peace: it guards the world... Kivu is a laboratory of fraternity for your Congregation.» - Andrea Riccardi

Program

THURSDAY JUNE 8, 23

Morning

- Presentation/ evaluation of mobilizing works: Université de l'Assomption du Congo (Butembo and Beni), Assumption University (Worcester), Ecoles de brousse, «Accompagner» (Brussels), Auberge Adveniat (Paris) and Centre Saint André et Saint Pierre (Bucharest).
- Postulation

Afternoon

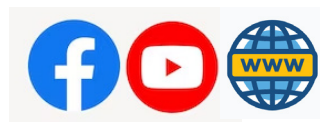
- The missionary fiber. The missionary character of the Congregation
- Work in Commissions



LETTERS

“Good morning, Most Reverend Father General, The laity of the Assumptionist Alliance are in union of prayer with all the capitulants, as well as our lay delegates on the occasion of this 34th General Chapter.

In your prayers and sharing, don't forget to think of all those people in the east of the DRC who have lost the will to live. It is to them that we are going to proclaim the hope of the Gospel in a particular context. May the Holy Spirit guide you in your work. May the Covenant, in all its dimensions, remain at the heart of your discussions. With greetings from the Goma laity. ART. Ferdinand Sahani. (Goma - DR Congo, in a letter to Father Benoît Grière)



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