



Monday June 19, 2023

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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

A General Council completed, priorities taking shape

It's been a busy weekend. The work of the Commissions continues, and the texts are being debated at the plenary session. Some texts are in their second versions.

These include texts on Community structures and organization, mobilizing works, training, economic affairs...

This Monday, work in the Commissions continues... There's just one week to go!



Photo montage by Marcelo Marciel

On Friday evening, June 16, 2023, the capitulants elected two new Assistants General. And on Saturday, the Vicar and first Assistant.

The General Council is now complete, even though two of its members are not capitulants and won't be joining Rome until early September for the local chapter of the Rome community.

Superior General :

Father Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Congolese (DRC), 52, from the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania

1st Assistant and Vicar

Father Benoît Bigard, French, 56, from the Province of Europe

Assistants

Father Thierry Kahongya, Congolese (DRC); 53, re-elected Assistant

Father Joao Gomes da Silva, Brazilian, age 41, Province of Brazil

Father Etienne Ratalata Rafanambinantsoa (Malagasy), 52, from the Province of Madagascar.

General officers

Bursar

Father Alex Castro, Filipino, 52, from the Province of North America

Secretary General and Procurator General

Father Michel Kubler, French, 68, re-elected Secretary General

Father Thierry Kambale Kahongya



Father Thierry Kambale Kahongya was born on February 25, 1970 in Butuhe in the diocese of Butembo-Beni (DR Congo) into a farming family. He has 4 brothers and 5 sisters.

After completing his secondary education (veterinary option), he entered the novitiate of Saint Charles Lwanga in Butembo in September 1990, and took his first vows on September 10, 1991.

He then studied philosophy in Bulengera (1991-1994) before moving to Kinshasa to study theology (1995-1999). It was in Kinshasa that he made his perpetual profession on March 29, 1998. He was ordained deacon on May 18, 2000 and priest on April 5, 2001 in Butembo by Mgr M.P. Sikuli. He was then bursar of the Bulengera scholasticate (1999-2001).

He then joined the Kambali community as Provincial Treasurer (2001-2005). During these years, he was chaplain to youth and adult movements.

After his term as Provincial Treasurer, he returned to Bulengera (2005-2007), then was appointed to the Kindugu community (2007- 2012), becoming its superior from 2010 to 2012. During these years, he studied Law at the "Université Catholique du Graben" (Butembo) and taught Law and Civil Education at the "Université Assomptionniste du Congo" (UAC) in Butembo (2011-2017). He was superior of the Provincial House (2012-2014). On the appointment of Fr. Protais Kabila as Provincial in March 2012, he was chosen as the first Provincial Assistant.

The 2017 General Chapter elected him Assistant General. In particular, he is in charge the North American Province, the Oriental Mission, the Lay-Religious Alliance and the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons. He is the coordinator of the Preparatory Commission for the current General Chapter.

Father Joseph Etienne Ratalata Rafanambinantsoa



Father Etienne Ratalata Rafanambinantsoa was born on October 18, 1970 in Fandrandava near Fianarantsoa, Madagascar, into a family of nine children (five sisters and four brothers). His father was a primary school teacher.

From 1978 to 1983, he attended primary school at the Catholic school in Besihara, 60 km from Fianarantsoa, and secondary school at the Jesuits' Collège Saint François Xavier in Fianarantsoa. In 1987, he joined the "Notre Dame" diocesan minor seminar in Kianjasoa.

In 1993, he made his novitiate from Belemboka to Toliara. He took his first vows on September 29, 1994.

He then went to the Saint John the Baptist of Vohitsoa inter-diocesan major seminary in Fianarantsoa. There he studied philosophy and theology. He took his final vows on September 29, 1999 in Belemboka Toliara.

He was ordained priest on August 15, 2001 at the "Notre Dame de l'Assomption" parish of Sanfily in Toliara.

From 2001 to 2004, he studied Theology at the "Institut Catholique de Lyon" (France), graduating with a master's degree in theology and a canonical license.

Back in Madagascar, for six years he taught Christology at the major seminary of Saint John the Baptist in Vohitsoa. He also is superior of the Manirsoa scholasticate in Fianarantsoa.

From 2010 to 2013, he was chaplain at the "Aumônerie Catholique Universitaire" in Toliara.

In 2013, he was appointed Vice-Provincial Superior and then Provincial of the Augustinians of the Assumption in Madagascar. He served a three-year term.

He then accepted responsibility for pastoral animation in a rural sector in Andranohinaly in the diocese of Toliara. He is currently enjoying a sabbatical year in our community of Saint Peter in Gallicantu in Jerusalem.

He enjoys Malagasy music, gardening and looking after the farmyard.

Welcoming the Superior General and his Council to the General House

Sunday June 18 was a day of prayer and personal reflection after two weeks of Chapter.

In the late afternoon, all the capitulants gathered at the Generalate to witness the welcoming of the Superior General and the members of his Council by the Generalate community. A moment of joy and great fraternity.

«One of the brothers, no doubt thinking of the heaviness of my new responsibility, asked me the following question: 'What scares you most?' And my answer was: 'It's not the travel - which can be numerous and tiring - it's not the files, which will be very numerous and of all kinds, it's rather the realization that I am now one of Father Emmanuel d'Alzon's successors.» - Father Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General.



Towards priorities

«God still wants saints, and we have to prepare some for him. Emmanuel d'Alzon (ES 470).

On Saturday afternoon, the Chapter's Promoter, Father Jean-Paul Sagadou, invited the capitulants to take time to re-examine the Congregation's priorities for the next 6 years, asking two capitulants to do the same.

Father Jean-Paul Sagadou highlighted three key expressions:

- **Intercultural brotherhood**
- **Justice and peace in the face of violence**
- **A missionary body of disciples-missionaries**

Father Nicolas Potteau (formator in Lyon, Pro-secretary of the Chapter) chose two words that recurred almost daily in the reports: «Formation» («giving ourselves the means to form for mission») and «Fraternity».

For Father Dominique Greiner (editor-in-chief of «La Croix», Paris), an apostolic priority emerges: Father d'Alzon's postulation, even qualified as a mobilizing axis: a call to holiness for all Assumptionists.

Identifying the Spirit's calls for the Congregation will be the task of this Monday, June 19.

Father Alberto's listening points



«The fraternity lived out in our communities with their different cultural faces, the commitment to justice and peace, the ministry of education, the exercise of authority and the service of decision-making... are all mediations within which the Reign of God comes about and makes us saints. If a young religious asks us on returning from Chapter: «So, what have you decided?», we might reply: «Well, we've decided, inspired by Father d'Alzon's charisma, to become saints». It takes a lot of daily translation to ensure that this desire permeates all our actions and mobilizes us apostolically.»

It's a interesting time: in each person's head and heart, things are beginning to take shape internally. Every Chapter is an unsettling adventure. The only thing we know is the final date. We are actors and witnesses of the unexpected way of the Spirit
Who would have imagined an assembly with so many primo capitulants? The election of such a government? The word sanctification is another way of saying this Chapter: a way of welcoming and building an increasingly international fraternity. It is also a strong cry for justice and peace, for a discernment of the places where we must be present: in : El Paso, Moscow, Kivu. But also the discreet, daily work of the mission received, accepting it as a place of sanctification when we return to our local communities.

COMMITTEE WORK

Some expressions

❖ Economic affairs

«The economy at the service of charism and mission».

«There is no contradiction between charisma and management: managing according to economic criteria does not stifle charisma, but on the contrary enables us to pursue and achieve shared objectives».

«Our income comes from salaries, donations and return on capital. At all levels, we need to improve our own resources.» - Father Benoît Bigard, new Assistant General

«In our southern countries, local congregations are doing better than we Assumptionists with our western origins. The Little Sisters of the Presentation are better at self-financing than we are! They live from their work. Isn't the solidarity we experience an infusion that prevents us from becoming self-sufficient? - Father Thierry Kahongya, Assistant General

❖ Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

«Through our vow of poverty, how are we involved in the areas of carbon footprint, use of plastics, commitment to degrowth, for more sobriety...» It is better to have fewer needs than too many possessions» (Saint Augustine).» - Father Benoît Grière

«In Madagascar, we've been on the move thanks to our sisters (PSA and RA) who have their formation house on site: meetings, «re-forestry» operations, garbage collection... We need to act, to stimulate those around us so that society as a whole can get involved behind the religious.» - Father Louis-Martin Rakotoarilala, Manirisoa Scholasticate, Madagascar

❖ Missionary character of the Congregation

«The missionary turn affects the whole Church, but also the Assumption: getting out of one's world, one's program, one's rules, one's language. Find your center in what God is doing.

The Church is missionary when it becomes close to its brothers and sisters, and goes down on its knees to serve them.

The missionary begins by sharing the joy of the Son.

«Internationality and interculturality, an adventure for mission and charisma». - Father Juan Carlos Marzolla, Provincial of the Andean Province.

❖ Young people and vocations

«In DR Congo, there's no mail or roads, so we recruit where we are. Depending on the realities of each province.» Father Floribert Kombi, Goma (DR Congo)

«Young people are not afraid of great things, but of mediocrity. Young people evolve in a world that changes quickly and in the short term... our way of doing things won't work with old ideas.» Father Juan Carlos Marzolla, Provincial of the Andean Province.

READERS' LETTERS

*«We do receive the «Chapter Journal... but we have to load it overnight... to print it for the community when there's enough electric power!!!! But so far all issues are available to the community within 24 hours of arrival... Thanks to all your team for this service... and all the best!»
- Father Daniel Carton d'Ejeda (Madagascar)*

«Joy and thanksgiving. That's what my heart tells me when I discover the composition of the General Council. A General Curia representative of the multicultural reality of the Congregation: intercultural, international, multi-experiential and, if we push the envelope, intergenerational. We can only rejoice at this new face of our religious family,

which in reality is a manifestation of the Pentecost of the nations.» - Brother Jean-Valère Kouwama, Adveniat Youth Hostel Community, Paris.

«Father João's election will be a further challenge for our Province, since he occupied a fundamental mission, that of first assistant and master of novices, in the Province which is the smallest of all. We are no more than 25 religious, but with an average age of 40: that's the widow's denarius! But we are happy to contribute to the general animation of the Congregation. The Lord, who is good, will know how to guide us...». - Father Marcos Antônio Dias AA, Eugénopolis (Brazil).

Program

MONDAY JUNE 19TH

The pace intensifies. There's even an evening session... until 10pm!



Morning

- Review - Evaluation of the Acts of the 2017 General Chapter
- Review of priorities: FIX, ADJUST, ADOPT

Afternoon

- Lay-Religious Alliance and the digital continent
- Abuse» working group

Evening

- Governance and community organization

TO FOLLOW THE WORK OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

- Congregation website www.assumptio.org updated by Father Marcelo Marciel: <marcelomarcie1@gmail.com>
- Facebook pages: Assumption General Chapter
- Youtube: Augustiniani ab Assumptione

- Take part in the «Readers' Mail» in this «Chapter Diary» by asking questions, reacting to the work of the capitulants (bernardholzeraa@gmail.com) or on Facebook.



«Journal of the Chapter»

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