

Letter of indiction of the General Chapter of 2023



To Assumptionist religious of every province

Dear Brothers,

In accordance with our Constitutions, I am informing you that the 34th General Chapter of the Congregation shall be convened in Rome at the Passionist conference (Piazza SS. Giovanni e Paolo al Celio, 13), from June 1 (morning) to June 25 (evening). I invite each provincial who has not yet done so to convoke officially a provincial chapter which, by law, must precede a general chapter. Among its tasks, each provincial chapter must in fact prepare the next general chapter and name the delegate(s) who, together with its *ex officio* members, will represent the province.

Composition of the Chapter

The base number for the election of delegates is 35. This number was determined by the Plenary General Council. Each province that, as of January 1, 2022, numbered 35 religious or less has a right, therefore, to one delegate. If a province has 35 to 70 religious, it must designate 2 religious and so on, every additional grouping of 35 religious giving a province a right to another delegate. In this way the chapter will be made up of 29 elected members, as follows:

- 1 delegate: Brazil
- 2 delegates: the Andean Province and the Province of North America
- 3 delegates: the province of Madagascar, the Vice-province of East Africa
- 8 delegates: the Province of Africa
- 10 delegates: the Province of Europe.

To these elected members, constituting a majority, there shall be added 14 *ex officio* members (the Superior General and his four Assistants, a general officer, the previous Superior General, and the 7 Provincial and Vice-provincial Superiors). Therefore, the chapter will be made up of 43 capitulants.

During the first week of the chapter, a maximum of 15 lay members will participate in the chapter, including the five members of the International Lay/Religious Commission. The Superior General will invite other lay delegates as proposed by the various provinces.

The Central Theme

You were made aware of it in the AA-Infos newsletter and the Congregation's website (www.assumptio.org); The theme chosen is: « **“The Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel** ». Faithful to the charism handed down by our beloved founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, we want to pursue the mission and to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God in us and around us. Our chapter will take place in a particular context, that of the preparation for the Synod on synodality: *“Toward a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission”* which will take place in Rome in October 2023.

The general chapter will be a synodal moment because it aims to allow as many as possible to speak, to discern together and orient our congregation in its missionary efforts. It is a dynamic of communion because it is a collaboration of all in the search for the unity of the Body, inspired by Christ, one and head of the Church.

In these troubled times that we are experiencing, we want to follow the path of being watchmen for the dawn and sentinels of hope. Religious life has a prophetic vocation and we are responsible for announcing the new age, the Kingdom that comes.

An Assumptionist is a man who examines the signs of the times and learns how to discern God's will. He is a man on fire with the Beatitudes that recognize in the small, the oppressed, the persecuted, and the sorrowful the presence of the Son of God who comes to heal and to save all of humanity.

The general chapter is in line with the preceding chapter of 2017 which reminded us that we are called to be « men of communion in a divided world ». Today, more than ever, we need to work for unity so that the Kingdom may be made manifest. Unity within ourselves, unity between us, unity in the Church and society. The Assumption can contribute to a renewal of the Church by playing its role, modest as it may be, but always firm in hope as well.

Faithful to Emmanuel d'Alzon, deeply rooted in the Gospel, set on fire by Christ and his Kingdom, we will make of this 34th general chapter a *kairos*, an opportune time to allow ourselves to be filled by the grace of God and his Holy Spirit.

How do we prepare the Chapter?

It is always at the local level that the dynamic of a chapter is launched. It is essential that each community place itself in a « state of chapter », that is to say, that it begin a time of discussion, prayer, discernment, and proposals. In order to live this time of preparation well it is necessary to encourage patience and a spirit of listening. Differences of perception and analysis are normal, but we must place goodwill and acceptance of the other above all else.

In order to take the synodal process seriously, you are invited to be innovative by seeking out, for example, the collaboration of lay-people close to your community or by listening to others away from the Church. It is important to listen to what « the Spirit says to the churches » (Rev 2:7). The Chapter Preparatory Commission will soon be sending you material with specific demands that will allow you to enter into the Chapter process in community.

I would like to call remind you that the General Chapter, *«which holds supreme authority in the institute according to the norm of the constitutions, is to be composed in such a way that, representing the entire institute, it becomes a true sign of its unity in charity»*¹. This means that the General Chapter is an ecclesial event that fosters growth in communion. The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* in #46 makes it clear that *«the sense of ecclesial communion, developing into a spirituality of communion, promotes a way of thinking, speaking and acting which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension.»*

The Chapter has a collegial authority that must be lived in a spirit of service. Each brother capitulant is convened to evaluate, discern, propose, promulgate, and elect. The capitulant bears a heavy responsibility.

In order to live this spirit of communion we need to ensure that the composition of the chapter reflects, as well as possible, the diversity present in the Assumption: diversity of cultures, of countries, of apostolic ministry, of age.

Let me be clear: a capitulant is not first and foremost a delegate from his particular provincial college, but is above all a member of the general chapter that makes decisions for the entire body of the Assumption. I hope that capitulants know the Assumptionist charism well and that they have the ability to be open to this concern for the whole.

Finally, I would also like this chapter to be a truly spiritual experience for each of its participants. We are the servants of God's will.

If the general chapter is to be successful, every religious in the congregation must do his part. Success does not rest solely on the shoulders of those delegates participating in the chapter.

Therefore, I invite everyone to enter into the preparation process. To do so, it is necessary to:

¹ Code of Canon Law, can. 631.

- respond to the various requests from the Chapter Preparatory Committee.

(This Committee is proposing a methodology and a number of questions. Every community and every religious is being asked to study these documents which will be provided by the Committee. Sound preparation for the Chapter will depend on your active participation.)

- pray regularly for the Chapter so that the Holy Spirit may be the principal player in our work. I would encourage you to use the prayer composed for this occasion.

The tasks of the Chapter

Canon 631 attributes three main tasks to a chapter:

- To protect the patrimony of the institute (...) and to promote suitable renewal according to that patrimony.

By «patrimony», the Code of Canon Law understands «the mind and designs of the founders regarding the nature, purpose, spirit, and character of an institute (...) and its sound traditions»². The Chapter will look back to the spirit of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon in order to demonstrate clearly how relevant his charism is. It remains the new wine of the Assumption. This charism will be at the center of discussions and debates: how does one renovate it, adapt it to the demands of the mission today, and situate it in the ecclesial context of the hour? How does one promote it?

- To elect the Superior General.

Having examined the Assumption charism and what is needed to renew it and adapt it, the Chapter proceeds to the election of the Superior General. He is the one who will lead the

² Code of Canon Law, can. 578.

Congregation according to this charism until the next chapter of 2029.

The Chapter also proceeds to the election of the General Council.

- To treat matters of greatest importance.

It falls to the capitulants to specify with realism the general orientations for the six upcoming years, based on the reflection concerning the charism, its renovation and its adaptation. We will have to find new ways to bring the Good News to the world. The Chapter will also tackle questions concerning the statutes and the means necessary for the mission, i.e. temporal and financial affairs.

Dear Brothers,

The Assumption is a modest Congregation, a « small family », as Fr. d'Alzon liked to call it. But we have a great vision: to play our part in the coming of the Kingdom of God. Our apostolic relevance will be strengthened to the extent that we find in the 34th general chapter the energy necessary to renew our commitment for the Kingdom. Each of us has the capacity, as does each of our communities, of letting oneself be guided by the Holy Spirit. The Assumption has not spoken its last word; let us measure up to our mission.

Very Rev. Benoît GRIÈRE, A.A.
Superior general

Rome, January 13, 2022

PRAYER

FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Lord God, source of all life, we come to entrust to you our Congregation and all of its activities in this year of Chapter. May we experience your love and your presence in our lives and in the lives of our brothers and sisters in the Church and in the world. Help us to be ever aware that your Kingdom is near and to hasten it by becoming its true artisans.

Let our Congregation remain a place where the Gospel is proclaimed in season and out of season, awakening in us and around us the joy and the hope that your Spirit alone offers to humanity. Give to all of us, religious and lay Assumptionists, a solid faith and renewed creativity so that we might not abandon your will and your summons, even as the world often claims to be able to move forward without You.

Mary, Our Lady of Hope and Mother of the Church, intercede for us so that the Holy Spirit may accompany us at all times in our mission to extend the Kingdom of your Son in fraternity and unity. Amen!