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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

Private audience with Pope Francis

On Thursday morning, all the members of the Chapter and the brothers of the Generalate community went to the Vatican for a private audience with Pope Francis.

The Holy Father received them in the beautiful Consistory Hall. He addressed them and then greeted them one by one before posing for a photo with them.

It was a very warm meeting, marked by simplicity and encouragement.

Below is the Holy Father's speech, with a few more personal touches.



Dear brothers,
hello and welcome!

I am happy to receive you as the end of your 34th General Chapter approaches. I greet the new Superior General and I offer him all my best wishes, as well as to the Council you have elected.

I would like to share some thoughts with you around the theme that guides your Chapter work: "The Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk 1:15). Living and proclaiming the

hope of the Gospel. This is a good way to update the motto, in the spirit of Saint Augustine, given to you by your founder, the Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon: *Adveniat Regnum tuum!* Indeed, one of the major missions of apostolic religious life is to manifest very concretely, daily, this closeness to the Kingdom, and therefore this hope for each person and for the whole world. Wherever you are, you are signs of the Kingdom by being as close as possible to the humanity to which you are sent.

Of course, this closeness goes through works, whether they are specific to your congregation or whether they are the missions of the Church to which you contribute. But beyond your actions, it is the very fact of bringing yourselves close to people, starting with those who most need a supportive and fraternal presence, which will show them that the Kingdom of God is drawing near to everyone of them, through you and through your evangelical witness.

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I am happy, on this subject, to salute in particular two accomplishments already old - and still very much alive - of your congregation: the apostolate of pilgrimages, beginning with the National Pilgrimage of Lourdes, the fervor of which you have spread to distant countries, to Latin America; as well as the involvement in the media, which you are developing today on all continents, for various audiences, even those far from the Church.

Allow me also to recall one of your historically most significant apostolates and still active, even modestly: your Mission to the East. I encourage you to continue this mission, in the Middle East where the situation of Christians is threatened, and in Eastern Europe where the war in Ukraine is jeopardizing the civil and religious balance of the region. I also want to express to you the gratitude of the Holy See for the fidelity of your commitment to the small Catholic Church of the Byzantine rite in Bulgaria, which is counting on you. Your long experience of dialogue with Orthodoxy, as with Islam and Judaism, is precious for the Church; may it make you, today more than ever, artisans of unity and communion, in the service of peace.

The object of your General Chapter was to define the main lines of your action for the next six years. I assure you of my prayers and my confidence, certain that you will invest your vital forces in it, in particular those of the

countries of the South which, in your institute as in many others, come to take over from the forces which are today declining in the North. I have been told that one out of three members of your Institute is in formation: this considerable proportion offers you prospects for the future, but at the same time constitutes a great challenge for the transmission of your charism. I give thanks with you for this renewed vitality that the Lord grants you. And I invite you to welcome this newness without fear, as a sign of the times, even if it can sometimes be frightening: we are all a little afraid of newness... but isn't the Kingdom of God itself a radical irruption of novelty for our humanity?

To take up this challenge, do not be afraid to cultivate in you and around you the "triple love" that Fr. d'Alzon shared with you: to love Christ, to love the Virgin Mary and to love the Church. Thus you will be faithful to your charism, and you will find faithful and innovative ways to actualize it.

As you walk along these old and new paths, dear brothers, you can count on my prayers and my confidence. I wish you a good end of Chapter and a good mission to all, wherever the Lord sends you. I bless you all. And don't forget to pray for me.

An ant's work... for the Kingdom

Wednesday June 21 was essentially spent in assembly, so that the orientation texts could be ready for a decision and a vote committing the Congregation.

Yesterday morning, the following texts were rediscussed and amended: Formation, Justice and Peace, Abuse Prevention, Economic Affairs.

In the afternoon, the Lay-Religious Alliance, the Eastern Mission, Education, the Missionary Fiber of the Congregation, Communication and the Digital Continent.

It's a tedious, painstaking job... with a lot of listening, especially for capitulants who are discovering these dossiers for the first time. It's hard to put into words, because you get into the details...

In the evening, the capitulants met Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, Archbishop of Marseille, before going on to work in Commissions. To relax, the capitulants were introduced to the electronic voting system that will be used to approve the texts.



Initiatives to know

Fighting juvenile delinquency and promoting peace

In Butembo (DR Congo)

Lay Assumptionists from 5 parishes in Butembo want to create jobs for 100 young people.

To ensure the safety and protection of unemployed young people, and to discourage them from enlisting in the many armed groups in the region, the ALMA association (*) wants to enable them to find work in agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts and electronics.

To achieve this, the ALMA association aims to help young people start up these activities by providing them with the necessary equipment: seeds, gardening equipment, animals, mechanical tools, generators...

ALMA: Assumptionist Lay Missionary Association



Meeting with Cardinal Jean Marc Aveline

In his address, the cardinal chose to share on the very theme of the Chapter: «The Kingdom of God is at hand», and to share with us what he feels is important today for the mission of the Assumption and the whole Church.

Here are a few key words from his talk:

Proximity

«Proximity is one of God's signatures in the Old and New Testaments. God's preferred way of revealing who He is to show His closeness. [...]

This is how I understand religious life, which expresses the conditions of this closeness to God in a given context: with the poor, through education... Every religious order can be re-read with this love of God for the world, and who makes himself close. Mission is about serving the love with which God loves the world. This is important in our thinking, because if it's love we're talking about, then our worries about survival are futile. The Church's center of gravity is not in itself, but in the love with which God loves the world. This is the origin of all charisms: to express God's love and closeness in a given time and context, it is necessary to create an order.

Catholicity

Each generation invents this closeness. It was in the 19th century, in the south of France and its history, and it's Father d'Alzon... he knows what he wants in terms of education, founding

a school, implanting Carmelites and converting Protestants! What struck me about him was a certain idea of Catholicism that is still in its infancy. As Fr. Merklen wrote: «as long as Jesus is announced, we'll be Catholics... all in one piece. Without too much regret for the ruins of the past, contempt for the present, illusions about what lies ahead, we will concern ourselves ... with the catholicity of the Church». In the story of d'Alzon and the Assumptionists, catholicity is understood as the true vocation of the Church. «Catholic» is what you must become... Assumptionists, let us welcome this vocation to catholicity: through pilgrimages, the press, teaching, social commitments... You have the mission of deploying this catholicity.

What struck me about you: this vocation to catholicity, to help the great Church not to lose its vocation to catholicity, in your apostolates.

And he goes on to quote at length two Assumptionist religious who had a great influence on him: Marcel Neusch and Bruno Chenu... The former taught him «the catholicity of thought», the latter «the catholicity of indignation», with this troubling question: «How is it that the privileged of the Kingdom are absent

from the Church? Where are they?» but also «the catholicity of hope».

And to conclude his speech:

My wish, based on your history and your charisma: help the Church to live this catholicity of hope, ART, proximity is God's signature, let it also be the signature of your order.

Born in Algeria in 1958, Father Jean-Marc Aveline is a priest in the diocese of Marseille, where he teaches theology. He founded the "Institut de science et théologie des religions" (ISTR) in Marseille, which he directed until 2002, as well as the "Institut catholique de la Méditerranée", where he taught from 1998 to 2007. He is one of the world's leading specialists in the theology of religions (consultor since 2008 to the dicastery for interreligious dialogue). In 2013, Pope Francis appointed him auxiliary bishop of Marseille. In 2019, he became archbishop of Marseille, and in 2022, Pope Francis made him a cardinal. Since last July, he has been a member of the Dicastery for Bishops. He is a friend of the Assumption.

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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