

A News of the Assumption



THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND
LIVING AND PROCLAIMING THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL



EDITORIAL

The anchor of hope

Our times are stormy. We feel as if we are capsizing, losing our footing, sinking. But the anchor of hope anchors us strongly in the very life of God.

Agenda

Plenary General Council

n° 11 : **November 30-December 9, 2022**, in Rome (Due Pini).

Ordinary General Councils

n° 38 : **September 7-23, 2022.**

n° 39 : **November 14-16, 2022.**

n° 40 : **December 13-15, 2022.**

n° 41 : **February 6-10, 2023.**

n° 42 : **April 17, 2023.**

Fr. Benoît

- **June 27 - September 4:** France (including the National Pilgrimage).
- **September 26 – October 13:** canonical visit to the U.S. and Canada.

Fr. Marcelo

- **July 5 – September 3:** Chile.

Br. Didier

- **July 6-18:** vacation in Italy.
- **August 13-30:** Madagascar.
- **September 28-30:** Paris.
- **October 1-10:** East Africa.
- **October 11-28:** DR-Congo.

Fr. Thierry

- **July 15-August 14:** France (Orantes).
- **September 26 - October 13:** Mexique.

Fr. Miguel

- **July 2-September 2:** North America.

HOLY SEA



Non-cleric religious can become superiors in clerical institutes

The news is beginning to be known, but the details often remain unknown: on May 18, 2022, a rescript from Pope Francis was published allowing for a derogation from can. 588 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, which until then reserved for priests the offices of government within clerical congregations of pontifical right.

The new provisions, published by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA), specify that from now on:

1. A non-cleric religious can be appointed **local Superior** by the Superior General with the consent of his council (it is no longer necessary to ask the Vatican for a dispensation).

2. A non-cleric religious may be appointed as a **Major Superior**, provided he has the written authorization of the CIVCSVA, at the request of the Superior General and with the consent of his Council.

3. A non-cleric religious may be elected **Superior General**, but this election must be confirmed in writing by the CIVCSVA.

4. In the cases provided for in §§2-3, the CIVCSVA reserves the right to evaluate the individual case and the reasons given by the Superior General or the General Chapter.

The rescript, the original version of which can be consulted online (1), is signed by Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the CIVCSVA, and Bishop José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary.

(1) <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/05/18/0371/00782.html>

(unofficial French translation: <https://www.droitcanonique.fr/sources-droit/dcmodele-autresource-171-171>)

The anchor of hope



Fr. Benoît Grière
Superior General
of the
Augustinians of
the Assumption

The Church that we love is being strongly challenged by a series of dramatic events. Since the frightening revelations of the abuse crisis, we have been subjected to a profound questioning of our Catholic faith by the world. But it is in the midst of this trial that we are called to stand. I like the image used by the Letter to the Hebrews, which speaks of hope as a ship's anchor thrown beyond the curtain of the temple and which fixes us firmly in God: *"This is a strong encouragement to us who have sought refuge in the hope that was offered to us and which we have grasped. This hope we hold as a sure and firm anchor for the soul; it enters beyond the curtain into the Sanctuary where Jesus entered for us as a forerunner, he who became a high priest of the order of Melkizedek for all eternity.* (Heb 6:18-20)

Our times are stormy. We feel as if we are capsizing, losing our footing, sinking. But the anchor of hope anchors us strongly in the very life of God. Of course, I am not saying that we just wait for the storm to pass and then everything will be better. I am convinced that we must act now and work for the renewal of our world and our Church. Some sociologists speak of the implosion of Catholicism to describe its inevitable decline. (1) Their analysis is interesting and it is necessary to know it. Our Christian faith impels us to act for renewal, and despite the wounds we have, because of the miseries of the times, we are sure that God continues to sustain us. I believe that Pope Francis is the pastor we need to move forward in the new times. The establishment of a greater synodality is the necessary condition to overcome the disastrous clericalism. We are a people of brothers and sisters, and each has his or her rightful place in the life of the Church.

There is no difference in dignity between the baptized persons and each one is useful for the growth of the body of Christ.

The Assumption has been practicing synodality for many years. As Fr. Athanase Sage wrote, Emmanuel d'Alzon had already insisted in the Constitutions of 1855 on our fundamental characteristics as religious and our lifestyle: *"love for Our Lord, fraternal charity all of frankness, openness and freedom of heart; close solidarity between the religious and lay members of the association, united in a common consecration to the coming of the reign of Our Lord."* (2) This close solidarity is a synodal path.

I do not believe in the disappearance of the Church. I am convinced that the Lord is always present with us and that he never ceases to lavish his tenderness on his People. But we have an emergency: to live the conversion of hearts. This requires a radical change in our lives. A prophetic hope characterizes religious life. It is an expectation of the Kingdom and also a manifestation of it. If we have the will to go forward, firmly attached to our anchor of hope, then we will reach beyond the curtain of the Temple. I hope that each one of us will live in truth this urgent call to conversion. On our determined action depends the future of the Church and therefore also the future of our world. On August 15, I will be present at the Assumption Pilgrimage in Lourdes. The theme is: *"With Mary, let us become witnesses of hope"*. I will pray for each of you, that Mary will help us to live the witness of an unflinching faith lived in hope and charity.

Father Benoît Grière,
General Superior

(1) Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Jean-Louis Schlegel, Vers l'implosion ? Entretiens sur le présent et l'avenir du catholicisme, Seuil, 2022.
(2) Emmanuel d'Alzon, Premières constitutions des Augustins de l'Assomption. 1855-1865, édition présentée and annotated by Frs. Athanase Sage and Pierre Touveneraud, Rome, 1966.

Callings, nominations, agreements...

Father Benoît Grière, Superior General,
with the approval of his Council, has called:

■ TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

- 1) **RAVELONIRINA Claude Orlando**
(East Africa) (04/12/2022)
- 2) **KIMANI KURIA Gregory**
(East Africa) (04/12/2022)
- 3) **MBAEZE Nnaemeka Dominic**
(East Africa) (04/12/2022)
- 4) **ANDRIAMALALARSON Christien Fabrice**
(East Africa) (04/12/2022)
- 5) **HONZOUNNON Maurice Billy**
(East Africa) (04/13/2022)
- 6) **DANG VAN Nghi Joseph**
(Europe) (05/02/2022)
- 7) **HOANG Duong Pierre**
(Europe) (05/02/2022)
- 8) **NGUYEN DINH Thong Pierre**
(Europe) (05/02/2022)
- 9) **NGUYEN MINH Tin Pierre**
(Europe) (05/02/2022)
- 10) **PHAM VAN Trinh Joseph**
(Europe) (05/03/2022)
- 11) **NGUYEN DINH Dien Jean-Baptiste**
(Europe) (05/03/2022)
- 12) **TRAN VAN Thanh Pierre**
(Europe) (05/03/2022)
- 13) **TRAN VAN Viet Jean-Baptiste**
(Europe) (05/03/2022)
- 14) **HOANG KIM Khoa Paul**
(Europe) (05/04/2022)
- 15) **ANDABWA MAKOMBE Boniface**
(East Africa) (05/04/2022)

■ TO THE DIACONATE

- 1) **ANDRIAMAHENINARIVO Richard**
(Madagascar) (04/13/2022)
- 2) **MUENDO MUTINDA Dominic**
(East Africa) (04/13/2022)
- 3) **MUHINDO SAASITA Faustin**
(East Africa) (04/13/2022)

- 4) **NSENGE MPIA Héritier Stanislas**
(East Africa) (04/14/2022)
- 5) **Augustine BYAMUKAMA**
(East Africa) (04/14/2022)
- 6) **SSEMBAJJWE Kizito**
(East Africa) (04/14/2022)
- 7) **RAZANAJATOVO Julien**
(East Africa) (04/14/2022)
- 8) **RUIZ RIVERA Jonathan Esteban**
(Andean Province) (05/04/2022)
- 9) **KAMATE KITSAKULENDE Marie Gaston**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 10) **KAMBALE YALAMIZE Éric**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 11) **KIBALA TARIKO Ferdinand**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 12) **MUMBERE SEKERAVITI Justin**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 13) **PALUKU KAHUMULA Jacques**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 14) **RAFANOMEZANTSOA Marie Joseph**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 15) **RAKOTONOMENJANAHARY Armain**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 16) **TIENE NGANGA Fabrice**
(Africa) (06/15/2022)
- 17) **RAKOTONIAINA Justin**
(Africa) (06/16/2022)

■ TO THE PRIESTHOOD

- 1) **RAKOTOMALALA Marc Pierre Chanel**
(Madagascar) (04/15/2022)
- 2) **NGUYEN XUAN Phuc François-Xavier**
(Europe) (04/15/2022)
- 3) **NGUYEN VAN Thang Antoine**
(Europe) (05//2022)
- 4) **NGUYEN VAN Dung Joseph**
(Europe) (05/05/2022)
- 5) **AKPO DOVI Augustin**
(Europe) (05/05/2022)
- 6) **AKPABIE Yvon**
(Europe) (05/05/2022)

7) KANTCHIRE Bernardin
(Europe) (05/05/2022)

8) GNOM Pierre
(Europe) (05/06/2022)

9) MWINGANIZA Joseph
(East Africa) (05/06/2022)

10) NKOYOOYO Ignatius
(East Africa) (06/06/2022)

11) MATONDO KABWIKU Dieu-Merci
(East Africa) (05/06/2022)

12) MUHINDO MALISAWA Bienvenu
(Africa) (06/16/2022)

13) MULOPO TONA Barny Emmanuel
(Africa) (06/16/2022)

14) MIRA RESTREPO Carlos
(Andean Prov.) (06/16/2022)

PROVINCIAL NOMINATION

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the approval of his Council, has named Fr. **Juan Carlos MARZOLLA LAIUS, Superior of the Andean Province**, for a **3rd triennium**, beginning on June 1st, 2022.

NOMINATION OF A FORMATOR

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the approval of his Council, has named Fr. **Albert EMASINTSOA**, as **Master of Novices for the St. Augustine Novitiate of Tuléar** (Madagascar).

OPENING OF A NEW HOUSE

At the request of the Provincial Superior of Africa, and with the advice of the Plenary General Council, Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, **has decided to open a house in Butembo-Kahamba (DR-Congo)**.

CLOSING

Upon the request of the Provincial Superior of Europe, and with the advice of the Plenary General Council, Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, **has decided to close the house in Leganés in Madrid (Spain)**.

DEPARTURE DUE TO INCARDINATION

The Holy See has granted an indult to leave the Institution to Fr. **Harilala Pio Soldier RAKOTOMANGA** (Europe), in view of his incardination ad experimentum to the diocese of Évry-Corbeil-Essonnes (France), June 4, 2022.

DEPARTURE FROM THE INSTITUTE

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the approval of his Council, has granted Br. **Kranthi Kumar POLISETTY**, temporary profession from the European Province, an indult for permanent departure from the Institute.

The logo of the 34th General Chapter, described by its author



The logo is as round as *the earth*.

To live and announce the Gospel in a modern world.

The person represents an Assumptionist sowing the *seed of the Kingdom*.

The Cross points to the road that leads to the *Reign of God*.

In one year, the 34th General Chapter!

The 10th session of the CGP, which was just held in Uganda, devoted a good part of its time to the preparation of this essential meeting for the whole congregation.

It was under the sign of the holy martyrs of Uganda that the Plenary General Council met from June 1 to 11 in Kisubi-Entebbe, near Kampala. It is fair to say that everyone was happy to meet again for this first session outside of Rome in four years! Juan Carlos Marzolla, who has just been reappointed as head of the Andean Province, was not present. Meanwhile, we could welcome Father Lucien Telolahy Razafimanantsoa, the new Provincial of Madagascar, who began his mandate on the very day of the opening of this session!

It is impossible to report here all the topics discussed, nor all the exchanges of experiences and concerns, even the common projects that the major superiors need to share! Several aspects of formation were discussed: the situation in the CIFA, specialized studies, professional training, language learning, etc. One morning was devoted to the very serious socio-political crisis in the region that welcomed us: Father Aurélien Kambale Rukwata, responsible for Justice & Peace for the diocese of Butembo-Beni, came to present the long history and the tragic current events.

Among the files studied, two in particular will be mentioned here: the economic file, and the preparation in various aspects of the General Chapter that will be held next year.



The PGC and the ECC, meeting in Kisubi-Entebbe.

- Operation “Old Age Provision”

As is now the custom, the Congregation’s Economic Council (CEC) had met at the same location several days before the arrival of the CGP, and then shared the first two days of work. In addition to recurring topics at such a time of year, including the adoption of the Congregation Accounts, a newly introduced issue was how we can, and indeed should, provide for retirement pensions in various ways, depending on the location and situation.

The CGP welcomed the recommendations contained in the CEC report on old age provision at Assumption. From now on, each Province will have to formulate a policy of old age provision for all its religious in need; a Fund of Old Age Solidarity is envisaged for the benefit of the religious originating from the Provinces of Africa and Madagascar, as well as the Vice-Prov-

Presenting a vow to the General Chapter

According to the Rule of Life n. 114 and the Capitular Rules n. 177, every religious and every community can send their wishes, suggestions and requests to the General Chapter. It is best to send them before February 1, 2023 to the Preparatory Commission, either by ordinary mail (Via San Pio V, 55 - 00165 Roma, Italy) or by e-mail (cpcaa2023@gmail.com).

ince of East Africa, and even the Vicariate of Asia. A system of annual contributions is foreseen for each member of the congregation, starting at 35 years of age or perpetual vows, until the fund necessary for the proper functioning of this provident fund is constituted; once the required amount is reached, only the religious who benefit from the system will continue to contribute.

The starting date for the implementation of this pension system is January 1, 2023.

Preparation for the 34th General Chapter

- The Preparatory Commission for the Chapter (CPC) has taken stock of its work: the questionnaire sent to all the communities in order to discern the signs of the Kingdom of God for our time, unfortunately, received only about fifty responses, with great variations according to the Provinces. Their content, however, reveals a certain confidence in the spiritual resources available to the Assumption, in the generosity of the brothers, sisters and laity: in short, a confidence in the future that comes from God.

The CPC produced a synthesis of these responses in four parts: “God gives us a sign”, “God gives us grace”, “God calls us”, “Communities and groups make proposals”. This text, of synodal inspiration, will now be sent to communities, commissions and lay groups to deepen, complete and refine it and, above all, to come up with concrete proposals - this by October 31, 2022.

- **Several pre-chapter commissions** have informed the

PGC of the progress of their work:

- “Justice & Peace” has set to work, in particular with a program of activities 2022-2025.

- The group mandated by the GCP to reflect on the organization of the Congregation has issued a first document, identifying situations of fragility, evoking perspectives for the future of the Vicariates and launching the first ideas for restructuring the territories.

- As for the Commission on Communication and Social Networks, it has already produced a document ready to be submitted to the Chapter.

- The CGP also chose **the logo for the 34th Chapter** from two proposals, both of which were made by Brother Joseph Nguyen Thanh Hoc of the Lille community: one combining the acronym “A.R.T.” and the cross, the other with a silhouette of an Assumptionist in habit sowing the seeds of the Kingdom, with the city in the background. It is this second proposal that was chosen (see opposite for the meaning that the author gave it).

The conclusion of the General Superior

In his closing address to this session, Father General insisted in particular on the “shift” underway in our Congregation:

“The Assumption is a family with strengths and weaknesses, the contrast is now very pronounced between the old provinces and the new territories where the Assumption regularly recruits. The aging of religious, the closing of communities, and the low number of vocations are giving rise to international support. Solidarity is already evi-

dent, since some provinces benefit from the support of brothers in other regions. Many communities throughout the world would be condemned to close without the presence of brothers from Congo, Vietnam or elsewhere. But as one of us said, we wonder about the future, but despite everything we still have human resources that are there. They come from countries other than those of the West (...)

Progressively the Assumption is moving to the south of the world, that is to say to Africa and Asia. We are becoming aware that the Church is not limited to the old world and that there are dynamic growths elsewhere on earth. We are in a rapid evolution that has an impact on our charism. More and more, the Assumptionist will have to define himself as a missionary disciple, that is to say, a disciple of Christ called to serve wherever the congregation needs him, in conformity with its major apostolic orientations. We will be a missionary body, as Emmanuel d’Alzon wanted, a body dedicated to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. This will require a greater availability on the part of each one of us, but also a better preparation to live in an international and intercultural community. The former provinces will have to specify, in connection with the CGP, their major orientations: education, media, parishes, studies, social work, defense of creation, Justice & Peace, etc., in order to have men ready to take up the challenges of this century.”

P. Michel KUBLER,
General Secretary

The Assumption Solidarity Campaigns

The CGP has observed that the annual Assumption solidarity campaign suffers from a lack of awareness among religious and communities. Here are some elements to better understand these campaigns and their goals.

The concept of the Assumption Solidarity Campaign was created in 2012. The idea is to choose a project in need of funding in one of our provinces. However, this project must have already sought funding outside the congregation through the Office of Development and Solidarity, but without success. It is therefore a project that has been awaiting funding for several years and for which the Development and Solidarity Office has been refused one or more times in its search for a donor. Each year, during its June session,

the Plenary General Council chooses the project that will be the beneficiary of the following year's Assumption solidarity campaign.

The Assumption solidarity campaign then proposes to the internal solidarity of the congregation to seek to finance the selected project. The first circle to be solicited is made up of the communities of the congregation. In fact, although many interprovincial solidarity mechanisms exist within the congregation, they are often very institutional and most religious are unaware of their functioning, or even their existence. The Assumption solidarity campaigns are intended to be a way for each community to give concrete expression to the fraternity and solidarity that we so often emphasize in our speeches. Every year, each community is invited to make a small effort (for example,

during Lent, but not exclusively) to contribute personally to the current Assumption solidarity campaign. The second circle that is solicited is made up of groups of lay people of the Alliance or close to the Assumption, as well as our pastoral works (parishes and schools in particular.)

The solidarity campaign underway in this year 2022 is **for the creation of a computer laboratory for our secondary school, Assumption High School, in Nairobi.**

I hope that these few explanations have rekindled your interest in the Assumption solidarity campaigns!

Bro. Didier REMIOT
General Treasurer



History of the Assumption Solidarity Campaigns.

		Received in EUR	Received in USD	Total
2012	Completion of the Kyabakade church, Uganda	20 002,18 €	\$ 5 881,97	\$32 200,63
2013	Palmba micro power plant, Congo.	18 154,00 €	\$ 8 259,00	\$27 229,93
2014	Renovation of rooms in the Eugenio's retreat center, Brazil.	10 845,70 €	\$ 2 499,00	\$13 013,72
2015	Semi-industrial poultry house in Kinshasa, Congo.	14 520,08 €	\$ 4 672,10	\$20 963,61
2016	CIMEDE (ADL professional center), Kivu, Congo.	15 180,00 €	\$ 11 004,20	\$27 095,09
2017	ISEAB computer lab in Butembo, Congo.	5 500,00 €	\$ 8 080,00	\$14 807,44
2018	Three vehicles for the Province of Africa	8 900,00 €	\$ 16 695,00	\$26 881,91
2019	Mi hogar asuncionista - Bogota: support to single women.	2 279,00 €	\$ 9 174,72	\$11 690,73
2020	Construction of a bridge in Bibwa, Kinshasa, Congo.	4 555,83 €	\$ 6 198,00	\$11 119,36
2021	A car for the community of the postulancy of Katembere in DRC.	21 870,00 €	\$ 3 540,00	\$28 253,10

First apostolic appointments

The « first apostolic appointment » of all religious at the conclusion of their formation is determined within the framework of the CGP, according to a decision of the 32nd General Chapter (2011) and published at the time of priestly ordination (for religious brothers: at Perpetual Profession).

We are publishing the appointments received by the religious ordained within the last year.

Africa

- **Zéphyrin KASERKA MUMBERE:**
Canon law studies in Kinshasa.
- **Jackson BWAMBALE NYENZE:**
Teacher of English in Mahamba.
- **Moïse KAKULE KALEMBERYA:**
Studies in communication at UAC with the goal of working at Moto Radio; he is in community at the Novitiate of St. Charles Lwanga in Butembo.
- **Nicolas KAKULE MAHAMBA:**
Director of the primary school within the Prince of Peace complex in Beni-Butsili.
- **Barthélemy KAMBALE KATUSELE:**
Foundation in Angola for parish ministry.
- **Eriel Kermelis MBOUNGOU:**
Buenos Aires (Argentina), for pastoral care of the sanctuary NS of Lourdes.
- **Michel MUMBERE MULYANGASU:**
Brazil.
- **Mumbere MUYISA BORA:**
Butembo-Kambali, for training in preparation for teaching technology at UAC.
- **Elie BAKAMARHE CIZUNGU:**
Parish ministry at the foundation in Kalemie.
- **Moïse KATEMBO KASOLENE:** At UAC, Secretary of Applied Sciences, while assisting at the Institute of Mahamba.
- **Barny Emmanuel MULOPO TONA:**
Marechal Community of Kinshasa, for school ministry at l'École Emmanuel d'Alzon I and youth ministry at the parish of Divin Maître (Divine Master).

East Africa

- **Morris GITAU MACHARIA:**
management responsibilities at Austin House, Arusha.
- **Joseph MWINGANIZA:** member of

the formation team at the Novitiate St. Kizito in Arusha.

- **Ignatius NKOYOYO:** Murutunguru (Tanzania), for two years of parish ministry.
- **Dieu-Merci MATONDO KABWIKU:**
Emmanuel House (Nairobi)---to assist with the finances of the Vice-Province (the water project) and also to work in pastoral ministry at the Sacred Heart Dagoreti Corner parish.

North America

- **Sadiki KAMBALE KYAVUMBA:**
work in Bayard Québec, with the possibility of a period of work in France.
- **Pacifique KAMBALE TSONGO:**
specialized studies for teaching in Worcester.
- **Irvin SANTIAGO MARTINEZ:** parish ministry at Santiago Apóstol of Tlilapan (Mexico) and helping with various forms of evangelization engaged by the community.

Europe

- **Joseph NGUYEN HUU Du:** Social community and work in the orphanage of Saigon (Vietnam).
- **Joseph TRAN QUOC Cuong:** Bethnal Green (Great Britain), work in the community and in the parish.
- **Truyen NGUYEN VAN Paul:**
Gwangju (Korea), parish work with the Koreans and with the migrants from Vietnam.
- **François-Xavier NGUYEN XUÂN Phúc:** Postulate of Saigon following his ordination, for the accompaniment of candidates to the religious life and for vocation ministry.
- **Antoine NGUYỄN VĂN Tchang:**
Lille (France), to contribute to the welcoming of youth---in youth

ministry and vocation ministry and as facilitator in an alternative program with a Vietnamese perspective.

- **Joseph NGUYỄN VĂN Dung:**
Montpellier, for youth and vocation ministry, as well as parish ministry.
- **Yvon AKPABIE:** Abidjan (Ivory Coast), for a Master of Christology and working for Bayard.
- **Augustin-Bernardin KANTCHIRE:**
Pastoral work in Sokodé-Komah, with the possibility of spending time in Lomé to finish studies in education, to either teach or to run an institution.
- **Paglam-Long Pierre GNOM:**
Conflans-Ste-Honorine, to contribute toward the double mission of the community (parish work and social work).

Madagascar

- **Florent Régis NDRIAMAMONJY:**
Parish service in the new foundation in the diocese of Port-Bergé.
- **Jean Lucien Adrien ANDRIAMASILALAINA:** Fotadrevo community, for the local bush schools and for youth ministry.
- **Jacques RAKOTONIARIVO:** New community of Nasandratrany, for the ministry of youth in the bush.
- **Raphael José NJARANIANIA:** In the parish at Ampanihy, specifically for youth ministry.
- **Dieu Donné Frédéric RASOLONIANIA:** Ejeda, at Msgr. Cannone College.
- **Marc-Pierre RAKOTOMALALA:**
Ampandrana Community, at Antananarivo, for an initiation in formation.

Andean Province

- **Carlos MIRA RESTREPO:** Riobamba (Ecuador).

Building a future for infants and young people

In the Andean Province, the Assumptionist schools seek to protect the students under their care: a report from Fr. Marcelo Marciel, Vicar General, following a canonical visit to his native country.



Catechesis session at Manuel d'Alzon College in Lota (Chile).

I am often asked about the work of the Assumptionist religious in the southern part of the world, whether it is in Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, or Columbia: the response is sometimes limited to a list of important activities such as the parishes, Marian shrines, the schools, social services, etc. The response, however, has little value without a look at the reality that began in Latin America with the arrival of the first Assumptionists in 1890. A look at the past projects us to the future as it helps us to understand the courage, the faithfulness, the initiative, and especially the faith of these men, who over the years have shared the joys, the hopes, and the suffering of the people of God in the different countries

that comprise the Andean Province.

Today, we are confronted with a crisis in the Church, particularly in Chile with abuses of all types: with great sadness we have heard of terrible situations endured by victims, who were able to raise their voices to ask for justice and acknowledgment of what they experienced. The gospels tell us that the truth will set us free; it is on this path that we wish to continue for the formation of our children and young people. Our religious vocation springs from a call from Christ to love deeply those to whom we have been sent. If we can imagine a future, it is because we are ready to cling to the rock that is Christ, by loving even in difficult times, because

love, when it is true, is strengthened by trials. Today, more than ever, we renew our commitment to protect infants, the young, and the most vulnerable.

Infants and the young help us to understand the beauty of God that is present in them. It is wonderful to see how as our children grow physically and emotionally, there is a spiritual dimension that is rooted in their depths that will one day germinate and give fruits of service and love to others. There is an example that helps us understand this belief. It is the celebration that takes place among students in the last year of secondary school: during the farewell celebration, the older students walk hand in hand with the young ones who enter the school at six years of



End of the year celebration at Emmanuel d'Alzon College in Bogota Colombia).

age---two stories that cross the same path.

There are four schools in the Andean Province: Padre Manuel d'Alzon (at Lota, Chile), Instituto San Roman and Instituto Ntra. Sra. de Lourdes (at Buenos Aires, Argentina) and Colegio Emmanuel d'Alzon (Bogota, Colombia). This educational reality, diverse and rich in experiences, contributes to what we call "the network of Assumptionist schools". This network exists to promote the identity of Assumptionist charism and the formation of men and women capable of responding to the challenges of our time with a clear option toward Christian values in our society.

We are convinced of the evangelical radicalism of Emmanuel d'Alzon. Therefore, the students learn his life, his history and his mission in the Church from a very early age. They pray each

week for his beatification, and they organize different activities to promote Christian vocations, whether it is for marriage or the religious life. Catechesis of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and the organization of missionary activities in low-income areas are organized in the schools. Solidarity and missionary activity are equal pillars for the alumni who remain connected to the school while they are in their technical or university studies.

All those who give life to the institution---rectors, supervisors, teachers, assistants, parents, students. . .are all part of the large Assumptionist family. We are far from perfect, and we continue on with our weaknesses, but we strive to interact honestly to the demands of the good of the children and youth with whom we are entrusted. Our goal is not to have gigantic

schools, but to build an educational family that understands the dynamics of the common good, of solidarity, and of respect for others. For this reason, we take Pope Francis' directives on the "Global Compact for Education" seriously, to build bridges with society and develop a culture based on concern for the world, as emphasized in the encyclical *Laudato si'*.

What are the features of an Assumptionist school? For me, it is the spirit of family---the same characteristic that we hope to find in our religious family. We distinguish ourselves as brothers and we have a desire, a passion, for transforming the world according to the message of the gospel. I am proud of what we have built together and for what we will continue to do; I am proud of the men and women we have formed; I am proud of those who have put their hearts into this mission; I am proud of the good we have done among so many families; I am proud of the men and women of character who contribute daily to the construction of a different world; I am proud of the dream of Fr. d'Alzon that we are able to realize.

No one who has gone through our schools can say that they have not heard of Fr. d'Alzon. As a sort of miracle, 142 years after his death in France, his spirit is alive and lives in so many generations. The Assumption is like a gene that we carry with us and that determines our reason for being in this world. Here is the mystery of it all: "Until Christ is formed in you." (Ga 5,9).

Fr. Marcelo MARCIEL
(Rome)

Joy and hope

Fr. José Miguel Díaz Ayllón has been able to pay his first visit to the Philippines and Vietnam since the closing of the borders due to the Covid pandemic.



The parish church and sanctuary of Digos (Philippines).

The first thing that comes to my mind when I think back on this trip is the smile of the brothers as they welcomed me. It is true that for us every visit is, first of all, a joyful encounter between brothers; this time, however, I felt something special, perhaps due to the isolation our brothers had to endure, particularly rigorous in Vietnam and the Philippines.

There is always something new to be discovered and celebrated in our visits, whether we are re-establishing contact with confreres we have known for many years, or meeting for the first time those who have joined our communities recently. On this occasion, I felt particularly happy because these fraternal encounters took place in the new setting of the Asia-Oceania Vicariate, and I rejoiced with our brothers who have gradually discovered the possibilities of enriching their own lives with the regular input from confreres from other countries in the region.

The Vicariate is a very young reality,

its existence officially began in January 202; and, just when we were envisaging all the many tasks of organizing the life of the new structure, the pandemic appeared and shut the borders; as a result, the visits were postponed and the meetings had to wait for months until the online virtual sessions were slowly becoming commonplace in our lives.

I've learned that, in spite of the time it took for reopening the borders, the brothers who were blocked from returning to their communities, finally could do so in all safety and resume without major difficulties their community life and work. I found that several Vietnamese brothers are now members of communities in the Philippines, and the English workshops and courses in Vietnam are running again with the help of some Filipino confreres.

Another great joy for me was a trip to Mindanao Island to meet the new community in Digos. Our brothers have been entrusted with the mission of ministering to the pilgrims who come in search of God's compassion and forgiveness to a



The Saigon orphanage (Vietnam).

shrine dedicated to Jesus Christ in the image of the “Divine Mercy”. This modest sanctuary, located on the outskirts of the city, has been erected as a parish, so that the pastoral care provided by our brothers and a group of committed lay people now reaches up to 25 Christian communities and their chapels. The territory is extensive, climbing from the sea up to the mountains amidst beautiful scenery. A wonderful sight; but serving those communities, accessible only after an hour’s walk in the broken terrain of the area, is far from easy.

The bishop of Digos, Mgr Guillermo Afable, told me that the territory of his rural parishes

is so large because he doesn’t have enough clergy to serve the entire population adequately. The Assumption has responded to the concrete need of this church and endeavors to cooperate bringing into play the strength that community life affords us. I cannot but mention the missionary zeal of our brother deacon Joseph, who strives to use the local language for pastoral service and is already being praised by many in the diocese for having sung the “Exultet” in cebuanese.

Turning now to my stay in Vietnam, what mostly impressed me was that, during the time of confinement, so long in these countries, some brothers and

communities took the initiative, together with many lay men and women, to help people and families in need: they visited the sick, delivered food, kept watch for whatever need that might come up. The Church gave a great testimony of solidarity, in spite of disavowal from the government; and our brothers made themselves conspicuous by sharing in this effort. Bless God for that!

I also discovered the new community in Bin Phu’o’c, an assumptionist reality so recent that it is still waiting to settle in the new house that is being built at full speed. I got to know the plantation of rubber trees: you do feel the silence and peace of the countryside among the long lines of trees that begin to yield, for the first time, the liquid from which rubber is obtained. A very young, joyful community imbued with hope in the mission that is gradually taking shape on the horizon for them.

The Assumption projects itself into the future through the faces of these young brothers, much more numerous in Vietnam, who are starting on their vocational journey with us. I see sincerity in their daily commitment, and a great desire to open up new sites in which to work at proposing the Kingdom of God.

Visiting Vietnam and the Philippines has indeed filled up my hope reservoir. The Assumption is alive and growing in Asia. God calls on us to open up new paths in those Eastern countries and our brothers are in search of God’s will for ways to extend our apostolic commitments, perhaps in yet other lands, in a new missionary quest.

Fr. José Miguel DÍAZ AYLLÓN
(Rome)

Leading to Mystery, serving with joy!

The 2nd International Meeting of Formators was held in Rome from June 20 to 30. One of the participants shares with us what he took away from it.



Participants in the International Formators' Meeting in Rome, June 2022.

And now that the most acute phase of the pandemic has passed, we have gathered in Rome from various parts of the world for the meeting of those responsible for formation in our Congregation, scheduled to be held every two years. A time of sharing and prayer, a time of grace, a time to become even more aware that we are witnesses of something beyond ourselves.

The group having received the status of a preparatory commission for the General Chapter, it was necessary to take into account this obvious fact: the relevance of our mission as formators depends above all on the fact that we are called to transmit our experience of encounter with the Lord. Yes, because he looked at us, he called us, he came to us: we welcomed him and we were welcomed by him. It is God him-

self who becomes a missionary; he has come to care for us. And that is why we must look beyond ourselves, beyond our pains, beyond our limits... Just as Christ the Redeemer turned to God and to others.

Thus, we could return to what the Latin American Episcopal Council (Celam) said in Aparecida in 2007: *“The Church must carry out its mission following the footsteps of Jesus and adopt-*



The Church needs prophets of God, those who come from the deserts of personal face-to-face contact with the living God »

ing his attitudes (cf. Mt 9:35-36). He is the Lord, he became a servant and obedient to the point of death on the Cross (cf. Phil 2:8); being rich, he chose to be poor for us (cf. 2 Cor 8:9), teaching us the way of our vocation as disciples and missionaries. (...) In the generosity of the missionaries the generosity of God is manifested, in the generosity of the apostles the generosity of the Gospel appears (Rev 31).”

Loving this world and being a source of hope for people today, the Assumption can help young people find spaces of interior life so that they can better know themselves and overcome the anguish of this world of ours and become missionary-disciples. The Church needs prophets of God, those who come from the deserts of personal face-to-face contact with the living God, a multitude who come in this way. A professor of religion comes from elsewhere, he comes from philosophy and theology courses, and he comes with a document. This is not the case of a prophet: he knows God because he has learned him, not from books, but in a state of friendship with the Lord.

It happens that we often live on the periphery of ourselves, the faculty of prayer receives many blows and wounds. We have no problem to study, to reflect, to consider the evangelical faith for the problems of our time...

But the most important thing is to help our brothers in formation to experience God personally, to purify their motivations to set out with us. If we take this path, we will have infinite grace, we will not fall into emptiness, we will not fall into despair, because our heart is constituted in such a way that we cannot live without God.

We must then remember that at the center is Jesus. He called his disciples to be with him, not to do things: we do things later, when we admire not only the person of Jesus, but his life. We are called to experience and to show our young people in formation that God is capable of filling our hearts and making us happy, that the authentic fraternity lived in our communities nourishes our joy, that our total dedication to the service of the Church, of families, of young people, of the elderly, of the poor, fills us as persons and gives fullness to our lives. It is here that we find the challenge of deepening interculturality, while witnessing that our richness is found in welcoming the other, his virtues and weaknesses, while knowing, honestly, that they are also ours.

By our motto, according to Fr. d’Alzon, we have magnificent things to accomplish in order to bring about the Kingdom of God. We must remember that Our Lord came to earth to serve (ES 78). So we know what tasks

we need to accomplish to promote unity, we can illuminate them, but we need to do them with a mystagogical spirit. The mystagogy, we know, is a time to savor the mystery of the living God. And we believe that Jesus is the great mystagogue. It is always striking that the disciples on the road to Emmaus said to each other, “Didn’t you notice how our hearts were burning? Didn’t you notice?” This is the kind of formators that the Assumption needs: those who realize that God is passing through their lives.

This is our mission, beautiful, true and always current. This is our challenge, which testifies to a continuous search for that beauty that is always old and always new of which our patriarch Augustine spoke. We choose to form friends and disciples of the Lord, people transfigured by the Spirit. By transfiguring all that our perception grasps, whether it be material, affective, cultural or mystical realities, we touch the mystery without ever exhausting it. What is admirable is that the more we do this, the more the possibility of continuing to do so opens up before us. Reality then becomes a window on the infinite. And that is our joy!

Marcos Antônio DIAS
(Formator of the Province of
Brazil - Eugenópolis)

Bayard, 150 years old... and the future ahead!

2023 will be a landmark year for the Assumption, not only because of its 34th General Chapter, but also because of the 150th anniversary of one of its major works: Bayard. The preparatory work for this event has been launched, with a determined openness to the future.



One anniversary can also hide another. If 2023 will be the year of Bayard's 150th anniversary with the launch of *Le Pèlerin*, the date of February 6, 1924 - less well known at Assumption - will have seen the constitution of the Société anonyme "Maison de la Bonne Presse", which had the merit of finally bringing a legal framework to the work after the painful years during which the Congregation was dissolved and the assets of the enterprise despoiled.

In France, a commercial company has a limited duration... of 99 years; it was therefore important not to miss the deadline to extend our Bayard work. This was done last December 9 during an Extraordinary General Assembly during which the Assumption renewed the company until February 5, 2122: enough to fuel a

mobilization for the century to come.

The company took advantage of this anniversary to officially change its corporate name; instead of "Bayard Presse", our statutes now officially state "Bayard". We have done this to keep up with a reality that has become more and more effective over the last few decades with the development, alongside the press or in connection with it, of book publishing and audiovisual activities and, above all, with the ambition of digital productions which, as we now know, correspond more and more to the cultural uses of our contemporaries. Of course, paper has not "said" its last word, but it will have to cohabit with digital... even if it means giving it pre-eminence, as is already the case for the daily newspaper *La Croix*.



From a “work-company” to a “mission company

Another social phenomenon has affected certain companies in France in recent years. Their managers and employees, as well as the State, no longer want them to be considered primarily as sources of profit for shareholders concerned with the short term. Moreover, they believe that companies must also contribute to the common good by assuming their share of societal and environmental responsibilities. Thus was voted in 2019 the “Pact Law” which allows companies to become “mission companies”. Its originality is to encourage companies to give themselves a “raison d’être”, which means clarifying and making their purpose publicly explicit.

Certainly, at Bayard, we were not lacking in reflection on our purpose: our former statutes already stated that Bayard “seeks to promote, in the dialogue of society, a coherent and continuous Christian presence, as broad as possible, in accordance with the thinking of the Church. As such, it wants to be a relay of the spiritual and cultural needs of people”. We have added the following *raison d’être*:

“Through a thousand points of view, a thousand sensibilities, Bayard, a Catholic publisher, wants to welcome and accompany all people at every moment of their lives. Together, we want to live our world to the fullest. We want to help everyone feel connected to themselves and to others. We are committed to the common good, concerned about nature and future generations. We believe in the liberating

power of accurate information, imagination and creation that nourish the soul and life. Let’s create fertile links!”

The formulation may seem poetic, at the risk of making it pure communication. It is not. In order to be considered by the public authorities as a “company with a mission”, it is necessary to assert very precise objectives, commitments and actions, the execution of which can be authenticated each year. To date, we have formulated three objectives that could be written into the statutes:

- *“In the interest of equal opportunity and access to culture, we want to open up our mission of education and information to as many people as possible.”*

- *Faced with environmental, social and societal emergencies, we want to ensure that each of our projects contributes to the emergence of a desirable shared future and gives the ability to act.”*

- *“We believe in the strength of an inner and spiritual life and we want, through listening and dialogue, to help people connect beyond their differences.”*

There is still some time to finalize the modalities linked to this change of status, but the constraints will be as many spurs to perpetuate what our last Chapters called “the work-company Bayard”, while giving it the means to mobilize current and future employees, as well as contributors and external partners, including public media

companies or non-profit associations; because there are more and more of us who want to share the mission. This is a charism that is both transmitted and enriched.

P. André Antoni, Director General of Bayard (Paris)

(this article is taken from the bulletin ATLPE of the Province of Europe, n° 34, April 2022)

The 150th Anniversary Program

The celebration of Bayard’s jubilee, spread out over the year 2023, will have several important phases, including

- a historical symposium on January 30 and 31, 2023 in Paris-Aubervilliers¹, (1)
- the collection of oral archives and documentation of all kinds,
- the publication of an anniversary “mook”,
- the publication of an interactive chronology, etc.

A steering committee for this jubilee, led by the historian Charles Mercier and the journalist Benoît de Sagazan, has been set up. Its objective is to make Bayard’s past better known and to help it reflect on its current evolution.

¹ For more information on the conference: <https://bayard.sciencesconf.org/>

The spirituality of the Kingdom of God and the figure of Mary

We continue to publish reflections on the theme of our next General Chapter: “The Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel”. Here is the contribution of Fr. Vianney KIM Myoung-Ho, a Korean religious living in France.

Is there a link between the spirituality of the Kingdom of God and the figure of the Virgin Mary? If we want to uncover the connection between the royalty of God and the Mother of God, we need to clarify what characterizes the Kingdom of God. It is through a simple biblical approach that we will try to discover it. Then we will see how the Virgin Mary realized, by her life of faith, “the virtues of the Kingdom” so that this is just not a far-flung reality, a reality of the afterlife. We will try to grasp its virtues through Scripture, without exhausting its source.

The paradoxical aspect of God’s kingship

The omnipotence of God, creator and origin of all things, has a profound biblical and theological anchor in the Christian faith--- hence the confession of the sovereignty and kingship of God over all the universe. In the Nicene-Constantinople creed, the Church solemnly proclaims the omnipresence of God the Father over all things visible and invisible: « *Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibillum omnium et invisibilium.* »

At the same time, if we wish to uncover the depth of this profession of faith of the Church, we must go further. Let us remember the words of the gospel of John (1,18): “No

one has ever seen God; the Only-Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made Him known.” Therefore, to access the mystery of the Kingdom of God we must think of Jesus of Nazareth.

Let us reflect on the moment when Pilate interrogates Jesus, in the gospel of John. Pilate addresses Jesus and asks: “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus responds: “My kingdom is not of this world. (. . .) You say that I am a king. I was born and came into this world to testify to the truth.” (Jn 18, 37-38) In this affirmation, one must grasp what is essential in the characterization of the kingship of Jesus of Nazareth. As Jesus said, the kingdom of this world is not like the kingdom of God, he affirmed that his kingdom was not of this world. We must understand that the kingship of God is very paradoxical in our eyes. Jesus established his royalty by a means that is beyond the common sense of men.

In the history of man, to show the power of royalty, one must show sufficient force over others, and one must crush others to show that we are superior to others. The royalty of Jesus does not work that way. His royalty mobilizes a movement the most profound in our hearts and in our spirits.

The ultimate Word of Jesus on the Cross as a foundation

The royalty of Jesus appeared as a paradoxical reality that surpasses human nature and challenges our



most profound liberty. In the Christian faith, the supreme moment of the work of the redemption of Christ is the cross. That is why the foretaste of his Kingdom can only be manifested in and through the cross of Christ. It is in this sense that the power of his kingship is manifested in the weakness of the cross.

If, with the eyes of faith, we accept to see the raising of the cross as the ultimate moment of Christ's Reign, we must consider the worth of his words spoken on the cross: "Jesus therefore, seeing his mother, and standing by her, the disciple whom he loved, said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'This is your mother.'" From that hour the disciple welcomed her into his home." (Jn 19, 26-27) Jesus himself entrusts Mary to us as mother so that, as disciples of the Lord, we may welcome her into our homes. Like this motto of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort: "Ad Jesum per Mariam", this path was recommended by many saints and theologians. This spirituality is not something ancient and obsolete. In this sense, we can understand this statement of the theologians: "The veneration of Mary is the most certain and quickest means to get closer to Christ."¹ There is no doubt that the Mother of God helps us to get to Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior and Mediator.

Following the interpretations of the Fathers, we know that "the disciple well-loved" represents all the disciples of Christ, and in some way, represents all of humanity. The universe is invited to accept the final words of Jesus "Behold your mother!" From now on, we must see how

Mary's life, in a more systematic way, as a witness to the reign of Jesus Christ. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we wish to share these simple meditations in contemplating the figure of Mary. We see the figure of the Virgin Mary as a figure of charity, of humility, and of communion.

The figure of the Virgin Mary as witness to the coming of the Kingdom

The Virgin Mary is a figure of true love. Her whole life can be summed up in this way: love for God and love for the future. Throughout her life, she contemplated and welcomed the Word of God that had taken on life. She followed the Redeemer until the end to the foot of the cross. With charity, she went through the trials of humanity in this life: she spoke her "yes" in the mystery of the Incarnation, she praised the wonders that God gave her in life; she kept all the events in her heart and meditated on them (cf. Lc 2,19; 2, 51). In the story of the wedding feast of Cana, Mary shows her intercessory role: she notices the lack of wine and, by her action, directly intervenes in the fulfillment of a sign (cf. Jn 2,3)² Mary thus commits herself to this New Covenant that is being made with the guests at the wedding: "Do all that he tells you." (Jn 2, 5). She recognized the night of faith; she certainly did not understand everything behind the mysteries which were beyond her. She walked by groping, by hesitating, for love of God.

The Virgin Mary is a *humble servant of the Lord*. Her humility can always inspire us in our lives. In relationships and

dialogue, we should possess the virtues of Mary. If the mystery of the Incarnation is beyond our human intelligence, it is a mystery of our Christian faith that cannot be invented by human intelligence or by calculation. We acknowledge the God who made himself a child: he came not only for the just or those well off, but for the sick and the sinners. The humility of Mary allowed God's plan to be fully realized: "Let it be done unto me according to your word." (Lc 1, 38). We can adopt Mary's attitude that accepted the will of God, holding close to her heart the Word of God and contemplating the face of her son. The magisterium, the Church Fathers and the theologians, are not finished delving into the mystery of God and man. We will never be finished uncovering its depth. That is why we need to remain humble like Mary and attentive to others and to the poor.

Mary is the *mother of communion* in the plan of humanity, since she welcomed the Word of God in faith as the person representing the whole of humanity. The Church Fathers often compare Eve, as mother of the living, and Mary as the mother of the New Covenant. "The knot caused by Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve had tied by her disbelief, the Virgin Mary untied with her faith."³ The knot caused by Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; she is part of our race, of our humanity; she encourages us on the right path. As Karl Rahner says simply: "Mary is on our side. We revere her, we praise her, we love and venerate her magnificent dignity. We need to return to her as mediator toward Jesus Christ, as she



is still one of us.”⁴

In our many Marian shrines (such as Lourdes), we see that pilgrimages are not solely centered on the figure of Mary : these shrines are authentically Christocentric. The men and women who come to the Marian shrines, as they experience the pilgrimage, discover the depth of the mystery of Jesus Christ, embedded in the mystery of the Trinity. These are places of the utmost evangelization. They are also place of dialogue with unbelievers, those of other faiths, and those with other convictions. For this reason, the Virgin Mary is not a source of separation or division but rather a source of communion.

Epilogue

In beginning this text, I asked the question: is there a particular relationship between the Kingdom of God and the person of the Virgin Mary? It is true that the doctrine of the omnipotence of God is not easy to understand in a natural way. In fact, in order to access the sovereignty and kingship of God, one would have to observe the very figure of Jesus of Nazareth in connection with the presence of the Virgin Mary.

In his dialogue with Pilate, Jesus shows the paradoxical as-

pect of his reign: « *My kingdom is not of this world.*” *We should not stop with this affirmation. The gift of the Holy Spirit that rests in our hearts calls us to an intimate freedom.* « The love of God has been expanded in our hearts by the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Rm 5, 5) In our inmost hearts, we are invited to contemplate the most crucial moment of human history: the sovereignty and the royalty of the cross. The visible link up until the moment of the redemption is the work of the cross, when Jesus gave himself up totally to the will of the Sovereign God. It is by the cross and on the cross that the kingdom of God expands.⁵ It is because of the words of Jesus on the Cross to John and his mother have a degree of such importance compared to other passages of the Bible. They allow us to contemplate and re-read the figure of Mary as a figure of charity, humility and communion.

Throughout her life, Mary shows us what the style of the workers of the Reign of God should be. She thus becomes a witness to the coming of the Reign of Christ which was established, once and for all, by “the wood of the cross”.⁶

Fr. Vianney KIM Myoung-Ho
(Cachan, France)

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, *Marie, première Église*, Médiaspaul, 1998, p. 121.

² John-Paul II developed the role of the mediation of Mary in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*. Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger continue with the same premise in *Marie, première Église*. It is clear that Jesus Christ is the Single Mediator (cf. 1 Tm 2,5). At the same time, John Paul II emphasizes the originality of this mediation of Jesus, which is not exclusive but inclusive, that is, it makes possible forms of participation. The unique originality of Christ does not exclude solidarity, the participation and communion of men and women of God. The mediation of Mary lies in her participation to Christ’s mediating function (cf. *Redemptoris Mater* 38). This mediation participates and depends on the unique mediation of Christ. Mary continues to intercede for us to Jesus, her only Son.

³ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*. quoted in *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

⁴ Karl Rahner, *Marie mère du Seigneur*, Éd. de l’Orante, 1960, p. 52.

⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar developed this idea in his trilogy, especially in *La Gloire et la Croix III, Les Aspects esthétiques de la Révélation* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1990), pp. 214-215.

⁶ The idea of the extension of God’s reign through «the wood of the cross» was developed by St. Augustine in the *Enarrationes in psalmos*, Discourses on Psalm 95.

Father d'Alzon: love of the universal Church and fidelity to the local Church

The saintly figure of our founder gives meaning to our mission in the service of the dioceses and guides our own way of animating the parishes. In the preparation of our chapters, his evocation helps us to discern our apostolic orientations.

Unwavering obedience to his bishop.

While wondering what he would do when he returned to Nîmes, the young Abbé Emmanuel d'Alzon wrote to Abbé Vernières, a priest he had known at the seminary in Montpellier and whose zeal he admired:

“My only plan is to go, when I arrive in Nîmes, to the bishop and explain my ideas to him: if he approves, to follow them; if not, to do what he tells me. I can have my own opinions, which I support as opinions, but I don't think there is a safer path than that of obedience, and that is the one I am determined to follow.” (March 24, 1835)

There was nothing to direct him *a priori* towards a parish ministry, for which he felt no attraction. And, as he says, he does not recognize any disposition to “vicarage”. At the same time, he does not want to be a vagabond priest, independent of any link with his confreres or his diocese of origin. But he also thinks that there are many ways to be a priest. Those he has consulted have very different ideas about his future and his ministry.

Father Vernières would like to see him as a missionary in the Protestant countryside. The Jesuits of Saint-Eusebius advised him to preach. And Cardinal Micara asked him to continue his studies to become a seminary professor. “None of them committed me to being a curate or a parish priest,” he confided to his mother. Professor at the seminary, taking the time to acquire a little more science and experience in order to work later on for the “*conversion of the Protestants*”, such is finally the project that he exposes to his sister on May 9, 1835:

“If my bishop consults me, here is what I

am determined to ask him. I would like him to allow me to dedicate myself especially to the conversion of the Protestants, but this task, I do not envisage it like Mr. Vernières... I would like to establish my headquarters in Nîmes, to ask the bishop for a room in his seminary, and, to make myself useful, to be allowed to teach a course (...): it would be Sacred Scripture, Ecclesiastical History, the Holy Fathers, or anything similar. During this time, I would prepare myself by other studies for lectures which I could then give in Protestant countries, with more success than if I were to launch myself into the struggle...”

Disinterested despite early responsibilities

The young Abbé d'Alzon left Rome on 19 May 1835 and took advantage of his return trip to visit Northern Italy. He did not arrive in Lavagnac until early July. He was still there when Bishop de Chaffoy named him honorary vicar general and created him a canon on 8 November 1835. (1) So things went very quickly.

His friend La Gournerie was surprised at his choice of the diocese of Nîmes, whose bishop had opposed Lamennais. But he adds an eloquent comment: “*Your submissive obedience to all his wishes can only give him a perfect idea of your feelings and your character.*” By abandoning Montpellier or Paris, D'Alzon shows that he is disinterested and free of all worldly ambition. For a long time now, he has sacrificed “*his future full of promises according to the world*”. And above all, he already feels sufficiently “*honored by his vocation*”(2). With the generos- ▶

ity and faith that animate him, he perceives the grace that God has given him by calling him to his service. He did not aspire to any other recognition. Nine years later, he vowed to renounce all ecclesiastical dignity and refused the episcopate several times.

He never deserved the attack of a vicar of the cathedral, who saw fit to denounce in his presence *“the scandal of the ambitious who were invading the sanctuary and usurping ecclesiastical honors. D’Alzon called his attack “a pistol shot in the back”*, but he reacted with all the virtue necessary and held no grudge against him. He even chose him as a collaborator in one of his works.



Mgr Claude-François-Marie-Petit-Benoit de Chaffoy

Participating in the renewal of the diocese of Nîmes

What attracted the young Abbé d’Alzon to Nîmes was the state of the diocese in the fall of 1835. After having been attached to Avignon for 16 years, the dio-

cese of Nîmes was re-established in 1817 but was without a seminary. (3) Seventy parishes lacked a parish priest, and almost none had a vicar. Appointed bishop in August 1817, Bishop de Chaffoy could not be consecrated until October 1821. And when he finally entered his house on the evening of December 18, he had the unpleasant surprise of finding that the prefect was giving a ball in the bishop’s palace!

Everything had to be rebuilt. The new bishop worked at it with an energy that could not leave the young D’Alzon indifferent. In a few years, Bishop de Chaffoy rebuilt the diocesan chapter, laid the foundation stone of the major seminary in Nîmes and the minor seminary in Beaucaire. He imposed a single breviary and missal, and created a Nîmes ritual in order to unify the clergy from four different dioceses. He invited all priests to an annual retreat. He created a solidarity fund for priests who had retired from the ministry - an attention that Abbé d’Alzon would emphasize in his eulogy. He relaunched catechism programs for children and adults. He traveled several times throughout his vast and mountainous diocese and never ceased to rekindle the piety of his flock or to rekindle the zeal of his pastors.

A dynamism and creativity that go far beyond the parish

Nîmes was also the place where the second Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Society was created. The lay charity, presided over by Bailly, had just been founded in Paris in May 1833. Ozanam, along with six students, was among the co-founders. At the end of the meeting on June 10,

1834, Ozanam introduced one of his former comrades, Léonce Curnier, from Nîmes. He had come to share his desire to found *“a meeting of young people, similar in every way to the one in the capital”*. At the meeting of 10 February 1835 - even before D’Alzon’s arrival in Nîmes and the opening of a second conference in Paris - Ozanam read a letter from Curnier announcing the birth of a Saint Vincent conference in Nîmes. This was officially approved by Bishop de Chaffoy on March 29, 1835. Such an initiative gave the founders the idea of spreading the conference widely, with the prosperity that we know today.

From 21 to 23 September 1835, a diocesan synod was held, prepared at length and in detail by Bishop Chaffoy. This dynamism could not but attract the young Abbé d’Alzon. The diocese of Nîmes met his deepest aspirations. It was a perfect match for his apostolic zeal.

His plans

Unfortunately, Bishop de Chaffoy did not accept his plan to convert the Protestants. At first disappointed by this refusal, D’Alzon abandoned it with humility and abnegation. He was even pleased when he realized that the project was premature. A great admirer of Teresa of Avila, he dreamed of establishing a convent of Carmelite nuns whose prayer would support the apostolic work of the diocese. But here again, the bishop was reluctant. What remained was his educational project, which was undoubtedly the work towards which Providence wished to direct him.

Since he did not yet have any educational institutions of his

own - there were already many schools in the department, with a total of 29,017 students in 1837 - Abbé d'Alzon was first in charge of the catechism. He taught every Sunday after Vespers in the chapel of the Collège Royal. There, students from the main schools in Nîmes gathered. In addition to the young people, many adults participate in the sessions. After reading and explaining the Gospel, D'Alzon asks questions and engages in dialogue with the audience. And he concludes the meeting with an address, all "with a remarkable spirit".

One of Fr. d'Alzon's notebooks is entitled "Instructional Course for the Catechism of Perseverance of Nîmes. It begins on 10 January 1836. Simeon Vailhé specifies its content:

"The first four sermons, of which we have only a few notes, have to do with the necessity of preserving the gift of faith, with indifference in religious matters, with the necessity and certainty of revelation, and finally with the necessity of a Church that says where the word of God is and that interprets it." (4)

Fr. d'Alzon seeks here to fill the gaps in religious instruction of his contemporaries. He does this for children, whom such a statement is probably a bit too much for, but especially for young people. He foresees them becoming apostles or future leaders in fields as varied as teaching, literature or administration. Through his instructions, he gave birth to many vocations, lay or religious, and formed personalities attached to the truths of the faith. Let us mention Father Barnouin, founder of the parish of Saint-François-de-Sales or Father Goiffon, future vicar general.

Evangelizing and edifying young people

The young Father d'Alzon also took charge of the Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague Society, which brought together children between the ages of 10 and 15 from the wealthiest families of Nîmes. Its goal was to prepare them for First Communion and to help them persevere in the faith. Canon Falguières and the banker Peyries recounted how he led their group:

"When we went to him, we found a welcome, an interest that cannot be said. He would tell us stories, he would cheer us up, he would play with us (...), he would declare [to his old cook] that he would take his meals among us, and he did it with a charming simplicity. We were, from the beginning, at least twenty or so."

Peyries adds:

"We loved him madly (...) he gave us instructions, but so pleasant, so full of life (...) without anyone finding that it was too long. He gave us advice that was so practical, so simple, and that went down so well that we benefited more from it for the rest of our lives than from many sermons." (5)

The Society of St. Stanislaus had the same goal, but appealed to children of a more modest class. For a time, it shared the instructions given at the chapel, at a time when social mixing was still unheard of. The two associations merged in 1847 in the Œuvre de la jeunesse, which was passed on to Father Argaud [read the history of this work in AA Info n°s 10 and 11].

Catechism lessons and patronage allowed Fr. d'Alzon to reach a large part of the Catholic youth: "I am more or less in charge of all the children of Nîmes, from

twelve to fifteen years old," he wrote to his friend D'Esgrigny in December 1837. "With time I can hope to extend my influence over more advanced ones." He had understood that the children of today were the youth of tomorrow and a promise of renewal for the diocese.

A typical day for Fr. d'Alzon

Marie-Eugénie de Jésus tells us that he always got up early in the morning. He celebrates his first Mass at the cathedral around 5:00 a.m. - "the Mass of the cooks and workers," he said with a laugh. He then went to the confessional, returning there regularly during the day and sometimes even in the evening until 11 pm! The penitents appreciated the discretion of "those hours when no one saw them". For his part, Fr. d'Alzon feels "exhilarated to have breathed the human breath for so long." Pope Francis evokes rather "the smell of the sheep".

After morning confessions, he returned to his home around 9:00 a.m. and had some chocolate. Then he returned to the cathedral for the choir service and high mass. In his comings and goings, he walks with a quick step and often "watch in hand". It is said that he did not always stop at the church door, "which he could run through like a hurricane." All his life, D'Alzon was a model of exactitude. He began the service or mass at the minute and observed this discipline for each of his engagements. In the late afternoon, he attended Vespers at the cathedral chapter.

The remaining time is devoted to study. He read a lot and quickly: "He read two volumes in one hour", according to his friend Father Tesson, who prob-

ably exaggerates a little. (6) He slept an average of five hours a night, sometimes less if necessary but never more than six, according to his personal rules of life written in December 1845. Since he did not yet live in a community or at the college, he allowed himself to eat breakfast in a few minutes and could not avoid stomach aches. He eats only one meal a day, apart from chocolate in the morning and a light snack (herbal tea and salad) in the early evening. But when he received guests, his table became rich and abundant, the surplus immediately going “to a poor house”.

Charity and closeness to one and all

On this theme of charity, Fr. Emmanuel Bailly recounted the interesting testimony of a “good old woman, a long-time vendor at the Halles” in Nîmes:

“Ah! that one, he looked at the poor. We lost our best friend. He never refused. He was cheated worse than the good Lord. But it’s equal, there was no heart like him, nor a head either. What a head! With that, he was not proud. Oh, how good he was, how charitable. When we performed plays at his young people’s home, he asked us for our animals, donkeys, dogs, which we could not refuse him. When I have a problem, a sorrow, I pray to him, I say a rosary while thinking of him, and my good Mr. d’Alzon helps me and protects me.” (7)

Father d’Alzon gave everything. And he was loved by everyone in Nîmes, from the upper classes to the poorest. But sometimes he also gave too much: “Mr. Abbé would give his shoe if we weren’t there,” said



Les Halles, Nîmes, 1910

his servant, who was sometimes obliged to borrow from the shopkeepers on the rue de l’Arc-du-Gras where he had his own shop.

Preaching, retreats, conferences

We have the originals of the “Rule of the Associates” and the “Rule of the Religious”, established the day after the entry into the postulancy (1845). Both reveal Fr. d’Alzon’s goal in founding his institute. This goal is also found at the head of the First Constitutions, insisting “on the good understanding that must always reign between the secular clergy and the religious” and warning “of the sacrifices that must be made, if necessary, so that this fraternal harmony may never be disturbed.”

Our Founder enumerates the works destined to extend the reign of Our Lord: “teaching; the publication of books that can help in teaching; works of charity, by which we can prepare children for the fulfillment of their duties as Christians in the world and for the reconciliation of the poor classes with the rich classes; the retreats that we will give, either in our houses

or outside, whenever this kind of work will not cause too serious inconvenience” - and then are mentioned “foreign missions and works for the destruction of schism and heresy”.

It is also specified that “we will not take on external works, such as preaching, confessions and others, unless we are sure of being agreeable to the members of the secular clergy, under whose jurisdiction we would be placed to accomplish them. “In this spirit of collaboration and fidelity to the local Church, “we will strive to inspire in the children entrusted to our care feelings of respect and affection for their pastors and an understanding of their duties as parishioners.” (8)

Having recalled this framework, which allows us to understand Fr. d’Alzon’s state of mind and purpose when he taught or preached, let us emphasize that he was an admirable speaker and a sought-after preacher. Simeon Vailhé writes: “Preaching was not an accident in his life, but one of his essential works, almost a daily task. To pass over it in silence would be to truncate his history, to deprive his apos-

tolate of one of its principal ornaments.” (9) And the bishop of Poitiers, Bishop Pie, praised him thus at the end of a pastoral retreat:

“Gentlemen, until now I had heard the chivalrous eloquence of the gentleman, the ardent eloquence of the tribune, the unction-filled eloquence of the sacred orator, the simple eloquence of the orator, the magisterial eloquence of the bishop; these days I heard them all at once, and they shone out in turn and in abundance in the word of the one who preached to you and who unites them all.” (10)

A talent for speaking in the service of unity

Behind this apparent ease, there is an enormous amount of reading and long hours of study and meditation. D’Alzon is capable of taking risks, of leaving his “comfort zone” especially when he addresses Protestants to encourage their “conversion”. He obtained permission from the Holy See to read the Reformed authors in order to reach the audience on its own ground. He took the time to assimilate their knowledge of the Scriptures, their doctrine and their understanding of ministries. In his mission, he did inculturation work long before the concept was clearly articulated by the Church.

Starting in December 1853, Fr. d’Alzon began a series of conferences on Protestantism every Monday at the cathedral in Nîmes. The bishop, Bishop Cart, who had become pusillanimous because of his illness, was not in favor of the conferences, either in form or in content. He did not attend even once. But D’Alzon quickly managed to overturn

the prejudices of the bishop, the clergy and the good society of Nîmes: the speaker proved to be “less aggressive than the public rumor had led one to believe.” 40 priests were present at the conference of January 9, 1854 and nearly 600 Protestants listened to the one of January 23. Invited by Fr. d’Alzon, they overcame their reluctance to enter a Catholic church well beyond his expectations.

About these conferences, we have the testimony of Fr. d’Alzon himself in a letter to Marie Eugénie dated 31 December 1853. In particular, she recounts the amusing statement of one of his admirers:

“I am frightened of the turn that the conferences on Protestants can take. The Catholics (the people) are enthusiastic. One woman, not knowing what to say, said she would sit on a fork to hear me. Note that it is not my eloquence that is in question here, but the subjects treated. The ministers themselves come to hear me. The lukewarm Catholics murmur that their peace of mind is being disturbed. Pray to God that I may be an apostle.”

Love for the mission, inseparable from love for Christ and his Church

The young Emmanuel d’Alzon explained candidly why he became a priest. For him, the mission is inseparable from the love of Christ and the Church:

“I became a priest, it seems to me at least, for others as much as for myself. It was the desire to glorify God, by bringing to him as many lost people as I could: it was the desire to pour a little balm on the wounds of this poor humanity, which drove me to the altar where I thought I would

find a remedy. But I went up to the altar only on condition that I come down from it to mingle with society and have the little influence on it that I am capable of.” (11)

There were many talents and zeal in Emmanuel d’Alzon’s personality and also many ways of being a priest in his life as an apostle. His commitment to the local Church and his fidelity to the diocese of Nîmes was far-reaching and went far beyond the realm of worship and the boundaries of the parish. Our founder already dreamed of apostolic communities.

Father Vincent Leclercq,
Postulator

- 1) He would not become Vicar General until March 1939.
- 2) Siméon Vailhé, *Vie du Père Emmanuel d’Alzon*. Paris, 1926. Volume 1, p. 97.
- 3) The concordat of 1801 suppressed the diocese of Nîmes and attached it to that of Avignon. In 1817, it was re-established and its jurisdiction was even extended to the entire department of the Gard and absorbed the former dioceses of Uzès and Alès as well as some parishes of the archdiocese of Arles.
- 4) Vailhé, op. cit., T. 1 p. 102
- 5) Vailhé, op. cit., T. 1 p. 103.
- 6) Ibidem, T. 1 p. 126.
- 7) Ibid, T. 1 p. 112
- 8) Ibid, T. 1 p. 169-170.
- 9) Ibid, T. 2 p 68.
- 10) Ibid, T. 2 p.7
- 11) Letter of Fr. d’Alzon, volume A, p. 778 to D’Esgrigny, 18 January 1835 in Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, *Nouvelle chronologie du P. d’Alzon, de sa vie, de ses écrits e de ses principales biographies*, Cahiers du Bicentenaire d’Alzon 2010 n° 10, p. 60.

Four new Assumptionist doctors

The Congregation's policy of specialized studies is bearing fruit, with several religious having completed their theology or philosophy theses during the past academic year.

On June 17, 2022, Father Jérôme Kasereka Masumbuko Kombi defended his doctoral thesis in liturgy at the Pontifical University of Saint Anselm in Rome. His research was on *“The conciliar liturgical adaptation and its application in the Roman Missal for the dioceses of Zaire. Sources, Analysis, Evaluation.”* It shows that in application of the principles of liturgical inculturation enunciated by Vatican II, the particular Church of the Congo (then Zaire) developed a liturgical inculturation project that led to the Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire, approved in 1988. Among the contributions of this missal: the more active participation of the faithful in the liturgy, a language close to African cultures and an African symbolism. The Roman Missal for the dioceses of Zaire is a successful model of liturgical inculturation, for it observes the principles established by the Council Fathers in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and in post-conciliar magisterial documents. However, this effort of liturgical inculturation in Congo is still a work in progress.

In addition, on June 22, 2022, two Assumptionists from East Africa defended their theses, this time in philosophy, at the Catholic University (CUEA) in Nairobi, Kenya. Charles Kasereka Muvunga, on *“The mystery of reality in Maurice Merleau-Ponty:*



Fr. Jerome Masumbuko, surrounded by his thesis jury.

a phenomenological approach to knowledge. “ He explained that human beings are capable of acquiring philosophical knowledge, but this knowledge is not absolute because reality is inexhaustible, and therefore mysterious. Human knowledge, always acquired progressively, is never total. A fundamental question remains: according to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, how and to what extent is human knowledge acquired? Our colleague's work answers this question in four chapters: he establishes that reality is a mystery and suggests that “mystery” should belong lexically to the epistemological discipline.

On that same day, Father Zacharie Wasukudi Kahindo defended his thesis, entitled *“Chaim Perelman's conception of rhetoric: A philosophy of dialogue”*. His research, developed over five chapters, shows that according to Chaim Perelman, the old or classical rhetoric leads to a “one-way” communication, while the new or Perelmanian rhetoric leads to a “two-way” communication or

communication proper. He then explains how the new rhetoric is different from classical rhetoric: it is that the Perelmanian conception defines man as a communal and relational being, on a basis of intersubjectivity and complementarity.

As for Fr. Iulian Dancă, it was already on October 16 that he defended in Sibiu (Romania) his doctoral thesis in theology, entitled *“The apophatic experience of unity in the work of André Scrima.”* In it, he demonstrates that apophaticism seems to be a door that does not threaten and that can allow an adequate understanding of the ecumenical theology present in the work of this Orthodox theologian. With such a thought, Fr. Scrima was looking for a path of encounter between the Eastern and Western Christian traditions.

We congratulate and thank our four brothers for their success, and wish them a fruitful journey in the understanding of the faith!

Father Dalmon KATEMBO
KAMERA
(Rome)

Writings from many different locations

We are sometimes asked if we continue to study in the Assumption. . . It is a fact that we publish often! Here is a quick synopsis of works recently received in Rome

African writings

Several Congolese religious have written works of various lengths and themes:

- Fr. **Oswald Lusenge Linalyogha** published *Cultiver l'humain. Une approche philosophique de l'éducation*, an overview of his reflection and assignment in Kinshasa (Ed. Patristique.org, 453 p., 30 €).

- Fr. **Omer Kamate Kasyakulu** wrote *Pour un journalisme des sujets sociaux*, in which he outlines his convictions as a specialist in communication, as a teacher at UAC of Butembo (Ed. Ishango, 163 p.)

- Fr. **Sadiki Kambale Kya-vumba** addresses *L'Honneur. Clé d'interprétation biblique*, which is the subject of his master's thesis in theology obtained in Québec. (L'Harmattan, 211 p., 21,50 €).

Lent---North America

Two Assumptionists from the same Province, after having published Lenten meditations on-line, have assembled them to give them a new life and a new audience:

First, the Provincial, **Fr. Dennis Gallagher**, invites us on a spiritual journey with essays for everyday life combined in *Thy Kingdom come. A Lenten Journey* (Creative Communications for the Parish, 48 p.).

Fr. Chi Ai Nguyen, a Vietnamese religious teaching at Assumption University in Worcester, has prepared a more in-depth journey

nourished by the Bible, with his publication *A Delightful Lenten Journey* (Bayard Vietnam, 333 p.).

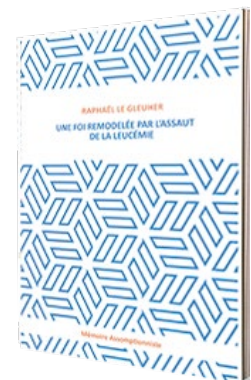
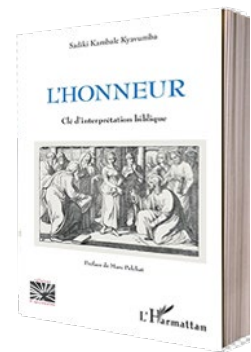
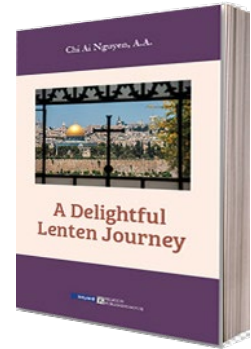
Stories of France and Europe

The community of Valpré, at Écully, recently celebrated its 50th anniversary as a Reception Center following its original period as a scholasticate: this jubilee was marked by a book with many varieties of entries and endorsements that evokes this significant history and reveals stimulating perspectives. The book, *Valpré, à livre ouvert. 50 ans passés, 50 ans à venir* (Bayard Service, 99 p., 15 €) includes a small, resourceful booklet on the chapel at Valpré.

Additionally, the collection **Mémoire assomptionniste** of the Province of Europe, of which readers of *AA Info* are well acquainted, is enriched by two new titles:

- The letters of Fr. Raphaël Le Gleuher, his heartbreaking testimony facing cancer, edited by Fr. Claude Maréchal: *Une foi remodelée par l'assaut de la leucémie* (39 p.).

- Completing the history published by Polyeucte Guissard in 1954, Fr. Patrick Zago presents an update, *Au temps des alumnats* (126 p.).



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Our Deceased Brothers



† **Brother Emmanuel**

ABARNOU, of the Layrac community (Province of Europe), passed away on June 23, 2022, in Layrac, France. His funeral was celebrated on June 27 in the chapel of Prieuré followed by burial in the local cemetery. He was 90 years of age.