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Closing remarks CGP #1

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I remember listening to someone say that closing remarks at the end of a session or other meeting should be a motivating word for movement towards something, not an impression of having finished. We don't need to say it. You know it, and I know you feel it now.

It's true that we've finished approving the first apostolic appointments, the accreditation of formators; we've decided on the locations and dates for the next CGP meetings, we've approved the amounts for interprovincial solidarity for the year 2024 and the budget of the Generalate and other finance-related decisions.

It wasn't just a question of formalities, because behind these authorizations and approvals are projects for communities, people, and territories. We give thanks to God for this, and many thanks to you, too, for the fraternal atmosphere in which it all took place.

Ten days wasn't enough to go a bit further or in depth. I would have liked us to have taken the time to go deeper into all the themes of the chapter. Especially the four that had been the subject of an orientation text, and here I mention: fraternity, holiness, mission, and formation.

It's not too late. Perhaps for future CGPs we'll come back to these themes - and if need be, with the help of a facilitator - one theme per CGP, for greater depth and appropriation.

This is perhaps another argument in favor of the reflection we need to continue on the functioning of the CGP. This first moment of exchange will enable us to make decisions that will allow us to improve the performance of this governing and learning body, whose importance has not yet been questioned.

Father Emmanuel d'Alzon ended his closing address to the 1868 chapter with these words: "*Let us therefore pursue our goal with joy and confidence, and thus merit, after having worked to increase the kingdom of God on earth, to enjoy it in heaven for eternity.*" (E.S p. 146) I couldn't wish you better: joy and confidence. Confidence in God, because He is the master of the worksite, but also confidence in yourself and in others.

I ask you to be the first protagonists of this movement (with joy and confidence) in your Provinces. Responses to the call to fraternity, holiness, mission and formation, as to the other calls of the General Chapter, will perhaps be slow in coming. And it is at that point that we must courageously continue our walk towards the future. Yes, it takes audacity to hope.

This CGP, which was the first of our mandate, adds to the reflections already initiated in your Provinces. This CGP is perhaps most distinctive in that it demonstrates our effort to discern God's will together, as a body, by pooling ideas, initiatives and experiences that may be useful for the life and mission of our Congregation.

We may have talked a lot. But the 1999 General Chapter already warned us against this temptation, saying, "*life before words; heart before pen; conversion before formulas.*" #2. Thanks, because at least we had time to listen to each other.

The discussions that have taken place show us that we're on the right track. But we must be open to suggestions and initiatives if we are to continue. We have all made an effort to ensure that discussions take place in a healthy and respectful climate. I sincerely thank you for that. Because that's what the synodal spirit is all about: giving a voice even to those who don't seem to have any expertise in the subject. Experts or not, we have - or better still, we should have - the same concerns for our Congregation.

And the decisions we take will have to be oriented towards these same concerns, that is to say: the unity of the body in solidarity at all levels; fidelity to our Founder, to the spirit of the Assumption, to Assumptionist values, and finally a mobilization for life and mission in listening to the Spirit. We're not going to start from scratch; things have been done before us, and for that we must give thanks to God.

It's true, the situation seems difficult at the moment. But, as you know and as we often say, "the more difficult the conditions, the more daring is needed".

We couldn't finish everything. We'll have other CGPs to continue what we've started so well. Work now needs to be done at provincial level to finalize the composition and start the work of the various commissions and working groups that are already beginning to be set up. As CGO, it will be our duty to remain vigilant to ensure that this happens. Here again, we'll need good and regular communication.

We agreed on a number of sessions to be held over the next six years. During the discussions, I was pleased to note your interest and even your desire to see some of these sessions held without delay. So, we're on the right track. Everyone is called upon to put their little stone on the table to ensure the success of these sessions.

Before we go our separate ways, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone once again for all you've been and all you've done. A big thank you to brothers Milad and Miguel for the simultaneous translation service, provided out of love for the Assumption. I know that if we call on you again tomorrow, you'll do the same.

Thanks also to our Sisters, who sacrificed their days off to be of service. The brothers of the Generalate were also available. Our thanks to them.

To our brothers Father Yves Kaghoma (Provincial of Africa) and Father Luiz Gonzaga (Provincial of Brazil), who will probably not be with us at the next CGP: I would simply like to express once again my gratitude on behalf of this assembly for the service you have rendered. I am convinced that it was truly out of love for Christ and to extend his Kingdom that you accepted this service for 6 years for Yves and 9 years for Luiz Gonzaga. Thank you very much indeed. And I believe that it is with this same spirit that you will soon accept the new missions you will receive.

We already know where we'll be meeting next (in the province of North America). It will be an opportunity for us to discover the life and mission of our brothers there. So please start preparing for it. We too, at the CGO, will do our part.

If you haven't already heard, I'd like to inform you that from January 3 to 7 next year (just a few weeks away), the CGO will be training in Lyon (France). And it's with a view to continuing to learn in order to do better that we're going. And at the end of the session, we've decided to visit Nîmes.

Brothers, I can think of no better way to end these words than to repeat those of our Founder who, at the end of a General Chapter, gave a missionary kick-off to his brothers by reminding them of the essential: unity. He said: "*Now, my Fathers and Brothers, our work is done; let us bless God for having inspired us with these unanimous views, these energetic resolutions which we all promise to develop and maintain with fervour and intelligence. Let us always have for one another that affection of true religious, based on respect and the need to hold each other tightly; let us form but one body in the sincerity of our souls and the loyal frankness of our relations; may our indissoluble bond be Jesus Christ.*" (E.S. p. 146). With these words, I declare closed the 1^{ère} session of the CGP for this mandate). Thank you!

Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, a.a.