

# A News of the Assumption



## EDITORIAL

### Let us dare!

*« We have the ambition to be missionaries of hope.  
Let us leave our habits, let us abandon our sterile certainties,  
let us be guided by God. Let us learn to dare! »*

# Agenda

## Plenary General Council

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

## Ordinary General Councils

n° 39 : **November 14 to 16, 2022.**

n° 40 : **December 13 to 15, 2022.**

n° 41 : **February 6 to 10, 2023.**

n° 42 : **April 17 to 21, 2023.**

## 34th General Chapter

**June 1 to 25, 2023** in Rome  
(Passionists).

## Fr. Benoît

- **September 26-October 13** : USA (canonical visit).
- **October 17-28** : France (canonical visits).
- **November 19-21** : Talks at Valpré.
- **November 23-25** : Union of Superiors General.

## Fr. Marcelo

- **October 8-17** : Chapter of the Andean Province.
- **October 17-28** : France (canonical visits).
- **January 5-14** : Chapter of the European Province.

## Br. Didier

- **October 1-10** : East Africa.
- **October 11-28** : DR-Congo.

## Fr. Thierry

- **December 22-January 15** : Chapter of the African Province.

## Fr. Miguel

- **December 15-21** : Chapter of the Vice-Province of East Africa.
- **December 22-January 7** : Chapter of the Province of Madagascar.
- **January 4-7** : Chapter of the North American Province.

## Letter from the Superior General to the Province of Africa on the 10th anniversary of the death of our three brothers



Dear Brothers, dear Sisters, dear friends of the Assumption, Our three brothers Bamtupe Kisughu Edmond, Kakule Wasukundi Anselme and Mumbere Ndulani Jean-Pierre were kidnapped 10 years ago. It is a sad anniversary. Time passes, but the memory remains. We are still without news of their fate. This silence is unbearable and yet we must continue to witness to our hope. First of all because we are Christians. We cannot resign ourselves to death and to the absurd. The lives of our brothers were given to the Lord Jesus to witness to the greatness of the Kingdom of God. They accepted, in their religious consecration, to be signs of God's love for our land. They did not choose to die, but they were ready to give witness to the end. This is their honor.

We continue to hope because we believe that hate, death and suffering will not have the last word. In Jesus Christ, evil has been defeated in a definitive way. This is the victory of the Cross, which culminates in the Resurrection.

Today, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and particularly North Kivu, is a country ravaged by atrocities, assassinations, looting, and displacement of people. The Congo is suffering and the people are also martyred. The disappearance of our three brothers, like that of Abbés Charles Kipasa and Jean-Pierre Akilimali, makes us cry out to God in distress. We all ask for peace and justice. This is our only hope: to see the children playing, to see the farmers working in their fields, to see the educators teaching.

The Assumption is at the side of all those who suffer. Our religious family does not want to forget anything, but it is destined to work for peace and reconciliation. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of the Most High. (Mt 5:9) We are in full solidarity with the People of God and we have the ambition to contribute to their happiness. The Gospel is a source of joy and renewal.

We will continue to pray for our brothers, for their families and their communities. We are sure that God will not abandon us.

May God bless all peacemakers!

Rome, October 19, 2022.

**Father Benoît GRIÈRE a.a.**  
**Superior General**



# Let us dare!



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

I have just completed the canonical visitation of the North American Province and I am happy to have met my brothers from the United States. Their fidelity to the mission touches me deeply. Despite their advancing age, they remain faithful to their post. Whether in Worcester, or in Fiskdale, our shrine to St. Anne, or in Brighton and finally in El Paso, Assumptionists are active for the Kingdom. I am reminded of the motto attributed to saint Martin of Tours: “Non recuso laborem”, which could be translated as “I do not refuse work”. This perseverance of the brothers makes me happy.

There is an example for the young and the not so young to ponder. While the congregation lacks experienced leaders, while the number of young religious is gradually increasing, the commitment of the elders is a testimony of courage and faith. I want to thank all those who are dedicated to their task and who continue to serve the Kingdom despite age and sometimes illness.

All of this makes me meditate on the audacity that we could deploy in our lives as missionary disciples. The Assumption is called to take risks to remain faithful to its vocation. The Kingdom of God is very close, so it is urgent to act for its definitive triumph. It is up to us to be actors of this Kingdom which is coming to radically transform our world.

For this, we must dare to take initiatives, even if we do not succeed immediately. I believe that we should solicit young religious much more and allow them to try new adventures in following Christ. The elders must continue to hold on, but it is important for them to know that the next generation exists and that it is generous and daring. The youth of the Assumption is not a reservoir of apostolic energy for tomorrow, it is already today a concrete dynamism. Georges Bernanos

said this, which I invite you to meditate on: “Alas! It is the fever of youth that keeps the rest of the world at normal temperature. When youth cools down, the rest of the world grinds its teeth.” At the Assumption, the fever of youth is our apostolic zeal. Emmanuel d’Alzon invited us to be bold and attentive to the present time. He wanted religious who were totally devoted and passionate for the Kingdom. Bernanos was right: it takes a burning and devouring passion to announce the Gospel. Sometimes we are lukewarm, and we know that God does not like those who are neither cold nor hot. It is good that the youth are resolutely engaged in the fight for justice and peace. Christians should not desert the world, but rather immerse themselves in it to help it discover the tenderness of God.

The next General Chapter will push us to go further in our mission. I ardently hope so. But each one of us must feel concerned about the urgency of announcing the Kingdom. Pope Francis recently said to the Redemptorists gathered in chapter, “I encourage you to dare.” He went on to say that he was exhorting them “not to remain clinging to their securities and, on the contrary, to allow themselves to be led by the renewing action of the Holy Spirit in order to become missionaries of hope, without succumbing to worldliness and egoism.”

I believe that this call is also addressed to us. We have the ambition to be missionaries of hope. For this, we must allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. I am sure that the Assumption has this deep desire within it, but it is up to each one of us to live it and to put it into practice. Let us leave our habits, let us abandon our sterile certainties, let us be guided by God. Let us learn to dare!

**Fr. Benoît GRIÈRE a.a.**  
**General Superior**

# Calls, nominations, agreements...

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

## ■ TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

- 1) **LUKALA BURU Freddy**  
(Africa) (09/08/2022)
- 2) **KABAMBA MUKENDI Marcel**  
(Africa) (09/08/2022)
- 3) **KAHUNGU TWABATWA Éphrem**  
(Africa) (09/08/2022)
- 4) **Clément LÖBEL**  
(Europe) (09/08/2022)
- 5) **Rodrigue OUEDRAOGO**  
(Africa) (09/09/2022)
- 6) **Joseph Denis RAHARISONINA**  
(Africa) (09/09/2022)
- 7) **Tojo Jean Pierrot RAKOTOARISOA**  
(Africa) (09/09/2022)
- 8) **Nathanaël TOKINOMENJANAHARY**  
(Africa) (09/09/2022)
- 9) **YAMBA YEMKOUEDOUGA Augustin**  
(Africa) (09/012/2022)
- 10) **Joseph PANAGUITON**  
(Europe) (09/12/2022)
- 11) **Ariel VIDANES**  
(Europe) (09/12/2022)
- 12) **KAMBALE MBALUTWIRANDI Lwanzo**  
(Africa) (09/12/2022)
- 13) **PALUKU VATSURANA Grâce**  
(Africa) (09/13/2022)

## ■ TO THE DIACONATE

- 1) **David BINIDI**  
(Europe) (09/13/2022)
- 2) **Pierre HỒ SỸ Cẩn**  
(Europe) (09/13/2022)
- 3) **Jean-Valère KOUWAMA**  
(Europe) (09/13/2022)
- 4) **Stéphane TRẦN QUYẾT Quyền**  
(Europe) (09/15/2022)
- 5) **Jefferson DE OLIVEIRA MARQUES**  
(Brazil) (09/15/2022)
- 6) **MUZUDI Dieu-Merci**  
(Madagascar) (09/15/2022)

7) **MATONDO Juvens**  
(Madagascar) (09/16/2022)

8) **Sambevoatse Jean Félix TONGASOA**  
(Madagascar) (09/16/2022)

9) **Mahonjo Laurent SOANANAMBINA**  
(Madagascar) (09/16/2022)

10) **KAMBALE KASAMBIYA Moïse**  
(Africa) (09/16/2022)

## ■ TO THE PRIESTHOOD

1) **Simon Pierre RABENIRINA**  
(Madagascar) (09/16/2022)

2) **Rolland RAMANANDRAIBE**  
(Madagascar) (09/19/2022)

3) **Alain Félix RAKAJIHARISON**  
(Madagascar) (09/19/2022)

4) **Léonce Edson RIRI**  
(Madagascar) (09/19/2022)

5) **Jérôme Adams TATSIDJODOUNG**  
(Europe) (09/19/2022)

6) **KIBOLOKO MFUMU-KANDA Urbain**  
(Africa) (09/20/2022)

7) **MUHINDO LUKOGHO Christophe**  
(Africa) (09/20/2022)

8) **KAMBALE SABWIRA Jean-Marie Vianney**  
(Africa) (09/20/2022)

9) **PALUKU WAYOMEKA Faustin Maurille**  
(Africa) (09/21/2022)

10) **KATEMBO SIWATHULA Anicet**  
(Africa) (09/21/2022)

11) **KATEMBO MUHATIKANI Modeste**  
(Africa) (09/21/2022)

## ■ DEPARTURE FROM THE INSTITUTE

The Holy See, as registered on July 21, 2022, granted an indult of secularization to Fr. **Daniel GARCÍA RODRÍGUEZ** (Andean Province), with a dispensation of his vows and loss of the clerical state.

The Holy See has granted an indult to leave the Institute to Fr. **Pierre-Paul Pessekoula PETCHIA** (European Province), on August 3, 2022.

# The Chapter, a necessity that has become an obligation for every religious family (Part 1)

Claude Maréchal, former Superior General, to the religious of France in formation in 2017 on the history and the stakes of this major event in the life of our congregation.



Session in assembly at the 32rd General Chapter (Rome, 2011)

**W**hy was I asked to speak to you about what the General Chapter represents in the life of a religious family? No doubt because I have had the grace of being a member of a Chapter eight times: three times as a basic religious, three times as Superior General in charge, twice as Superior General Emeritus, in accordance with our Rule of Life. Needless to say, one lives the General Chapter differently according to the office that is ours at the time: I will say a few words about it at the end of this presentation, because certain chapters have marked me more than others.

This presentation will be more a description of this supreme authority in every religious family that canon law imposes. But the obligation is not in question, so much is its necessity unanimously

perceived. If a Chapter does not bear all the fruits expected of it, it is because of a well-conducted process, but more often because of an application that leaves much to be desired.

## In the history of religious life

In fact, the General Chapter existed almost at the origin of religious life. In Egypt, in parallel to the eremitical life illustrated by Saint Anthony of the Desert, there existed the cenobitic life, privileging community life with Saint Pachomius (292-346), which very quickly included a handful of monasteries. And an annual meeting was planned for all their members.

Let us not imagine that monastic life was much regulated from the beginning. For centuries, until the birth of the mendicant orders (13th century), there was

only the monastic life, under its double eremitical or cenobitic norm. Even in the second case, there was not necessarily a written rule, not even in the monasteries founded by Saint Martin of Tours (+ 397). Each monastery was autonomous and would remain so, even when the rule of St. Benedict was widely adopted or imposed; the autonomy of the monastery was a characteristic of the monastic life where one made a commitment to stability in that place.

In the 12th century, the great annual gatherings inaugurated by the Cistercians - who were reformed Benedictines - and later by the monasteries under the obedience of the abbey of Cluny (there were up to 1,000 of them) were really the prelude to the general chapters. These will really take shape with the appearance of the mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Servants of Mary) whose double characteristic is membership in the order and mobility. In order to maintain the spirit, an annual reunion became a necessity in all apostolic orders.

This necessity was to become self-evident in the 16th century, with the appearance of orders of regular clerics, the best known of which was the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). The General Chapter was then given the mission of electing the Prefect General, who was elected for life. The periodicity and the mission of the Chapter are carefully fixed in the constitutions.

Whatever the size of the religious family, the Chapter constitutes an inescapable reality, which canon law will make an obligation (n. 631). Its mission is described as follows: to protect the patrimony of the institute; to

promote its renewal and adaptation to that patrimony; to elect the supreme moderator (in other words, the Superior General); to deal with major matters; to enact rules which all must obey.

The composition of the Chapter and the extent of its powers are defined in the constitutions of each religious institute, especially with regard to elections and the agenda of the matters to be dealt with. Moreover, each member of the Institute can freely address his wishes and suggestions to the Chapter, where they will be examined by a Chapter commission of vows, elected by the Chapter, which is the great democratic body of every religious family.

### **At the Assumption**

The mission of the General Chapter, which is also that of the Superior General, is situated in the double fidelity to the thought of the Founder and to the calls of the Church. The Chapter animates the Congregation spiritually and doctrinally, making it aware of the problems and urgent needs of our time; it coordinates the efforts of the apostolic life; it sees to the permanent adaptation of the religious and the works; it maintains the unity of spirit among the Provinces according to our common vocation.

Our Rule of Life includes 16 numbers (103 to 119) on the General Chapter, regulating its periodicity and its ordinary or extraordinary convocation in case of the death of the Superior General or of definitive incapacity, as well as its composition, the members being elected by the Provincial Chapters (representation proportional to the number of religious of the Province) and all perpetually professed being eligible.

The information of the delegates necessarily requires the reports of the Superior General and the Provincial Superiors, and another report on the activities of the Plenary Council. The conduct of the Chapter is carefully regulated. The conclusions of the matters under discussion are voted on by secret ballot and by an absolute majority of the members present. To modify an article of the Constitutions, a 2/3 majority of the votes is required. The Chapter decrees guidelines and ordinances, the latter having the force of law.

The election of the Superior General takes place at the time decided by the Chapter, which also determines the number of his assistants before designating them by vote, as well as the Vicar General chosen from among them. The General Officers - Bursar, Secretary, Procurator - are chosen immediately or later. The procedures for the election of the Superior General are clearly defined, as are his powers, which often require the decisive agreement of his Council. Visiting the Provinces is one of his obligations.

### **How the Chapter works**

The General Chapter usually lasts three weeks. It very quickly elects three moderators, a promoter, and a secretary: it is they who, with the President (who is, by right, the Superior General), really carry the Chapter from day to day. Thus, they determine the subjects to be treated, constitute Chapter commissions to deal with the selected subjects, which elaborate texts that move from commission to General Assembly until the final version is submitted to a vote. It takes quite some time before a text is fi-



nally adopted. The pace always quickens at the end, as time is short.

Most of the elected delegates who participate for the first time in a large international assembly are out of touch. Moreover, the different languages, despite simultaneous translations, constitute a real difficulty that slows down the work. Preparatory work is required to read the numerous documents sent before the opening. Unfortunately, many delegates do not do this. A well-tryed and rigorous working method is essential. Penmen - that is, brothers who write quickly and well - and thinkers are needed.

Difficult moments inevitably occur; when one does not see how to approach a given question on the agenda, how to progress in one's reflection, how to arrive at a text that makes sense... It is not only the work: the prayerful and fraternal atmosphere is the guarantee of a good Chapter. The delegates are not only the spokespersons of their Provinces; they are there for the service of the whole congregation which is not limited to the Province that sends them.

### Some memorable chapters

First, there are the Chapters carefully prepared by Fr. d'Alzon, from whom he expected much and whom he did not overwhelm with his strong personality. The closing speeches, especially the one of 1868 (Spiritual Writings), are essential documents on the spirit of the Assumption. Picard and Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, two very different men, I will not say anything about them.

The Chapter of 1923 is very particular. d'Alzon no longer al-



Three successive Superiors General: Fr. Richard Lamoureux (1999-2011), Benoît Grière (since 2011) and Claude Maréchal (1987-1999).

lowed for the election of members of a growing congregation, especially since it did not respect the norms of canon law that had become mandatory. It was a Chapter challenged by the Holy See for irregularities in the elections. There was the election of the General Superior when the delegate of the Holy See took away the bulletins and then finally appointed Fr. Gervais Quénard, who was to prove to be a great General and who was equal to his mission. His first letter to the congregation began with the words: "Peace to this house.

In 1963, the longest General Chapter in our history was held, drafting the Chapter Rules and sitting for six weeks. It was a considerable turning point, a profound updating of Assumptionist life that would change its face.

Several chapters devoted to the writing of the Rule of Life followed, a thorough work, leading to the present definitive version, approved by the Holy See. This was in response to an explicit request from Pope Paul VI

to all the existing religious families, from the smallest to the largest. Great latitude was given to modify the organization, sometimes from top to bottom, but in fidelity to the founding intuition.

The Chapters that took place from 1987 onwards were increasingly prepared at the summit and in the Council of the Congregation. They allowed us to deepen the charism of the Assumption in fidelity to Fr. d'Alzon, rediscovered in 1980 on the centenary of his death, and to define our apostolic mission in the new times. The successive titles of the General Chapters of the last decades are indicative of these orientations.

(to be continued)

P. Claude MARÉCHAL (Albertville  
- France)

Text published in ATLPE n° 16,  
February 2018

## In Madagascar, the Alliance works with the poor

Each year the Lay Assumptionists in Fianarantsoa organize days of care in orthopedics for those who are disadvantaged



Everyone wants to be happy and to live in peace in the world. This is the reason why certain individuals are constantly searching for a means to improve their conditions of daily life, from which comes the importance of health and of well-being. As it is said in a Malagasy proverb, “Ny fahasalamana no voalohan-karena”---literally: “Health is the first of all the treasures”, the priority of all the occupations. In a Christian perspective, life is sacred because it is divine, and it is our responsibility to augment it, to care for it, and to protect it.

It is in this spirit that the laity of the Alliance of Fianarantsoa, in Madagascar, work in the apostolate of health, even though they are already invested in other activities---social, liturgical, and artistic. This translates into an

activity of charity with the poor, a sign of solidarity and unity that is social and ecclesial and that is supported by the diocese. These Lay Assumptionists perform a sensibility toward the poor to facilitate surgical interventions necessary for their health. They also organize these operations.

The last of these annual days took place July 26-28 in the operating rooms of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny at Marana-Fianarantsoa. The technical aspects of these operations are limited, but they performed the following operations: hernia, appendicitis, cyst, lipoma, tonsillectomies, harelip repair, goiter, fractures, material removal, and others. This act of solidarity could not have been realized without the collaboration of the Azur Association, coming from the capital of





Antananarivo. These medications came as a donation to help with surgical procedures, that cost much less for the patients, only one tenth of the normal price of the State hospital. This comforts the families in need, for whom one hospital stay would be financially inaccessible.

It is important to note the way these social works were accomplished: in a preliminary phase, an announcement was made in all the parishes and districts, as well as on the radio, so that the people were aware and could register in advance.

The day of the operations began with a mass presided by Fr. Chrysanthe, the responsible national of the Alliance, accompanied by Fr. Parfait Elysé responsible regional. Fr. Chrysanthe exhorted the lay of the work of

practicing fraternal charity for the extension of the Kingdom of God, according to the words of Jesus: “Each time you did it for the least of my brothers, you did it for me.” (Mt 25,40)

86 patients came this year to be operated on, and one team of 12 skilled medical specialists accomplished this work. About ten members of the laity collaborated with them in different ways. We discovered during these four days a life of communion, that a real spirit of family reigned. It was a time of exchange and understanding among all. It was such a rich experience to live the character of the Assumptionists, that of a spirit of listening, simplicity, and selflessness.

After the surgeries, two Assumptionist brothers devoted one day to visit each patient; they prayed with them and gave them each words of encouragement. This was a special moment for the brothers of practicing the apostolate toward the sick and of putting into practice the words of Jesus: “I was sick and you visited me.” (Mt 25, 36)

It was a reminder that we re-

cited with all our hearts during a novena, through the intercession of Venerable Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon. It is meant to encourage our patients and their families to pray ardently so that their recuperation may be speedy and that they will return to good health. Also, for the group of doctors: that they can believe that they cooperate with God in their work and that they do not count solely on their skills and intelligence. We thank God that all the medical interventions took place in good conditions---thanks to God’s help and protection.

We thank the laity of the Alliance at Fianarantsoa who gave so much toward the realization of this noble project, in engaging in this social work that rekindled the value and dignity of each person. This work is testimony of an ecumenical spirit because people of other beliefs benefitted from this service. Lastly, this pastoral work manifested our unity with society, the Church, and our congregation for the greater glory of God.

**Fr. Parfait Elysé ANDRY NIRINA**  
(Fianarantsoa, Madagascar)



## In France, two new churches entrusted to the Assumption

Coincidence or sign of the times? Two dioceses in France have, one after the other, asked the Assumption to take charge of a church in the heart of essential cities.



Celebration in the St. Irenee church in Lyon, presided over by Fr. Rémi Clovis Kientega.

**T**he European Provincial Commission “Assumptionists in Parishes” recently recalled: “The commitment in parishes or in a pastoral ministry, that is similar to it, concerns 71 brothers on the old continent. And it recounted the conviction of a brother: “Faced with the challenges that await the Church, not having our “hands in the dirt” makes us lose credibility. Joining diocesan parish communities for occasional celebrations makes no sense when so many places suffer from not feeling supported, accompanied.”

What a beautiful coincidence, then, that two dioceses in France have offered to take charge of new parish churches: St Irénée-St Just in Lyon, and St Perpétue and Félicité in Nîmes.

### St Irénée-St Just, on the heights of Lyon

It is a dynamic parish, in a rather well-to-do and intellectual sociological context,

with a student residence of 1,000 places and many schools. At the heart of the Church of Lyon, it includes about twenty religious communities, the residence of the archbishop, the major seminary, the shrine of Fourvière and a church devoted to the Tridentine rite.

We find beautiful possibilities for a pastoral ministry there in the spirit of the Assumption: a place of pilgrimage with the shrine dedicated to St. Irenaeus in the crypt of the church; a highly ecumenical place; since last January 21, the Pope declared St. Irenaeus “Doctor of Unity” and the neighborhood of a Catholic parish of the Byzantine rite; a dynamic youth ministry and parishioners who are very sensitive to the spiritual sense of socio-economic realities, in line with the pastoral axis of our Valpré Center a few kilometers from there

There are three Assumptionist brothers who collaborate for this ministry: Fr. Remi-Clovis Kientéga, pastor, Fr. Nico-





The church of St. Perpetua - St. Felicity in Nîmes.

*that are under your tutelage [...] It is not a question of creating a parish for the Assumption establishments. But there is certainly a community around you that would like to meet you on Sundays, that wants to live its faith in the dynamic of your charism. There are also people who are discovering the Christian faith and who need to be accompanied on their journey by the brothers and sisters of the Assumption.”* “It is also, more broadly, a pastoral project of missionary presence in this place dear to Father d’Alzon. His memory must be kept alive there. It is part of the spiritual heritage of your communities and of our diocese. In the heart of the city of Nîmes, it must be accessible to all, identified and celebrated. We are very much in favor of having a chapel to recall its memory. This will help to spread the reputation of the sanctity of the Venerable Emmanuel d’Alzon.”

las Potteau, and Fr. Floribert Katembo Vuseghesa, part-time vicar. Moreover, since our formation community in Lyon-Debrousse is located on the territory of this parish, the long-standing collaboration of other Assumptionists in this area will of course continue and be strengthened, whether through the apostolic commitments of our brothers in formation or in the context of possible synergies with Valpré. A beautiful page is opening before us.

### St. Perpetua and St. Felicity, in the heart of Nîmes

What a happy surprise when the diocese of Nîmes contacted us to entrust us, together with our Oblate sisters, with the ani-

matation of the church of St. Perpetua-Ste Félicité in the center of the city. It is very close to the College where we were founded. Since the train station, the arena, and the courthouse are near, many people stop there to pray and catch their breath.

Msgr Nicolas Brouwet, the new bishop of Nîmes, explains the challenges of this mission: “Above all, it is a question of welcoming people who are passing through and of animating the Christian community that gathers there. This church deserves to be open to be a place of prayer, of listening, of proclaiming the Gospel.” “We are also thinking of your two communities, so active during the week in the educational establishments

This church is not an autonomous parish, as it is part of the “Nîmes Grand-Centre” parish complex with nine steeples. The curial responsibility is assumed by a priest of the diocese, surrounded by a team of priests, each of whom has the mission of accompanying, by a more regular presence, such and such a church. Our brothers and sisters are therefore part of this framework, with the particular mission of animating the church of St. Perpetua.

It is very fortunate that we are able to give new life to the figure of Fr. d’Alzon in Nîmes. We rejoice in the mission entrusted to us and we must be worthy of the trust placed in us.

**P. Benoît BIGARD**  
Provincial of Europe



## A Haven from the Nightmares

“We fear for our lives, and we fear for our families”  
Stories from migrants in El Paso.



Revs. Marciano López Sólis, Peter Precourt and Ronald Sibugan (1st row), with volunteers from the migrant reception center.

Migrants traveling through El Paso, Texas receive uncompromising love from many shelters, such as the one at the St. Francis Xavier Parish just 2,000 feet from the border, where Assumptionist priests have dedicated their lives to serving immigrants. Warm meals, clothing, support, and prayers from the priests, parishioners, and volunteers go a long way after the nightmares the migrants experience in their home countries.

Jairo, a middle-aged schoolteacher from Nicaragua, shared, “I feel at home here; I do. As some friends and I were just saying, for me, you are angels that God has placed on our journey, because God does not abandon anyone.”

He chose to come here because in Nicaragua, “the current gov-

ernment doesn’t respect human rights. If you’re not in favor of this government and don’t share its ideals, they mistreat you.”

This oppression causes citizens themselves to resort to evil measures. Hipolito, also from Nicaragua, told his story of how another’s desperation not only puts a life at risk but fuels the bigger problem.

“When I was 32 years old, a man tried to rob me. He hit and assaulted me, and left me with life-long injuries. He gave me thirteen machete wounds, and the man is already going to be set free from jail. My life is at risk over there, since the government is Sandinista... and since he’s sided with the government, he’ll be freed from prison soon, in order to serve the government in oppressing people.”

For every criminal walking free, a just man faces a punish-

ment even worse than what the latter would have deserved.

“If you were to speak out against the government, you’d go to jail for 12-13 years,” Hipolito explained. “And then, after doing that time, they’d take you to a prison called El Chipote, where they’d torture you, and afterward, they’d kill you. And if not, they’d let you go and after that, they’d send their own country’s military to execute you.”

Colombia’s economy also endangers the well-being of its people, which is what brought José, a young Colombian man, to the States.

“I’m here undergoing this cursed experience, to which you come prepared to suffer because it’s a story already told by family and friends. But it’s not just a story because every day, my country is getting worse and worse economically. Even if you manage to get a job, the pay is very low; one can hardly obtain food with what they earn.”

But the nightmare didn’t end as soon as they stepped out of their home countries.

“It’s very risky and difficult to get here,” Jairo said. “You have to pass through many countries, and when you get inspected by the immigration law enforcement and the cartels, some are lucky, and some are not. It’s very tiring; you travel by day and by night, and you pass through very dangerous places. So we fear for our lives, and we fear for our families.”

Compared to some colleagues who were kidnapped, robbed, and



Veronika Jaster

delayed by months, Jairo’s journey was relatively quick and not as perilous, but still traumatic.

“In my case, the most dangerous thing was traveling in a trailer. We were closed up, there wasn’t enough oxygen, it was very straining, and we had to spend twelve hours on the road,” he said. “One person suffocated and was also dehydrated.”

The officers and cartels in some countries also threaten safe passage. Jairo said that “they approach you, check you, and blackmail you, saying that the document you’ve brought isn’t valid. Then in order for you to keep going, you have to collaborate [with them].”

And the nightmare persists, even on this side of the border. Once migrants arrive, they must wait in a detention center for an indefinite amount of time. These

centers, according to Hipolito, are more like prisons.

“It took me two months to get to the States, plus the 14 days that I spent in the prisons here; well, I don’t know what you called them, but we were prisoners there,” he said.

José would agree, as he described the uncertainty to be confined.

“One terrible thing is that the future is so uncertain. You don’t know where they’re taking you,” the Columbian migrant said. “Let’s say a person is received in one place, and once he’s taken to another place, he doesn’t even know if food will arrive nor where they’ll take him. They come and wake you up at any hour of the night and we have to leave right away. So it’s literally like a dream.”

And this terrible nightmare lingers, even once they leave the detention center and arrive at their final destination.

“You’re free,” Jairo began, “but when you come here, there’s not really any more freedom or possibility of exit.”

Despite the horrors, these men trust that God does not abandon them and that their

decisions were worth the risk.

“If ten times I was told to come here from Nicaragua and I had to do it, I would do it my entire life,” Hipolito said. “And thanks to God, everything will work out well here for me in this country because this is the country of opportunities for all of us immigrants.”

José likewise does not regret the journey, especially thanks to the St. Francis Xavier parish. “I really don’t even have enough words to express how grateful I am because out of all the bad and ugly experiences, out of all the dangerous places I’ve passed through, to get to a place like this, you feel as if you have come to a family where they make you feel truly at home.”

Jairo expressed his blessings for all those involved with the Assumptionist mission in El Paso: “I ask that God blesses you. May He provide for you more and more each day, and may organizations, institutions, and people support this mission because what you do is part of the great commandment to love God and neighbor.”

Veronika Jaster





# WYD 2023, let's get ready!

In one year, in Portugal, the 37th World Youth Day will take place. An international Assumptionist team has already mobilized.



A work group, composed of religious from the Provinces of Europe - Brothers Romel Bautista (project leader) and Jean-Thomas de La Roche Saint-André - and North America, as well as RA, OA and PSA sisters, is working on the organization of this event that will take place in three stages:

■ **July 27-31, 2023 in Elche** (Assumptionist parish in Spain, near Alicante): visit, spiritual time, solidarity mission and international meetings.

■ **August 1: pilgrimage to Fatima (Portugal).**

■ **From August 1 to 6: participation in the WYD in Lisbon.**

It will also be possible to extend the WYD experience by participating in the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes (France), from August 11 to 16.

Posters are available in Paris-Denfert and Lyon-Debrousse (photo opposite): we encourage you to use them in your communities, parishes, homes, apostolates... and to communicate widely on this gathering which promises to be unforgettable!

To follow the event, to share and like : <https://www.assomption-jeunes.org>

Organizational contact: [romel.bautista@assomption.org](mailto:romel.bautista@assomption.org)

Official website of the 37th WYD (in English, Spanish and Portuguese): <https://www.lisboa2023.org>

(from the Province of Europe's aa.news newsletter)

From August 1 to 6, 2023, Lisbon will host the largest gathering of young people in the world around the Pope! And the Assumption family intends to take part in it, even offering the young people it will bring along a specific program, before and after the huge meeting in the Portuguese capital.



# Lay-Religious Alliance: a sign of the Kingdom?



A pilgrimage of the Lay-Religious Alliance of the Province of Europe.

We are following up with the publication of the reflective texts submitted on the theme of the coming General Chapter: “The Kingdom of God is near” (Mk 1, 15). Live and announce the hope of the Gospel”. Here is the contribution of a Lay Assumptionist on the challenges of the Alliance.

When I asked the Lay Assumptionists the question that had been given to me as the title of the article for reflection, the immediate responses came in three topics: that of fraternity, that of service, and that of connection with the Church. If we equate a sign as “a little thing” that precedes something bigger, and is much bigger, therefore these signs can preclude a little bit of the Kingdom---and that is cause for rejoicing.

But, how do we treat this question without being pretentious, without self-interpretation? I do not fully understand the Assumption and my approach is fragmented, marked by a European influence from the suburbs of Paris. There are obvious points, “the Kingdom already there,” and

others not so obvious, that are evolving, the “Kingdom not yet”. I re-organized these signs of the Kingdom that were shared with me, including my own reflections and without claiming them to be complete.

## Fraternity

It is a fact: lay and religious are brothers and sisters in the Alliance. It is a precious thing that translates often by “**the spirit of family**”, which the lay appreciate greatly. We partake of the same spirituality that comes alive in a form of intimacy that gives you the opportunity to recharge your batteries, as a family, in a place where you are accepted as you are. In the Alliance, for both the religious and the lay, it is often “an open door”, with an exchange and a friendship guaranteed. Whether

we know each other well, or not, there are no pretenses. We know the qualities and the gifts of one another, but also the little shortcomings that can become annoying. It is like a real family! The living faith, lived in equality, allows for a spiritual progression of all. The openness of religious is often underlined, as well as their welcome and their support, precious at the time of the upheavals that life brings.

Different generations, diverse cultures, different social classes respect one another based on their baptisms and their belonging to the same Father. This fraternal solidarity is evident and speaks in a French world that is often compartmentalized. For me, ever since I participated in my first meeting with the Assumptionist Alliance, I was ▶

touched by the presence of poor people, in the biblical sense: a woman in a wheelchair who was very handicapped; a woman with psychological problems; a depressed gentleman; a woman who was very isolated, etc. Fraternity is a sign of the Kingdom when there is diversity and when it is not insensitive to misery.

Fraternity grows when we know one another better, when we pray together, and when we participate in activities together. It translates into concrete choices among different people. There is a **calling and a mutual accompaniment**. It is based on discussion, sincere exchanges, friendship and enrichment! This fraternity when given, received, and lived in a form of simplicity is a joyous sign of the Kingdom--even if it is difficult to enter. When people know one another well and have a wonderful exchange in common, it is sometimes difficult to integrate beyond the first warm welcome.

One must persevere and hold onto the good occasions that present themselves to gradually find the joy in these encounters and in fraternity.

Differences in age are not that evident among the Lay Assumptionists in France : we are, for the most part, retired individuals. How can an intergenerational sign still be assumed? How can we present the Assumptionist spirituality lived by our lay members to a younger group? On the other hand, if the religious are not present in a community, can the lay continue to live in « Alliance »? With whom? Some lay members have a hard time conceptualizing a spirituality that is not physically shared with them by religious. Therefore, will this still be an Alliance?

### Service

The service undertaken, the mission, is a visible sign of the Kingdom. The religious and lay are missionaries together in a concrete way of life and works. For the Lay Assumptionists, living the charism goes along with taking part in the mission of the congregation. There are many apostolates: subtle works in connection with the parishes, in rural areas, and in the outskirts. People are engaged in diverse domains in the Church, in parishes, in the diocese, or in particular movements: sacramental preparation, liturgy, communication, charity, and formation. As various Assumptionist priests are appointed, the lay are involved, at their request, in responsibilities large or small, and they discover brothers working on the same tasks. The simplicity of working in common, daily, pleases them. This elbow-to-elbow experience in service speaks to them and makes them want to know more. They discover the spirituality of the Assumption, are recharged, broaden their ecclesial and spiritual perceptions, and commit themselves to this path.

The works undertaken by the lay, with the support of the religious, like Bayard, the Center at Valpré, the Hospitality and Association of Notre-Dame de Salut, the National Pilgrimage, the boat “Je sers”, to name some of the **French apostolates** that are wonderful, are a testimony to the Kingdom open to all. This lay-religious collaboration is a sign of the times that the founding intuitions are transmitted and shared. Together, lay people and religious, inspired by the same charism, put themselves

at the service of their contemporaries,

The vision of the society of the Assumptionists is not negative, nor is that of the Church. We are neither in a vision of dissolution in the world, nor in the defense of the Church as a besieged fortress. We are in a dialogue that provides us the means for advancement. These works are signs that make sense, as they are a participation in the life of the world. They speak to believers and non-believers, as signs of participation and openness for all.

In a time when clericalism is being singled out and its ravages are being discovered, to be able to collaborate as equals, within the same charism, each in his own role, is a blessing. For me, the “Covid years » were marked by working in common, at least with international videoconferences for the Université Européenne de l’Assomption. We collaborated, lay, religious, and sisters of different countries, toward the realization of a formation for interculturality, available on line, and attainable in fraternity. We had to **exchange a lot and learn** to move forward while considering the rhythm of the others. Working together enables us to accomplish the endeavors that we would not be able to accomplish on our own. We started from nothing and arrived at a course of ten interactive modules. We went from internationality to interculturality assumed as a gift from God. Working and sharing together among the Lay Assumptionists from different countries is a plus. However the difficulties to overcome are important: language, finances, availability. . .



General assembly of the Alliance of Madagascar.

Can we compare it to the mustard seed (cf. Mt 13, 31-32)? Without a doubt---because it still has multiple possibilities to shelter in its shade.

### The Church

The Alliance is an effective sign, sometimes tenuous, of a common life of prayer, to celebrate and serve in the Church. “In the nave,” insists a committed laywoman. She repeats this several times. The sign is tenuous because there is not a great deal of specificity regarding this life in the Church. “Where God is threatened in Man and where Man is threatened in God.” Personally, this phrase touched me when I first heard it. Yes, that’s what I want to hold onto! I didn’t think I would have to listen to all the misery of the world at the bottom of a big prison...This is huge; it necessitates choices since its venues are numerous. Just as the Church does not exist for itself but for the world, it invites us to involve ourselves in many areas: as professionals, in associations, in the family or other areas. From their baptism, many Catholics make the same choices of commitment and service.

What is the difference then? The lay of the Alliance find comfort, support, and encouragement in their spiritual engagement with the Assumption. They share in the witness of a Church **living for all** and not just “in a priest’s preserve” as described by one member. The laity feel listened to and are happy to be associated with this particular ecclesial life, without having the feeling of being “bleating sheep”. After having reflected, they commit themselves freely. They feel like partners, associated and free to ▶

In all the collaborations, formation and competence are placed before any requirements. The works managed in this way are a message addressed to those who wish to hear it: “When two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them.” (Mt 18, 20) They are good and necessary for the world and can continue to exist thanks to this fruitful organization. The Alliance is a sign of unity because the lay and religious work toward communion, for the service of the Kingdom.

We find the lay involved where life has placed them and where Assumptionists were or currently are. From the beginnings of their engagement in the Alliance, in Europe, there was always a friendliness, a confidence, and a strong relationship with a religious, and most recently, with another lay person. Their spiritual engagement with the Assumption fortifies them in their lives of faith and service. In their works and beyond, even in their personal lives, the laity seem connected in their commitment.

The trust that is shared lends itself to a confidence in oneself and gives one the daring to move forward with courage and simplicity. Many have said how their engagement has given them the strength to bear witness with simplicity and courage. The spirituality of the Kingdom often needs to be explained in contemporary terms. Some have a challenging time expressing it in words that make the Assumptionist spirituality come alive. However, this could enlighten those around them and make them want to know more. There is a need today for a theology of everyday life, for simple correlations with words that everyone can understand.

These lay members are extremely connected to the religious they met in the beginning. This raises questions about the personal investment required of everyone for a renewal of the Alliance’s membership. Living like the rest of the world, working like everyone else, the Alliance of Lay-Religious is a clear sign, not very visible externally, much less visible than some great works.



## >> General Chapter

choose. We are far from “helpers to the priests”, even though we can always provide some service.

Sometimes they find it difficult to express their specificity in the Church. Is this necessary? Yes, if we think that what gives us life can give life to others. We know we can't see the leaven in the dough, but still: bakers know where it is stored and without it, bread is not made. How to express a state of mind, a sharing of friendship, a breath? What is visible in this alliance? What shows through? How can we be more explicit for those who hear or see? It is sometimes difficult to leave behind a language of selfishness or a coded language, without even realizing it. “Come and see”, even if there is not much to see! This requires a great deal of attention to the other, the new, the weak, the most destitute. It requires being able to tell a story, not only for its exceptional past, but because we believe and think that it will continue. It requires organization and the desire to open the future together, to have common projects that mobilize.

From what I heard, the discussion about the desire to be open and welcoming to others is synonymous with the appreciation to be in small groups and knowing everyone, of being a group that is more human and warm. The question of « openness » should be considered in terms of objectives: where are we going? Why are we doing this? What kind of community do we want to build? There is undoubtedly still a path of dispossession of the representations of what the Alliance can and must be.

In the Alliance, lay and religious are involved in the mission, according to their Baptisms,



A group of lay assumptionists in DR-Congo.

and of the religious vows for the brothers as well as the ordination of the priests. The ecumenical concerns are tangible and alive. Together, the people of God are partnered with the mission and that touches everyone. It is even clearer in light of the forums or the chapters, where discussion is engaged by all, not only in pairs and with experts. The lay participate, along with the religious, in important gatherings. There are very few Catholic ecclesial gatherings where the governance is shared. It is even truer when the lay are women!

The laity are sensitive to the choices of covenant that have been made by religious, spiritual choices that have been assumed for a long time and not made by default, because of the decline in vocations in France. The service of the unity of the human race, along with that of the least of these, is a strong sign of the kingdom in the making.

### Conclusion

The Church is not the Kingdom of God, but a small part of its anteroom. . . It is a sign of the

Body of Christ, a sign that he gave us to help with the coming of his kingdom. Within the core of his body, religious and lay join to live the same spirituality, try to have the same references and serve: faith in Christ is the first step in perceiving the joy of dwelling with him and entering the Kingdom. With Jesus, the Kingdom of God has taken a face and has entered into the history of humanity. It is already there and is yet to come, like the leaven in the dough (cf. Mt 13, 33). The Kingdom is at this time a reality, a calling, a sign, and a promise. It will not be crushed; it lives in the love of others and in humility

It is offered to all, but it must be searched for and built. The Kingdom of God is a wonder!

The possibilities of belief that it offers are joyous, because they open the field for inventing, creating, and responding to the call of the Holy Spirit.

Christine GILBERT  
(Lay Assumptionist, France)

# D'Alzon and Community Life

What was community life like in our Founder's time? What was fraternal life like with him?

**F**ather d'Alzon opened, visited and supported the first Assumptionist communities. However, we don't have many details about community life at the time of the founder. What we do know are the missions of these communities and the brothers who interested him in helping them live and grow.

## The congregation was born in community

On Tuesday, 24 December 1850, with the consent of his bishop, Bishop Cart, Fr. d'Alzon took public religious vows for one year. Immediately afterwards, he received the vows of four of his first companions: Fr. Henri Brun, Bros. Victor Cardenne, Hippolyte Saugrain and Etienne Pernet. Contrary to popular belief, the ceremony did not take place in the chapel of the college in Nîmes, but in the chapter hall of the community (1). Thus, the essential part does not always take place in the chapel, but sometimes within the walls of our communities.



In Fr. d'Alzon's mind, the community is what defines us as a congregation from the start. *"An idea I had once had and which was only a memory came back to me stronger than ever, and that was to dedicate myself to forming a religious community".*(2)

According to a report of Bishop Plantier - the direct successor of Bishop Cart - addressed to the Holy See in 1856, the Assumption already had 27 members including 5 choir novices and 5 lay brothers. They were divided into four communities: Nîmes-college (200 students in 1853), Clichy (3), Miraman (4), Rome-students (5).

## It didn't all happen in one day!

Soon enough, a new community was built at no. 8, rue François 1er, in the 8th arrondissement of Paris. It was built in 1861-1862. Today, we see the modern façade of a 4-star hotel, but at the time there was only a "poor shanty" with a few cells and a modest chapel. The religious officially took possession of it on Sunday, May 25, 1862. They enlarged it in 1866 and had the "Picard building" constructed in 1874. On the other hand, Father d'Alzon never saw the large chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of Salvation, which was only built between 1896 and 1899 (6).

Lack of financial means, work to be done to adapt the cramped buildings to the demands of the community, the precariousness or even the instability of the very first communities, sometimes ephemeral like the one in Clichy, Miraman or Brisbane in Australia (1862-1873)... The beginnings were not always easy and the religious were put to a severe test. This exchange between Fr. d'Alzon and Fr. Picard on January 9, 1861 bears witness to this: *"Remember that a superior is not required to kill himself. You have to make your fire last. If I saw in you the aspirations of the saints towards heaven, I would let you do it; but as I know you, it is better not to wear out the candle at both ends."*

The style of Fr. d'Alzon is simple and frank, fraternal and full of humor. Picard loves life, so let him not shorten it by his hyperactivity.

But D'Alzon also firmly refuses to be lazy. After receiving his share of his mother's inheritance, he confided to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus: *"My God, when we have income, will we not rely on it to live and would it not be better to suffer a little poverty? This virtue forces us to work, and in this respect, it has the great advantage of keeping away the lazy and the attempts to be lazy. Believe me, this kind of sentinel prevents many abuses from penetrating many convents."* (7)

(1) Letters from Father d'Alzon to Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, 21 December 1850 and 24 December 1850.

(2) Letter from Father d'Alzon to Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, 24 June 1844.

(3) A château with a park of 8 hectares, located in Clichy-la-Garenne and destined for the transfer of the college from the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris.

(4) Miraman is a property located in the suburbs of Nîmes, rented for the novitiate of the lay brothers and including an agricultural school.

(5) Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, *Nouvelle chronologie du P. d'Alzon, de sa vie, de ses écrits et de ses principales biographies (New chronology of Fr. d'Alzon, his life, his writings and his principal biographies)*, Cahiers du Bicentenaire d'Alzon 2010 n° 10, p. 170, note 278. During his stay in Paris in July 1855, Fr. d'Alzon was able to stay at the community of Clichy-la-Garenne.

(6) *Father Emmanuel d'Alzon by himself*, Anthologie alzonienne t. I, «Une 'bicoque' à Paris», p. 153-156.

(7) Letters from Father d'Alzon to Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, 4 January 1861.

(8) Letters from Fr. d'Alzon to Fr. Galabert, 27 April 1856, and to Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, 17 September 1857.

(9) Letters from Father d'Alzon to Father Galabert, November 1860.

(10) Letters of Fr. d'Alzon, vol. IV, p. 364 and 365.

(11) Letter from Father d'Alzon to Father Pernet, 27 October 1863.

(12) Letter from Fr. d'Alzon to Fr. Saugrain, 4 March 1863.

(13) Letter from Fr. d'Alzon to Fr. Galabert, 21 March 1863.

(14) Letter from Fr. d'Alzon to Fr. Saugrain, 17 March 1863.

(15) Letter from Fr. d'Alzon to Fr. François Picard, June 1866.

(16) Letter from Fr. Picard to Fr. d'Alzon, 13 August 1868. Letter from Fr. d'Alzon to Fr. Galabert, 19 November 1868.

### Everyone prays and works

On August 26, 1857, D'Alzon obtained an indult from Rome to keep the Eucharistic reserve in the chapels of his communities (8). In fact, our senior brothers in Assumption - with the exception of the lay brothers - were obliged to recite the Office in the choir, as the monks still do today, for about three hours a day in the chapel.

D'Alzon entrusted each community with a specific mission to which the resident religious contributed directly. Today, we would speak of a "community-work". The type of mission can vary considerably depending on the location of the community and its role in the congregation. The apostolate can concern the education of young people, the formation of the first religious, self-financing through agro-pastoral work, the mission with notably the installation of the Oriental Mission or even the press and pilgrimages.

### Agriculture, formation and study, openness to the world

From the beginning, the congregation cultivated a strong agricultural tradition, at least for the communities located in the countryside. The work was not limited to the vegetable garden, but included the maintenance of farmyards. In Vigan, Fr. d'Alzon had several farms connected to the Condamine, the house he inherited from his mother. These farms and their lands, located in the communes of Arènes, Bagatelle, Elze, La Valette and Le Moulin, were run by the religious themselves. On the large property of Montmau (62 hectares!), Father d'Alzon nevertheless agreed to install a farmer, Emmanuel Boudet, with his sons Paulin, François and Emmanuel (9). Unfortunately, this family was decimated by cholera in 1864.

In November 1861, three Assumptionists left to form a "student community" in Rome. They were the two Bailly brothers and Augustin Gallois. For the duration of their studies, they lived with the Polish Resurrectionists in the attic of the convent adjoining the French church of Saint-Claude and Saint-André des Bourguignons.

In Paris, the community on Rue François 1er adapted to the changes and new needs of the congregation. It quickly specialized in relations with the outside world and grew with the beginnings of La Bonne Presse. At times, it also served as a novitiate. Father d'Alzon went there regularly during his stays in the capital. He took advantage of his stay to meet friends, collaborators, and the religious personalities of his time. For example, in September 1863, he received Louis Veuillot and his friend Melchior du Lac for dinner (10). Fr. Pernet, the future founder of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, recognized as Venerable by the Church since 1983, joined this community on October 17, 1863 after having left the college in Nîmes where he was responsible for supervising the students (11). He was an exceptional confessor and had a decisive encounter in May 1864 with Antoinette Fage, the co-founder of the PSA.

In March 1863, Fr. d'Alzon wrote from Constantinople to Fr. Hyppolyte Saugrain that it was high time to buy a piece of land in Turkey, "*not in Constantinople where everything is too expensive, but a few minutes away, in Chalcedon where we must hurry*" (12).

We also learn that Fr. Victorin Galabert went to Bulgaria. Asked to join him there, Fr. d'Alzon did not see the point. He had confi-





Fr. d'Alzon in the midst of his religious (photo of September 29, 1879).

dence in his religious and encouraged him by asking him to find a place to settle down: “Doctor my friend, here are some letters from France. They would like me too to go to Bulgaria. I am not happy about it. What is there left to discover where you have looked? So you will look well for me. Your letter has had an excellent effect here. Keep on producing it, and everything will be fine”. (13)

In a letter to Fr. Saugrain, he describes in a few very funny lines, but without any malice for his little foibles, the religious to whom he leaves the entire responsibility of founding in Bulgaria. He is grateful for his qualities and admires his dedication:

“Fr. Galabert is always the same. I lend him my umbrella, he breaks the apple; I lend him a book, he gives it back to me crumpled; he brings me letters, I don’t know if he used them to fold something; he is full of zeal and good will, ready for anything and of absolute devotion. At the

moment he is trotting around Bulgaria looking for an honest man. If he finds him, I will burn a candle for him. Goodbye, my dear friend. I love you well, I assure you. Pray for me.” (14)

Monday, April 30, 1866 saw the founding of a community in Alais (today: Alès, in the Gard) by Fr. Raphaël Jourdan, Fr. Vincent Chaîne and Br. Justin Jaoul. They began by living on rue Saint-Vincent with the parish priest, Father Jean Baptiste Bertrand. Fr. d’Alzon went there in June to preside over the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. He writes to François Picard: “I’ve just arrived from Alais and I’m writing in a hurry. The house in Alais will be fine. There was some tension, but finally it will be fine. [Instead of being in the country, our people will go and live in Alais itself, with the parish priest: they will rent him a charming second house, and there they will make a small community, where, I hope,

everything will be for the best... “ (15)

Finally, on Thursday, November 19, 1868, Frs. Henri Halluin and Pierre Baptiste Morel, as well as Frs. Joseph Maubon and Vital Martin, left Nîmes for Paris, then to Arras to open a “social oriented” community in charge of an orphanage. Born in Wimille (Pas-de-Calais) and already a secular priest, Father Halluin had founded this orphanage in Arras before becoming an Assumptionist.

“Father Halluin, a highly esteemed priest, full of zeal and devotion, founded an eminently popular work in Arras. He takes poor children, prepares them for their First Communion, sends them to apprenticeship, follows them to work and continues to house them until they marry. His work does the greatest good.” (16)

### What community relationships?

The correspondence of Fr. d’Alzon, with its tone that is both ▶

firm and tender, as demanding as it is fraternal, gives a glimpse of the relationships and the daily life of the first Assumptionist communities.

The typical example is undoubtedly his correspondence with Fr. Pernet. In March 1863, he was very depressed because the responsibility for discipline at the college had been taken away from him: “*I was never much and today I am nothing,*” he confided sadly to Fr. Galabert on February 11. D’Alzon sent him a letter from Constantinople. It showed that he had not lost confidence in himself. The wings would soon grow back on him... Such benevolence proves to be an accurate prediction. Fr. d’Alzon knows exactly what to say to a religious to support him in his vocational journey and, for that, he does not hesitate to address his heart. With Fr. Pernet - whom he calls *Pernichon* (17) - he is full of attention and delicacy, and also of depth:

*Pernichon of my heart, If you expect a long letter, you are mistaken, you will get a short one. I have a lot to do. Father Hippolyte will tell you that I am not writing to you alone. But if*

*the sea air could do you good, I would take you to Constantinople, because one day we must have a house there. Let’s take it easy and God will bless us.*

*Finally, you must be patient, accept your temporary nullity, so that one day you may rise again like a true phoenix. Ah, dear phoenix, what beautiful things you will do when your wings have grown back! Finally, I beg you to take care as soon as possible to make me a saint by your prayers.*

*Farewell, beloved object, be well and sanctify yourself for others. Totus tibi in Christo.*

E. D’ALZON (18)

A few weeks later, Fr. d’Alzon rejoices that he has received better news from Fr. Pernet. He speaks about Fr. Galabert’s goodness and efficiency and visibly tries to make Etienne Pernet laugh. Their relationship is not at all hierarchical. They are those of a brother who tenderly teases another brother, playing on words and gently mocking Fr. Galabert to get him out of his sadness. With gentleness, he also refocuses Fr. Pernet on a question that seems essential to him “*Are you a saint?*” :

*Ah, Pernichon of my heart and tenderness, you have decided to write to me. They say that you are making mincemeat at Madame de Narbonne’s house. At least, don’t die of melted fat. I would like to pass on to you some of the beautiful “potelete-rie” of Father Galabert; he is fat, plump, plump; he is a darling, seeing it wrong.*

*Yet this is the man I am going to put at the head of the Assumptionist-Monastic-Scholastic-Catholic movement in Constantinople.*

*Ah! how well the Assumption will appear to the Turks and the Bulgarians!*

*Are you a saint? Let us see, no periphrases, what are you becoming? Are you sanctifying yourself? Are you desanctifying yourself? Are you becoming perverse? You were once a little per-maigre and per-yellow, try not to become per-round. [...].*

*Farewell, dear son. Don’t kill yourself by getting too fat. I have a terrible fear of finding you to find you in a real ball. All yours with a very tender heart, I assure you.*

E. D’ALZON (19)

### Let us conclude with Spiritual Writings...

...and let us allow Fr. d’Alzon to speak about the type of relationship that should prevail among religious:

*“What a spectacle it is to see brothers loving one another! [Yes, nothing is as good as a community where people love one another, but for that to happen, everyone has to do their part.*

*For this charity to be permanent, it is important to remove a host of particular feelings which too often get in the way of the general affection that we must have for one another.*

*Let us beware of particular friendships which give rise to jealousy and harsh judgments, and which lead to separation from those who seek to act apart. The charity that we must have must extend to all and be very universal, as the house where we live together is common to all”.*

Emmanuel d’Alzon, *Spiritual Writings*, p. 571

**P. Vincent LECLERCQ**  
Postulator General

(17) In French, this diminutive seems to be a contraction of the two words “père” for Father Pernet and “cornichon”. This nickname that Fr. d’Alzon gives to Fr. Pernet is no doubt an amusing way of signifying both his affection for him and the fact that he sometimes makes mistakes or reacts in ways that he deems inappropriate.

(18) Letter from Father d’Alzon to Father Etienne Pernet, from Constantinople, 4 March 1863.

(19) Letter from Father d’Alzon to Father Etienne Pernet, Constantinople, 31 March 1863.

# Assumptionist Reflections on the Kingdom

To help the Congregation deepen its understanding of the theme of the 34th General Chapter, Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, asked some fifteen religious and lay people to contribute to an Assumptionist reflection on the Kingdom

At the outset, it was to be a single book, dedicated to the theme of the next General Chapter: “‘The Kingdom of God is at hand’ (Mt 1:15) Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel”. Finally, there will be two books:

- one brings together some fifteen reflections by religious and lay people, asked by Father General on this theme. Entitled “Thy Kingdom Come”, it will be the first book to bring together so many views on the motto that Father d’Alzon offered us;

- The other is dedicated to “Bruno Chenu, prophet of the Kingdom? Nicolas Tarralle, who is currently preparing a doctoral thesis on this great Assumptionist theologian and journalist (1942-2003), offers here an original biography of the former religious editor of *La Croix*.

These two works are currently being finalized by the General Secretariat. They will be distributed to all the communities before Christmas, to allow each religious to take inspiration from them before - and even after! - the General Chapter.

Here are the contributions that make up the book “Thy Kingdom Come!” :

- Preface by Father General

## The Assumptionist, Man of the Kingdom

Vianney KIM: The kingdom and grace in Saint Augustine.

Nicolas POTTEAU: The Kingdom of God in D’Alzon

Baudouin NGOA YA TSHIHEMBA: The Kingdom in us! The experience of a novice master.

Benoit BIGARD: Examining for the Kingdom today.

Vincent LECLERCQ : Forming apostles of the Kingdom.

Christine GILBERT : The lay-religious Alliance, a sign of the Kingdom.

## - Places of the Kingdom

Jean-Glory MUKWAMA LUWALA : Religious in Israel; a place to discover the Kingdom

Jean-Paul SAGADOU : Announcing the Kingdom in Africa.

Bernard HOLZER : Missionary for the Kingdom in Asia

Miguel DÍAZ AYLLÓN : The liberation of the Kingdom in a globalized world

Dominique LANG: *Laudato si* and the hope of the Kingdom.

## - Facets of the Kingdom

Dominique GREINER: The Church and the Kingdom after abuses and scandals.

Vianney KIM: The Virgin Mary and the Kingdom.

André ANTONI & Sr. Véronique THIÉBAULT: Transmitting the faith, a catechesis for the Kingdom

Oswald LUSENGE LINALYOGHA : Educating for the Kingdom

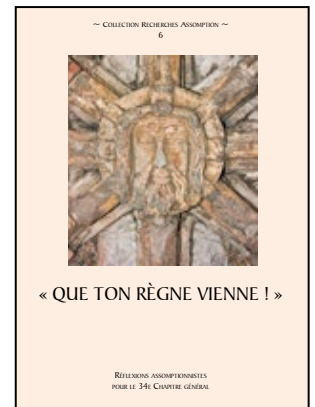
Francesco CESAREO : Mission of Assumption University & Kingdom.

Iulian DANCĂ: The Kingdom and the Unity of the Church. A look at ecumenism today.

NGUYEN Chi Ai: The Kingdom of God announced in the “others”. Interreligious dialogue.

Jean Marie PALUKU THALIWATHEKA: Healings and the Kingdom.

Jacques NIEUVIARTS: Pilgrimages and the Kingdom.





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*... and the help of DeepL*

**Model and laid out**

Loredana Giannetti

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- ◆ Letter from the Superior General to the Province of Africe on the 10th anniversary of the death of our three brothers

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## A New Superior General for the Little Sisters of the Assumption



**R**eunited in the General Chapter from July 28 to August 14, 2022, the Little Sisters of the Assumption elected their Council for five years.

The new Superior General is **Sr. Nathalie Laffogue**. Born in 1967 in the south-east of France, a social worker by profession, she discovered the Little Sisters of the Assumption through the review "L'Assomption &

ses oeuvres", that she found in a church! She began her religious life in Vaulx-en-Velin, near Lyon, where she accompanied people with mental illness, the aged, and families in distress. In 2008, she became novice mistress, she rejoined the community of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine (Parisian region) where, working for the Pierre Blanche Association, she collaborated with the Assumptionists residing on the boat "Je sers". She was

also, up until this time, the Secretary General of the Little Sisters.

The **other members of the General Council** are: Sr. Dominique Fuchs, First Counselor (France); Sr. Luz-Miryam Espinosa (Columbia), Sr. Bernie O'Donovan (Ireland) and Sr. Pilar Trillo (Spain), General Counselors.