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Father Emmanuel d'Alzon

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Assumptionist Constitutions, 1855..... 3

Closing address to the General Chapter of 1868..... 40

Four letters to the Master of Novices..... 52

Introductory letter..... 53

First letter to the Master of Novices..... 54

Second letter to the Master of Novices..... 57

Third letter to the Master of Novices..... 60

Fourth letter to the Master of Novices..... 64

Closing address to the General Chapter of 1873..... 69

The final moments of Father d’Alzon..... 70

THE FIRST ASSUMPTIONIST CONSTITUTIONS

1855

Fathers Athanase Sage and Pierre Touveneraud noted that these Constitutions never pretended to be definitive. Fr. d'Alzon was the first to realize that they could only be a "project," according to the somewhat flippant remark by Mother Marie-Eugenie de Jesus. The third General Chapter which received them from the Founder and accepted them noted that to obtain the approbation of the Institute from the Holy See they would wait until the Rule was somewhat more "decided". Under the name of regulations, the Chapter included the observance of religious life and some norms of government of the Society. But already the principles of the Order were clearly stated and were worthy of Roman approbation. Its aim, its spirit, the limits of its apostolate, its notion of vows, its desire to be considered a full-fledged Order, its place in the ensemble of religious institutes, the strong unity of its government, such were the choices for which the fledgling Assumptionist Congregation needed await no further decisions.

The notes following some chapters are by FF. Sage and Touveneraud, and were prepared for the French edition.

GENERAL SUMMARY

(Transcribed from the novitiate notebook of Brother Victorin Galabert and completed with passages handwritten by Fr. d'Alzon, this summarizes the 1855 Constitutions).

Our small Association proposes to sanctify itself by spreading the reign of Jesus Christ in souls.

Our specific spirit is based upon a very ardent love for Our Lord Jesus Christ and for his Blessed Mother, our special patroness, great zeal for the Church, and inviolable attachment to the Holy See.

Our life must be a life of faith, devotedness, sacrifice, prayer, apostolic spirit, and frankness.

Struck by the spectacle of the contest between secular clergy and regular clergy, we believe that above all else we must respect such limits as will enable us to avoid any damaging clashes. Therefore, we will not meddle in any work which might be the prerogative of the secular clergy. Occasionally sacrificing a particular good, we will accomplish more perfectly the one entrusted to us. By the edification of humble charity, we will strengthen the fraternal bonds which must unite all the servants of Jesus Christ, in whatever part of his vineyard they are called to work.

We propose more specifically to extend the reign of Jesus Christ by the following works:

1. Education in the broadest sense of the term, by trying to form Christians profoundly attached to the Church, by pointing out the absolute necessity of a vital unity, not only in dogma but also in discipline, under the increasingly respected direction of the Sovereign Pontiff.

2. Publication of books that can help Christian education.

3. Works of charity, by which we can prepare children to carry out their duties as Christians in the world, and to the reconciliation between the poor and the rich classes.

4. Retreats, in our houses or outside, as long as this type of work does not involve any serious drawbacks.

5. Foreign missions and works to destroy schism and heresy.

We shall be involved in external works such as preaching, confessions, etc., only when we are certain that this is agreeable to the secular clergy, under whose direction we shall be in accomplishing such work.

Along these same lines, we shall endeavor to inspire the children entrusted to us with a sense of respect and affection for their pastors and an understanding of their duties as parishioners.

Besides the three vows, we also vow to extend the reign of Jesus Christ in souls.

The vow of chastity needs no explanation.

We desire to give the most absolute meaning to the vow of obedience.

The vow of poverty must be understood thus: at the time of profession, the novice disposes of his possessions, as he so desires, in such a way that later he will be unable to change anything without the authorization of the Superior General, and in such a way that his Superiors cannot force him to change such disposition. Should any unforeseen bequest, or some wealth he had disposed of, come to him after his profession, this bequest or this wealth belongs to the community unless, in the judgment of the Superior General, it is deemed appropriate to cede it to the family of the religious.

The novitiate lasts for two years. Ten years after the start of postulancy, a religious may make a third year of novitiate, and add the fourth vow to consecrate himself to the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ in souls, which is done by dedication to the works indicated above.

Novices are admitted by the Superior General or by those empowered by him to admit to novitiate or to profession.

The Congregation is composed of:

1. Choir religious, engaged in education, charitable works, or other forms of apostolate already mentioned.

2. Lay brothers or Oblates, who aid the religious in charitable works according to their talents and abilities. They shall have no part in the government of the Congregation nor of the houses to which they are assigned.

3. A Third Order. Its members, outside of the community, intend, by their stricter conduct in life, to protest against the maxims (rules of conduct) of the world. Under the direction of the Order, they may devote themselves to those works of charity, zeal, or apostolate which are compatible with their status and are capable of extending the reign of Jesus Christ in souls.

The Congregation is governed by a Superior General who serves for life. The General Chapter which shall name him shall furnish him, according to need, with one, two, three, or four Assistants General. These shall form his Council and they shall have consultative voice, except in financial matters, where they shall have deliberative voice.

Should the Superior General become seriously derelict in his duties, the Assistants General should admonish him, and if necessary, bring their complaints to the Apostolic See so that he may be apprised of means to be taken to remedy the disorders.

General Chapters are held to elect a Superior General and whenever the Superior General deems it necessary for the welfare of the Congregation.

Appended Note

Father Galabert's version of the General Summary is to be completed by the following note, based on his manuscript copy or on the copy that Fr. d'Alzon had made of his manuscript.

Although the attached schedule may be modified, such is the usual order of our day:

Rise 4:25

Prime 4:45

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

Last Updated Monday, 04 January 2016 14:52

Meditation until Study	5:35	
Mass		7:00
Breakfast		
Study		
Small Hours	11:30	
Particular Examen		
Dinner		Noon
Recreation		
Study		1:30
Visit to Bl. Sacrament	6:45	
Office (Vespers, Compline, Matins, Lauds)	7:00	

Supper 8:00

Recreation

Reading of points of meditation 9:15

Bedtime 9:30

We recite Office in choir; it is psalmody except on major feasts.

Our food is ordinary; but we impose upon ourselves no general mortifications, given our obligation to speak a great deal.

We sleep on a quilted straw mattress. At night, we wear a long white garb, to be always ready to get up to supervise the children.

CONSTITUTIONS

BOOK ONE

COMMON RULES

CHAPTER I

THE GOAL AND SPIRIT OF THE ORDER

The goal of our small Association is to work toward our perfection by extending the reign of Jesus Christ in souls; accordingly, our motto is found in the words of the Lord's Prayer: "Adveni at Regnum Tuum
"

[\[i\]](#)

The coming of the reign of Jesus Christ for ourselves and for our neighbor is what we propose before everything else.

The means of attaining this goal are: for ourselves, the practice of the religious virtues; for our neighbor, the works of zeal specified below.

The religious virtues we shall practice are [\[ii\]](#) :

1) **FAITH.** It will open us to the supernatural order. We shall believe with all our heart whatever the Church believes and teaches. We shall view all our actions in the light of divine mysteries, so that even the least of our actions might be carried out under the watchful eye of God and be prompted by the desire to fulfill in ourselves some of the teachings of Our Lord.

Moreover, we shall practice this virtue:

- by our complete submission, not only to the teaching of the Church, but also to the spirit of such teaching;

- by our filial obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff whose every wish that we are aware of we shall readily follow;

- by our respect for truth, manifested in the deposit of religious dogmas, realizing more fully the importance of our vocation as defenders and soldiers of these dogmas, and consequently as soldiers of Jesus Christ, Word of God and Eternal Truth;

- by our spirit of obedience to the Rule and to our Superiors, our faith enabling us to see God himself in those who are placed over us in our small Association.

2) **HOPE.** We shall place our trust in God alone, never in human means. We shall try to hold all created goods in contempt, in order to attach ourselves only to those of heaven [\[iii\]](#) . Evangelical poverty will be the external proof of our practice of hope. We shall also draw from it a true spirit of humility, i.e., of contempt and hatred of ourselves; and a spirit of prayer in which we shall ask for the graces needed to fulfill the Law and the Counsels of God; and a deep conviction that all that is not God or is not related to Him is not worthy of us.

Such a practice of hope will inspire us with the most profound gratitude for God's gifts and remind us of the words of the Apostle who suggests that we thank God for all that happens to us: "In omnibus gratias agentes."

Hope will be for us the source of an absolute trust in Our Lord amid all our trials. It was precisely at the time of his Passion that He said to his Apostles: "Non turbetur cor vestrum, neque formidet; creditis in Deum et in me credite

" (Jn 14:1). As Our Lord pronounced these words just as he was about to fulfill the prophecy which said of Him: "He shall be surfeited with shame,

saturabitur opprobriis

" (Lam. 3:30), we shall have confidence that, despite whatever trials befall us, He will not abandon us if we remain faithful to Him. Indeed, He promised not to abandon us if we remain faithful to Him. Indeed, he promised us persecution along with victory; "

Si me persecuti fuerint, et vos persequentur; in mundo pressuram habebitis, sed confidite, ego vici mundum

" (Jn 15:20 and 16:33).

Concerning all things, let the members of our family remember:

1. never to request in their prayers anything which is not directed toward the greater glory of God;
2. to ask for deliverance from the trials which God sends them only insofar as such deliverance further contributes to the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ;
3. while working to solve their temporal difficulties, to seek solely a greater freedom for the service of God to whom they must be completely and absolutely consecrated;
4. to find their happiness, their strength, and their rest in the love of the Cross, since the Lord Jesus saved the world by the Cross. Let them be deeply convinced that their trials are as nothing when compared to those of Our Lord Jesus Christ. If they love this good Master, they should forget their own afflictions in the presence of those endured by Christ and those endured daily by the Church, his heavenly Spouse. They should act like the child who, suffering from a small hurt, quickly forgets it and attends solely to his mother when she suddenly becomes

seriously ill. With this loving selflessness in mind, the religious of Assumption shall offer at the Holy Sacrifice and to Our Lord present in the tabernacle their hearts and their capacity to suffer, in order to atone for all the crimes committed against God and the Church.

3) CHARITY. Its practice includes:

- the love of God whom we shall solely love

- chastity, which, because it detaches us from fondness for sensual pleasure, will help us direct toward God all the aspirations of our heart;

- the love of Our Lord, which we will try to prove by practicing the virtues that He perfectly exemplified in his holy humanity, and by making all our actions depend on his spirit according to his injunction: “Vos amici estis, si feceritis quae praecipio vobis” (Jn 15:14). The practice of charity also includes love of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of Jesus Christ and our special patroness; love of the Church, whose every interest should be ours
[\[iv\]](#)
; and devotion to the Holy Angels, especially the Guardian Angels of our Brothers and of the souls entrusted to us.

Love of our neighbor shall show itself: by our gentleness in bearing whatever wrongs others inflict upon us, by our readiness to serve others as required by our vocation, by our cordiality and our spirit of frankness, and especially by our zeal in all the works we undertake for the good of souls.

Finally, charity will reveal to us that spirit of unity which Our Lord asked of his Father just after instituting the Sacrament of Eucharist and before shedding his Blood for the salvation of the world: “Ut omnes unum sint.... Ut dilectio qua dilexisti me in ipsis sit et ego in ipsis” Jn 17:21 & 26). Because, in the words of St. John, God is love, and because he who lives in love lives in God, we shall continually ask the Spirit of Love, who proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, to unite us indissolubly to God, to Jesus Christ, to his Church, to our Brothers, and to the souls entrusted to us.

Such a spirit of unity will keep us far from the struggles which all too often arise within the Church between the secular and the regular clergies. We shall scrupulously stay within our bounds so as to avoid conflict with others who, like ourselves, are engaged in working for the salvation of souls. We shall consequently not get involved in any type of work that seems more properly the prerogative of the secular clergy. We must know how to renounce doing some of the good which must be done, in order to accomplish more perfectly the one which will be more directly entrusted to us. We do this in order to strengthen, by the example of humble charity, the bonds of brotherhood which should unite all the servants of Jesus Christ, in whatever type of work they do in his vineyard.

More specifically, we shall seek to extend the reign of Our Lord by the following works [\[v\]](#) :

1. Education, understood in the broadest sense of the term, i.e.: secondary schools, colleges, seminaries, and universities. We shall engage in primary education only if we are to dispense it free of charge. We shall diligently devote ourselves to forming Christians deeply attached to the Church and to pointing out the absolute need for a vital unity, not only in dogma but also in discipline, under the increasingly respected direction of the Sovereign Pontiff. For, if one of the greatest evils of our day is the spirit of division which tends to break the bonds uniting the intelligentsia, one of the purposes of our small Association must be to try, through education, to bring the minds and hearts of men closer to the common center which Jesus Christ gave to his Church [\[vi\]](#) .
2. Publications of books capable of helping Christian education. The calumnies against the truth, which Protestants and philosophers have built up over three centuries, make it imperative for the defenders of divine truth to dispel the darkness which has obscured modern science [\[vii\]](#) .
3. Works of charity, by which we can prepare the children entrusted to our care to carry out their Christian duty in the world. We cannot deny the fact that the poor harbor in their hearts great hatred against the rich. This comes either from a loss of faith among the lower classes or from the scandalous use the upper classes have made of their wealth. To redress, as much as possible, such a great evil, we shall try to inculcate in the young people entrusted to us a love and a respect for the suffering members of Jesus Christ, and we shall try to instill in them the obligation they have to help the suffering, not only by their alms, but by their words, their advice, their encouragement, and their solace [\[viii\]](#) .

4. Retreats. We shall conduct them either in our own houses or on the outside, provided there are no serious drawbacks.

5. Foreign missions and works for the destruction of schism and heresy [\[ix\]](#) .

We shall undertake work outside our houses, such as preaching and confessions, only if we are certain that it is agreeable to the secular clergy, under whose direction we shall place ourselves to perform such work.

Along these same lines, we shall endeavor to inspire the children entrusted to us with a sense of respect and affection for their pastors and an understanding of their duties as parishioners [\[x\]](#)

CHAPTER 2

THE DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED TO ENTER THE ORDER

Whoever desires to enter our small family shall examine himself to see whether he has the following dispositions:

1. Does he have an unshakable disposition to offer his life to God, so that it may be required of him in work, persecutions, suffering, contempt, or the lowliest occupations? Is he ready to endure anything to do the Lord's will, and thus achieve perfection? [\[xi\]](#)

2. Does he have a burning love for Our Lord Jesus Christ and a resolve to face anything in order to prove himself a soldier capable of working for the extension of his reign?

3. Is he ready to place his entire life under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and consider her as his Mother?

4. Is he ready to have no love on earth except for the cause of the Church, God's Kingdom? Is he ready to face any peril for the salvation of souls?

5. To achieve perfection, does he wish to practice the holy evangelical counsels, as we shall teach him?

CHAPTER 3

EXAMINATION OF THOSE PRESENTING

THEMSELVES TO BECOME RELIGIOUS

Those in charge of receiving postulants must examine them to discover whether they have a frank, open, generous, flexible character, are not too eccentric, are endowed with sufficient intelligence for studies, good health, able to meditate without too much trouble. Would community life be too great a burden for them? Would they tire others by their unreasonable demands or their whims? Would they seek to introduce their own mentality?

Those in charge of postulants and novices must be aware of their responsibility should they admit to the Association members unsuited to be good religious.

CHAPTER 4

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED OF SOMEONE WHO

PRESENTS HIMSELF TO BE A RELIGIOUS

- 1) Does he come from a heretical family?
- 2) Has he professed doctrines condemned or contrary to the faith?
- 3) Is he legitimate?
- 4) Has he been found guilty of criminal offences?
- 5) Is he free of debt?
- 6) Among his relatives, have any been disgraced, dishonored?
- 7) Is he in good health?
- 8) In his family, has anyone been mentally deranged, or has he himself?

- 9) Is he unmarried?

- 10) Does his family need him to subsist?

- 11) What has his past life been like? How long has he been considering religious life? Why did he choose us?

- 12) Is he resolved to sacrifice his will completely?

The prudence of the Superiors will determine whether any of the above points warrant the exclusion of someone who requests admission among us, depending on their seriousness or their number.

Attention must be drawn to the fact that in joining us one must be absolutely resolved to give himself to God in complete obedience and dependence and be ready to serve Him in any capacity, as soon as the Superior has spoken.

The postulant shall be stripped of the use of his possessions, leaving him only the use of his clothes. He must be ready to give up even these and put on others, should he be asked to do so.

We recommend that novices not pay too much attention to their bodies and their health. But, because they must be unconcerned on this point, they must be supervised very closely so that they will not, by excessive zeal, ruin their health too soon.

Even while treating them fairly rigorously, we will show them sincere affection, which will prompt them to open themselves to their Master [of Novices], and become attached to the Society in which they will spend their lives. Having peace of soul, at least from this point of view, they will

strive with greater fervor towards anything that concerns their own sanctification and that of their neighbor in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 5

ON ENTERING RELIGIOUS LIFE;

ON THE NOVITIATE

When someone requests to be admitted among us, we shall ask him, in more or less detail, depending on his situation, the various questions mentioned above. We will urge him to reflect for a while on the general goal of our small Society. If he accepts its spirit, the conditions and main prescriptions which we shall acquaint him with, we shall urge him to make a short retreat among us.

During this time, we will study him and urge him to examine himself even more seriously. If after consulting God in prayer and recollection, he persists in his intention, he will enter a probationary period of from three to six months unless he is known to us by other ways: he was educated by our religious, he had been a teacher in one of our houses, or had been for some years a member of our Third Order. During this time, he will be able to judge whether our congregation suits him, and we will examine whether he suits us. Then if, for good reasons, he leaves us, or if we find it useful to dismiss him, we shall try to effect the separation with all prudence and charity.

If, on the contrary, he persists in his intention, and we judge him apt to become a good religious, we shall invest him with the habit and he will begin his novitiate.

Ordinarily the novitiate lasts two years. It cannot be less than a year and a day, and can never

be longer than three years [\[xii\]](#) .

The novices shall be trained:

1. to detachment from their will, by numerous practices in obedience;
2. to humility, by various tests of scornful abuse to which we shall subject them. They must be made to realize that as long as they cling to personal honor or to the honor of our small Society they will only imperfectly pursue the glory of God and the triumph of the reign of Our Lord;
3. to penance, by various mortifications, so that we may know whether they are able to destroy within themselves the appetites of nature and the tyranny of the senses;
4. to prayer; we shall have them read books that can train them in mental prayer, and we shall frequently question them on the state of their interior life. It is important that we inspire them with a great spirit of faith in their relations with God, so that they may seek Him only for himself and not for the consolations they might get in his service;
5. to the exact practice of regulations: we shall teach them to be orderly not only in the actions foreseen by the Rule, but in all their work, studies, and other occupations;
6. to community life: that is, to the toleration of other people's character, to which they must bend and the harshness of which must be for them an exercise in patience and charity. So that they may not cause suffering in others, they must during novitiate struggle to destroy whatever might be faulty in their own character;
7. to great frankness and cordiality among Brothers;

8. to an absolute openness of heart toward their Superiors.

We shall try to give the novices a virile, generous, unselfish character. We shall teach them to be preoccupied the least possible with what concerns them personally and with anything that their egoism or self-love might come to expect. As often as possible, we shall instruct them about religious life, on the virtues they seek to acquire in it, and on the desire they have for the greater glory of God and the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ.

Novices shall be admitted to profession upon presentation by the Master of Novices or his delegate, following examinations that will later be specified by the Superior General.

During novitiate, a novice who may want to complain about the Master of Novices can always write to the Superior General who would then see whether, for serious reasons, the novice might be sent to another novitiate, providing the Congregation had several.

Concerning lay brothers, we can leave things up to the Superior of the place where they were received. What is especially required of them is a great spirit of faith, of simplicity, and of obedience. Experience shows that neither exterior coarseness nor even lack of education is an obstacle to the sanctification of some persons who can render very great service, provided they act out of love of God with confidence and docility. But we shall be most severe concerning anything that smacks of lying, deceit, difficulty in being open, stubbornness, or the love of bizarre practices, as is often found among some members of the lower class [\[xiii\]](#) .

CHAPTER 6

ON THE DISMISSAL OF RELIGIOUS

The longer someone has been in the Society, the harder it shall be to dismiss him. We must

know how to cut out, in a timely way, a dangerous or dead member, even in vows. But we must do this only when precautions have been taken to avoid scandal inside or outside the Society. Those dismissed are released from their simple vows, except that of perpetual chastity [\[xiv\]](#) .

If someone has left on his own initiative and then presents himself again, we may take him back if we deem there are sufficient reasons. In this case, we must beforehand receive the Superior General's permission and require that the novitiate be repeated.

CHAPTER 7

ON VOWS

In addition to the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, we shall pronounce a fourth vow, that of consecrating ourselves to the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ in souls [\[xv\]](#) . This vow implies an obligation to give ourselves, with all possible zeal, to the works of charity mentioned above, within whose limits we desire to confine our action. These vows will be simple until they receive the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff; the Superior General can release from them, except for the vow of perpetual chastity. The regard the religious have for their vows will be the measure of their fervor. The more exact they are in their observance, the more assured they will be of attracting God's blessings upon themselves. Conversely, laxity on these four essential points would be the surest sign of decadence and of God's wrath upon our small Association.

CHAPTER 8

ON POVERTY

The richness of our small family must consist in its absolute detachment from earthly goods. Our Lord said, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head: (Mt 8:20). Therefore we shall be ashamed of any unnecessary satisfaction we give to our bodies. As Our Lord, during his apostolic life, did not want to give the example of great external mortifications, we shall seek to imitate Him at least in his destitution during this precious period of his life on earth, which must be a model for our own life. For this reason we shall be very severe in the use of our time. We are all poor men who must work to earn our living [\[xvi\]](#) .

In conformity with the General Chapter of 1850, we shall keep only those properties where our religious or their students reside. In our various houses, colleges, novitiates, country dwellings or farms, we will limit ourselves to what is necessary, not seeking to spread out. Revenues from various houses must be used to improve the houses, and the remainder is to be used for good works.

Consequently, every year, the Superior General shall balance the books of the general account. He may retain from the revenues a sum corresponding to his budget for the following year. All additional revenues must then be used for good works, especially the foreign missions, if possible.

Nevertheless, in one case the total revenues may be retained: whenever other houses are projected and the revenues of several years would be needed to realize such projects.

We shall require no dowry from those desiring to enter religious life, but we shall accept whatever they wish to give, as alms. Such alms must be spent on good works during the year, unless as mentioned above they are set aside for additional foundations.

Before he enters religion, the novice shall dispose of anything he possesses; and once he has pronounced his vows he may never come back upon the disposition he has made, without the formal consent of the Superior General.

Should it happen, after his profession, that he receive a bequest or an inheritance, such

bequest or inheritance belongs to the community, unless for good reasons the Superior General deems it appropriate to cede it to the family of the religious.

If the bequest or the inheritance can be sold, it is entirely appropriate to sell it and use the money immediately for some good work, especially the foreign missions.

Let the clothing, food, and residences of the religious always be poor. Nonetheless, the sick shall be treated with all the care which charity inspires, according to the recommendations of the Rule. While banishing all luxury from our cells, we shall accept for our colleges and other residences whatever can inspire in our students a deep feeling for Christian art. Our churches shall be for us an object of holy envy and we shall devote to them all that can heighten the majesty of the ceremonies and increase the love of Our Lord.

Religious shall purchase nothing without permission.

In whatever concerns them personally, they will act with the thrift that befits poor people. Their garments shall be as simple and poor as possible.

At the chapter of faults, they shall accuse themselves of anything they will have broken or caused to deteriorate.

They shall have no pecule [allowance, kitty]; and when they are given some money for their travels, they shall hasten, upon their return, to give back to the bursar whatever money remains.

Let them keep in mind that voluntary poverty brings them closer to the real poor. What they deprive themselves of enables them to help the real poor, and they thus preach by example the benefits that can come from poverty and the submission to the decrees of Providence.

Before profession, the religious shall draw up and sign an inventory of whatever he may have brought with him. Should he, for whatever reason, leave the Congregation, we shall return to

him everything listed in the inventory, except for deteriorated items for which the Congregation is not responsible. All money that he may have earned by his work or otherwise shall remain in the community to offset his living expenses while he stayed among us.

To exercise religious in a spirit of renunciation of property, the Superior shall from time to time require the religious to exchange the objects they use, such as rosaries, breviaries, rooms, religious habits, etc.

CHAPTER 9

ON CHASTITY

It is from their devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and in their filial tenderness for the Blessed Virgin that the members of our little family shall draw the strength to keep this vow. Let them avoid useless conversations; let them be fully occupied at all times; let them be horrified by any dangerous relations; let them always be ready to account for their actions; let them remember that the apostolic life is after all an angelic life and that they must have its virtue. Only a transparently innocent heart can enjoy an intimate relationship with Him who is the eternal and pure splendor of the Father.

Superiors have a special obligation of ensuring that this virtue is observed among their Brothers, and they must anticipate the occasions and eliminate the circumstances which could damage their reputations. Religious shall remember that it is only by great purity that they can achieve their goal, the eternal possession of God, as Our Lord said, "Happy the pure in heart; they shall see God" (Mt 5:8).

CHAPTER 10**ON OBEDIENCE**

Whereas the religious gives whatever he possesses by poverty, gives his body and its senses by chastity, he gives himself totally by obedience. This virtue, whose vow is the bond of religious life, completes the sacrifice of all his being. He must seek its origin in the very center of the adorable Trinity and in the eternal obedience of the Son, uncreated Word, to the will of the Father. For this reason, Jesus Christ wished to be called the Lamb immolated since the world began. He declares through the Prophet that he wills whatever the Father wills and that his law is written in his heart: "My God, I have always loved your Law from the depths of my being" (Ps 40:8). St. Paul teaches, and the Church repeats in the prayers of Holy Week, that "For us Jesus Christ became obedient even unto death, death on a cross" (Phi I 2:8).

For our obedience to be pleasing to God, it must be humble, calm, prompt, faithful, uncomplaining, and courageous.

Assumptionist religious must practice obedience to its highest degree, especially in the following cases:

1. Religious will have absolute and filial obedience first and foremost to Our Holy Father the Pope; then to the Superior General; and then to the other Superiors in the Congregation.
2. They will never go out without permission. If the Superior is alone or only with other religious, they will ask for a blessing.
3. They will account for their interior life at least once a month. For the Superior, obedience will consist in always being ready to listen to the religious, unless urgent occupations prevent him from doing so.

4. They will give an account of their studies whenever requested to do so.

5. They will always be ready to work at whatever job is entrusted to them, however painful and disagreeable it might be.

6. They will obey as promptly as possible all commands given to them.

7. Every day, after dinner, upon leaving chapel, and every evening after the reading of the points of meditation, the religious will have what is known as “obedience,” that they might request permissions needed for the rest of the day or for the next day.

8. They will not without permission, meddle with the functions of others. Without permission, they will never eat between meals; and they will never receive outsiders in their cells.

9. In all humility and without grumbling, they will accept whatever reproaches are made to them and whatever penances are imposed upon them. To be truly obedient, religious must remain indifferent in the matter of the jobs entrusted to them, considering them as coming from God, as soon as the Superiors have specified them. Religious always have the right to make to the Superior whatever remarks they deem appropriate. They must tell him everything and do so, as in everything, with great frankness and complete freedom. But they are urged to flee with utmost care those conversations in which, under pretext of a greater good, they criticize the government of houses or the faults of the Brothers. Such conversations ruin communities, and the Major Superiors are strictly obliged to punish with utmost severity, yet with prudence and discretion, the smallest abuses they might discover.

A religious who is a chronic complainer should be dismissed without mercy, if he is deemed incorrigible. Better to cut off one member than to let gangrene take over the whole body. Indulgence toward one member could mean the loss of the entire community.

10. Religious will neither receive nor send letters without the Superior’s permission. The Superior may read all incoming or outgoing mail, except those letters which the religious send

or receive from the Major Superiors. Such outgoing letters will be sealed in the presence of the religious who sent them, and any incoming letters will be sealed with the seal of the Congregation. A Superior who commits an indiscretion in this regard will be considered disqualified for any position in the Congregation, for at least three years.

CHAPTER 11

ON THE VOW OF CONSECRATING ONESELF

TO THE SALVATION OF SOULS

Because the spirit of our Order is especially apostolic, we must try, as much as possible, to acquire the virtues proper to such a sublime vocation. Consequently, keeping in mind that Our Lord came on earth not to be served but to serve, we must consider ourselves humbly dependent upon the souls we are called to help. We must remember that these souls have rights over us and that the only right we have over them is the one Our Lord entrusted to us, of leading them, with the means we have at our disposal, toward their own personal perfection. This attitude of dependence will generate respect, which will serve as a safeguard for them and for us. It is in the heart of Jesus Christ that they must be dear to us; it is the love that Jesus Christ manifested when He shed his Blood for them that must be the measure of the efforts we make to direct them toward holiness according to their own calling.

Though each religious should be willing to accept, within the limits of the Institute, any assignment proposed by his Superiors, the latter shall nevertheless consider very carefully the various aptitudes, the natural talents, and especially the graces received by each, and appoint them to the work in which they are most likely to succeed.

We shall send to a foreign land only those religious who have requested it. On this point a'> on all others, we must avoid, as much as possible, everything that goes against prudence, for we must not forget that, through self-deception, personal pursuits can sometimes be mistaken for

divine zeal. Superiors will be attentive to discern these two very distinct attitudes so as not to reap some great harm in the place of an expected good.

Since zeal for the salvation of souls is one of the distinctive characteristics of our Association, we cannot do enough to rid our zeal of the faults that could otherwise render it jealous, bitter, or self-seeking. We should bring to whatever good we do as much unselfishness as possible, especially from vainglory. We shall rejoice when others accomplish work we were not judged worthy of doing. And when others will have done God’s work, even work we think we might have had a right to do, we shall say with Moses: “Utinam et omnes prophetent” (Num. 11:29). Our zeal shall be humble, as we recall the words of Our Lord to his apostles: “When you have done all you have been told to do, say ‘We are merely servants. We have done no more than our duty’” (Lk 17:10). Finally, our zeal shall be persevering. Holy Scripture gives countless examples of the way in which God makes prosper the works He wants, even when they appear most hopeless: He grants more of his graces when He sees man relying less on himself.

CHAPTER 12

ON PRAYER

The life of the Assumptionist religious will be a life of prayer, recollection, and presence of God. During novitiate they will be trained in meditation and the practice of the interior life. Let religious remember that all their strength comes from God. Prayer must be their greatest weapon in repelling temptation, combating the enemy of salvation, and overcoming all obstacles to good works. They will deem themselves happy to progress in the interior life. As prayer is their principal means, they will walk unceasingly in the presence of God in order to be perfect. This feeling of the divine presence will be the source of their recollection and of their modesty. They will try to pray to God everywhere, in order to adore God everywhere and everywhere thank Him for his gifts or to atone for the scandals that surround us. They will pray especially for the intentions of Our Lord, judging themselves happy to unite their prayer to those which the Eternal Pontiff unceasingly makes to the Father, for sinners. They will pray for all the needs of the Church, and in this prayer of devoted sons they will ignite their zeal for the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ. If their prayer is filled with the spirit of faith, as a religious’ prayer should be, they may rest assured that it will be more powerful than any means inspired by purely human prudence. They will undertake nothing without recommending themselves to God, but

they will also remember that nothing attracts divine grace more than gratitude. They will thank Our Lord for everything, good or ill, that happens to them, because on the one hand everything turns toward greater good for those who love God, and on the other hand the Apostle urges us to render thanks in everything, "In omnibus gratias agentes" (1 Th 5:18).

CHAPTER 13

ON THE OFFICE

We recite the Roman Office, in choir, as much as possible. This obligation is for us like that of priests.

We shall deem ourselves happy to recite thus the public prayer of the Church, and we shall fulfill this ministry with respect, love, recollection, and devotion.

In accepting this obligation, we propose for ourselves:

A mortification, because of the increased fatigue the Office may cause.

The edification of the students in our colleges where the Office is recited.

In our relations with our neighbors, the esteem for the great prayer of the Church that we would like to inspire, rather than a host of practices, with which we do not find fault, but which we consider inferior to this solemn prayer, the perfect public prayer.

Special rules shall be made concerning our manner of reciting the Office and the times it will be recited.

CHAPTER 14

ON MORTIFICATION

Religious must realize that when they entered the Congregation they sacrificed their life to God. This life no longer belongs to them. Therefore they should care little about whether it be long or short, provided it be spent as God wills it.

Consequently, health reasons shall never be admitted in order not to do what is demanded. On the other hand, whenever they are told to take care of their health, religious must obey, in order to do what is most pleasing to God. A religious is a soldier: he must be ready to fight or lay down his weapons, according to the orders of his leader. He must always keep in mind the objective of his vocation: victory over the world and himself, as well as the manifestation of Jesus crucified.

To conquer self, penance is necessary, but it must be in conformity with the spirit of the Institute. It consists mainly of poverty, prayer, study, patience in good works, forbearance with one's neighbor, and regularity. Fasting and other penances will be less necessary than in other religious institutes, because the Assumptionist must weaken his body in works for the salvation of souls.

One reason for practicing some extraordinary penances will be to obtain the success of our good works, the conversion of sinners, or the reparation of the scandals that afflict the Church; and for these reasons we will often meditate upon the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 15

ON HUMILITY

The most indispensable virtue for the Assumptionist religious is certainly humility. If it is true, as St. Paul says, that “Knowledge gives self-importance” (1 Cor 8:1), then we are undeniably exposed to great danger because of the work we are engaged in [\[xvii\]](#) . Peril lies within the very good we are called upon to do. Consequently we must attempt, by humility, to bring a great purity of intention to every act of our life, lest we let self-love take the place of the glory of God which alone we must seek.

We must constantly uplift our thoughts toward Him who must be the beginning and the end of all our actions, lest we find our reward in the personal satisfaction we obtained in accomplishing such and such an action, good in itself, but which we insufficiently directed toward God. Humility will detach us from our own will, for fear that, adhering too much to some personal attachment and not to God’s good pleasure alone, we be exposed to hear the terrible words: “Behold in your sacrifices is found only your own will” (*Quoting from memory Is 58:4. “Fasting like yours today will never make your voice heard on high” is the Jerusalem Bible translation of the passage. Fr. d’Alzon often quoted Sacred Scripture from memory*).

Humility shall be the source of our obedience, no matter how great the sacrifices imposed upon us. Mistrust of ourselves will lead us to understand our need for guidance; and the consciousness of our weakness will cause to spring up within us a greater confidence in God. Humility shall be the source of our openness with our Superiors, in accounting for our state of conscience, in the avowal of our faults, our temptations, our pains, our needs, and all our inner ills.

Humility will make us accept orders, as well as the most lowly occupations and the most contemptible positions. It will make us understand that we deserve only the last place, being trodden underfoot, because Jesus Christ said, “Yet here am I, now more worm than man”(Ps 22:6). Humility will cause us to accept with respect, the customs established in the community,

even when we do not understand them. It puts a curb on our tongue. It inspires us to the gravity suitable to a religious. It is the source of the modesty which he must bring in his relations with his Brothers and with his neighbor. Finally, reminding him constantly how despicable he is, humility will cause him to love contempt, because of his love for Jesus Christ who was overwhelmed with insults. It will give the religious the strength to become, in the divine hands of Jesus and those of his representatives, a docile tool, ready for all good, to extend the reign of God in souls.

CHAPTER 16

ON THE SPIRIT OF RETREAT AND SILENCE

The more we are called upon to live in the world, the more we must at times try to seek solitude. Every year the Brothers shall make a ten-day retreat, and they shall make monthly retreats in the manner prescribed by their Superiors.

Let them bear in mind that it is by applying themselves to recollection that they can remain united with God and the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which must be the constant object of their efforts.

To this purpose, they shall try, as far as their occupations allow, to observe regular silence, making an effort to retreat within themselves amid the distractions which their duties sometimes impose upon them. It will then be obvious that when they do break silence it is because they are really obliged to.

Grand silence shall be very strictly observed, beginning at the obedience which follows the reading of the meditation points at night until the following morning after Prime. Ordinary silence shall be kept as carefully as possible except during recreations.

CHAPTER 17

ON FRATERNAL CHARITY

The love of souls is a distinctive characteristic of our small family. Religious must especially love the souls of their Brothers and of their Superiors, and the Superiors must have a very special love for their religious. Everyone should thus try to have for one another a love full of tenderness, esteem, respect, and gravity. They should find in the members of our small family living symbols of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, children of the Virgin Mary, our common mother. Let them avoid all undue familiarity, all particular affection, that bane of communities, all antipathy which might undo the bonds of holy affection, all injurious words, and whatever relationships might produce scandal. Let them warn each other when necessary; and unless a disorder becomes public, let them avoid revealing anything scandalous they might have witnessed, unless it be to those persons whom it is absolutely necessary to notify in order that the harm might be corrected as promptly and as efficiently as possible, without charity being greatly damaged.

In their daily relationships, let the Brothers remember that their greatest love, after Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Church, and Our Holy Father the Pope, is our small Congregation. But let them love it for God and in God, avoiding any exclusive love that would consider something good only if it were done by us.

Let their conversation deal with useful and edifying subjects, avoiding slander, violent disputes, and anything that might offend religious decorum.

Without permission, they will not enter each other's rooms.

They will avoid whatever might offend Brothers of different nationalities.

Finally, may it be said of us what the Holy Spirit said of the first Christians, “The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul” (Acts 4:32).

CHAPTER 18

ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

In external relations, let our Brothers be aware of the edification that they give, or the scandal they can cause if they do not always act as true religious.

They will avoid whatever might be a cause of rivalry with the secular clergy, doing only what they have been expressly invited to do. The prudence of the Superiors is strictly enjoined to be watchful on this very important point of the Rule.

We shall not get involved in family matters or lawsuits, unless we have reason to believe that doing so would avoid great harm or procure great good. But it is important not to be deluded in this very delicate matter.

We shall not become part even of a good work without the permission of the Superiors, local or General, who must be consulted about the importance of the work.

Religious will receive no visitors; they will never go out without permission. Letters will be received only with the Superior’s authorization. Without permission, religious will not eat outside of their religious house.

Religious must be modest in everything. Their clothing and their furnishings must be neat and

decent. Let their modesty be noticeable especially in their relations with their neighbors. Religious will remember that modesty reveals them to others as masters of themselves, as living copies of Jesus Christ, and makes their behavior and dress a living sermon, often more effective than any preaching with words.

CHAPTER 19

ON THE MEANS OF MAINTAINING FERVOR

Because we seek God alone and the triumph of his Son, our Divine Master, it is by supernatural means that we must seek success in our endeavors. Such means are:

1. A constant meditation on the virtues of which Jesus Christ in the Gospels is our model.

2. A devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to our patron saints and to the guardian angels of those entrusted to us. Besides the Blessed Virgin, the patron saints of our Society are St. Michael, St. Joseph, SS. Peter and Paul, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Augustine.

3. The conscientious choice of Superiors, and especially of the Superior General and his Assistants, as hereafter prescribed. The Society must have a great deal of power and authority over the Superior General; and the Superior General, over the Congregation.

4. The greatest uniformity in spiritual exercises, penances, customs, occupations. For this reason the Masters of Novices must strive to make their charges realize the importance of our various observances.

- 5. The care with which the Superiors will endeavor to be a living rule in the house they govern.

- 6. A profound conviction that we must love our Congregation for God alone, not for itself nor ourselves, nor for any advantages that we might gain from it.

- 7. An exactitude in the accounts of conscience of religious and superiors, at the times specified by the Rule

- 8. The vigilance with which visitators accomplish their duty.

- 9. The resolution, often renewed, that religious will not become involved in external matters but will concentrate on the objective that they had in mind when they joined us.

- 10. The energy with which the Superiors will forestall any abuses at their outset, repressing them with mildness or with vigor, but always conscious that if they tolerate abuses they are responsible before God for the souls entrusted to them. They are also responsible for the souls which, later on, might lose themselves in the Congregation due to abuses that have become incorrigible because they were not suppressed in a timely way.

CHAPTER 20

ON THE CHAPTER OF FAULTS

The Chapter will be held weekly, on Friday or Saturday evening whenever possible. In our educational institutions, it may be held from 8:45 to 9:15.

When everyone is gathered in the designated locale, all kneel and the Superior begins the Miserere

which is recited in alternating choirs or” as a dialogue between the Superior and the community. At the end, the Superior recites the prayer

Respice quaesumus

and the Hail Mary. The religious then rise and there follows the reading of a chapter from the Rule or the Constitutions. When another than the Superior is reader, he asks the blessing:

Jube, Domne, benedicere

. The Superior responds,

Regularibus disciplinis instruat nos Magister coelestis

. When he deems fit, the Superior ends the reading by these words,

Tu autem, Domine, miserere nobis

.

After the Superior makes what remarks he wishes, the lay brothers and the novices make their culpa

(self-accusation) and leave. The

culpa

is done thus: whoever is accusing himself kneels before the Superior and says, “In the presence of God, of my Superior, and of my Brothers, I accuse myself of...” He should accuse only external faults.

After the lay brothers and the novices, the other religious then accuse themselves. The Superior does so only on the eve of major feasts. When the accusations have ended, the Superior may again make whatever remarks, or seek whatever advice, he deems appropriate. The meeting ends with the psalm Deus misereatur and the Sub tuum.

No one should repeat what was done or said in the chapter of faults. There are different kinds of faults that can be accused in chapter. The Superior must match the penance to the seriousness of the fault. Such penances are mentioned below. If the fault reaches a certain degree of seriousness, it should be referred to the Superior General.

CHAPTER 21**ON THE DAILY SCHEDULE**

Although the daily schedule may be modified for proper reasons, here are the daily exercises to which the Brothers are obliged and their timing.

Rising 4:25

Prime 4:45

Meditation 5:00

Angelus, study 5:35

Community Mass 7:00

Study 8:00

Small Hours, particular examen 11:30

Dinner and Recreation Noon

Study 1:30

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament	6:45
Office	7:00
Supper	8:00
Recreation	8:30
Meditation, obedience, adoration	9:15
Bedtime	9:30-10:00

On Sundays, High Mass and Vespers are sung.

CHAPTER 22

ON FOOD

Let the religious remember everything that the great servants of God taught about the dangers presented by food. It is with food that Satan tempted the first human; it is concerning food that the Hebrews so often attracted upon themselves the wrath of God in the desert; it was when he was hungry that the Savior of the world permitted the devil to tempt Him. On the other hand,

Our Lord warned us that it is only by prayer and fasting that we can conquer certain demons. Let religious therefore be ever watchful that in their meals they be as sober and mortified as their religious state requires.

At dinner they shall have soup, two dishes, and dessert. At supper, two dishes and dessert.

They may take breakfast, but they shall never snack between meals, without permission.

They shall never complain about their food in public. They shall never ask the cook for anything for themselves. If they have special dietary needs, or if they have any remarks to make, they will, in all simplicity, speak to the Superior. During dinner and supper they will always have reading. Anything else will be spelled out in particular rules.

CHAPTER 23

ON RECREATION

There are two kinds of recreation for religious: the ones they spend among their students and the ones they spend among themselves. Recreations with students require special care. Religious shall avoid any undue familiarity as well as any brusqueness. They may play games; in fact, they should in order to get the games going. They shall take care that students do not just chat among themselves at great length, or that they do not form cliques. They shall supervise with special care any dubious or suspicious students.

They shall avoid coarse language and anything that smacks of back-biting or complaining. Without affectation, they will occasionally speak to the students about God. They shall be cordial with students, and avoid deviousness in dealing with them, so that they might inspire confidence. During recreations we can do a lot of good for students, but also much harm,

because in these moments of relaxation people are especially susceptible to good or harmful influences.

In recreations among themselves, religious will endeavor to strengthen the bonds of fraternal life and affection which will be the greatest rest they can seek at such a moment.

Whenever he can, the Superior will try to take part in the recreation of the religious. At such times there is a danger of offending charity and obedience by somewhat unchristian remarks. The mere presence of the Superior should put an end to such abuses.

No one shall be absent from recreation without having obtained permission, which will be granted only for serious reasons.

CHAPTER 24

ON THE SICK

We shall have a tender love for the sick members of our Congregation. We shall lavish upon them every care allowed by evangelical poverty. We shall love them all the more because, in their weakened and suffering condition, they resemble Our Lord. If the house where the sick reside should be low in financial resources, it would be preferable that healthy religious deprive themselves of necessities so that sick religious might have what would be for them superfluous, were they healthy.

We shall make a special effort to furnish them with the means of sanctification, either in the form of pious conversations or good books. When they are in danger of dying, with all possible charity and prudence we will help them to prepare to appear before God.

For their part, the sick will try not to be too exacting. They shall be obedient by submitting willingly to whatever is prescribed for them; chaste, by avoiding all immodesty; poor, in asking only for what would be suitable to poor people; charitable, by the edification they give in accepting, with patience and mildness, their illness and their remedies. They shall remember that many saints made of their sick-bed a conversion-rich pulpit.

Because the enemy of salvation attacks religious souls especially during their last moments, sick religious will seek to put their conscience in order, as soon as they have been sick in bed for twenty-four hours.

Whenever possible, our houses shall have an infirmary, so that sick religious may get whatever care they need and still remain regular, and that whatever mitigation they are granted will not become a habit once they have recovered their health.

CHAPTER 25

ON OUR DECEASED BRETHERN

We shall have a tender affection for the souls of our Brothers whom God has called unto Himself. Whenever a religious dies, each religious priest of his house will say three masses for the repose of his soul; each lay brother will receive Holy Communion three times; and the Office of the Dead will be recited three times. In other houses, a Mass for the Dead will be said for his intentions.

CHAPTER 26

ON THE OBLIGATION OF THE RULE

This Rule does not oblige under pain of sin, unless the prescribed points are also imposed by God's law, or when it is broken with formal contempt of the Constitutions, or when the Superior shall give a written order including the phrase, "By virtue of obedience..." In this last case, disobedience is a grave sin.

CONSTITUTIONS

BOOK TWO

ORGANIZATION OF THE SOCIETY

CHAPTER 1

ON THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

Our Association is composed of:

1. Choir religious, occupied in the works of study, teaching, charity, or apostolate mentioned above. They do not have to be priests, but if they are not, they shall not be Superiors, unless there be an urgent necessity.

2. Lay brothers or Oblates. They help the other religious in charitable works according to their talents and skills. They shall have no part in the government of the Congregation nor of the houses to which they are assigned.

3. Brothers of the Third Order. Its members, outside the community, intend, by their stricter conduct, to protest against the maxims [customs] of the world. Under the direction of the Order, they may devote themselves to those works of zeal, charity, and other apostolate which are compatible with their position and are capable of extending the reign of Jesus Christ in souls.

CHAPTER 2

ON THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SOCIETY

The Society is governed by a Superior General, named for life, with absolute power.

Four Assistants, named for the lifetime of the General, supervise him in the exercise of his authority. The Superior General and his four Assistants are elected in General Congregation, by secret ballot, and by an absolute majority of the votes cast.

At the death of an Assistant, the surviving Assistants and the local Superiors have the right to elect his replacement. (If we ever have provinces, the Provincials shall perform the duties attributed to the local Superiors).

Should it become necessary, for the good of the Order, to depose the Superior General, the Assistants, having deeply examined the reasons, will refer the case to the Holy See, which has the right to make the definitive decision.

The Assistants constitute the General Council, but the Superior General is obliged to consult it only in cases of selling, buying, or altering the real estate owned by the Order. In these cases the Assistants shall have deliberative voice.

Besides the Assistants, the Superior General is aided by a Secretary and a Procurator General.

CHAPTER 3

ON THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

All authority in the Congregation resides in the Superior General. He receives the vows of those called to profession.

The Superior General shall nominate to all positions, except when he delegates this power, for colleges and other houses, to the Provincial or to the local Superior. It is into his hands, or into those of his delegates, that religious shall make their profession. It is to him that they promise obedience, and it is he who can release them from such a promise.

In person or by his delegate, he visits houses, corrects abuses, approves or modifies local regulations; in a word, he makes whatever improvements he deems appropriate, according to the spirit of the Rule.

By his authority, incorrigible religious are expelled from the Society.

He founds houses and may suppress them with the authorization of his Council. He transfers religious from one house to another.

Religious shall have recourse to him in cases involving good works that are difficult or important.

He names the Masters of Novices and dismisses them, as he wills. Temporal affairs of the Society are handled in his name, unless, for serious reasons, he thinks it necessary to have them handled in the name of another religious.

Without his authorization, no book shall be published by a member of the Congregation.

On his own authority he transmits whatever he deems appropriate to religious to whom he entrusts a mission, a charge.

If he should become ill, he may delegate one of the Assistants General to govern the Society.

CHAPTER 4

ON THE ELECTION OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

An election is required: at the death of the Superior General, when he resigns and his resignation is accepted, or when he is deposed. In the last case, the Assistants General convoke a General Council to hold a new election.

Have right to attend a General Chapter: the Assistants General, the Secretary General, the Procurator General, the Provincials, the local Superiors, and a certain number of religious from various houses or Provinces, as shall later be enacted.

The Superior General must always be a priest. The Religious must choose one of themselves gifted with the qualities hereafter specified [\[xviii\]](#) . He shall be elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast. If, after two ballots, no one receives an absolute majority, the electors shall choose between the two candidates receiving the most votes. If, after a third ballot, there should be a tie, the choice shall be made by drawing lots.

Prior to the election of the Superior General, the electors shall make a three-day retreat. The election shall be held only after there has been sufficient time for those taking part to be able to arrive at the place of convocation.

CHAPTER 5

ON THE GENERAL CHAPTER

The Superior General may convoke a General Chapter whenever he deems it necessary. The General Chapter is composed of: the Superior General, who presides in person or by his delegate, the four Assistants General, the Secretary General, the Procurator General, the Provincials, the Masters of Novices, and two religious from each house, elected by secret ballot.

Thus composed, the General Chapter has the right to modify the Constitutions or write new ones, provided such changes be approved by the next two General Chapters.

At this general meeting, one of the Assistants General shall give a report on the state of the Society; the Provincials will do likewise for the houses they govern; the representatives of the local houses may present the demands or observations entrusted to them. They shall beware lest special interests cause them to forget the general interests.

The Superior General shall, with good will, accept remarks made in the interests of the Order.

Items discussed shall be decided by absolute majority of the votes cast.

The General Chapter itself decides when it will adjourn.

CHAPTER 6

ON LOCAL SUPERIORS

Local Superiors have the right to govern their houses according to the Rule and the powers given to them by the Superior General. Within such limits, they are responsible for the souls entrusted to them.

They have a very strict obligation to maintain the Rule in all its strictness. Therefore they must require great obedience from all those who depend upon them, at the same time making themselves loved, so that they can lead with kindness rather than by fear.

Three times a year, each Superior must send to the Superior General a report on the overall state of his house, on the financial situation, on the works undertaken, and on the religious personnel.

Each time a new, important good work presents itself, he shall seek the advice of the Superior General or of the Provincial.

FIRST ADDRESS

The address delivered on September 17, 1868, at the closing of the General Chapter, and "The Letters to the Master of Novices," written in 1868-1869, are very closely linked to the Directory

which had just been officially approved. Like the Directory

, the address develops the theme of the triple love of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, his Mother, and of the Church, his Spouse. And it already reminds us of the importance of the Adveniat Regnum Tuum

. From the very beginning of our Congregation, the second petition of the Lord's Prayer was adopted, almost instinctively, as our motto. The idea of the triple love was developed only later, during the period of Fr. d'Alzon's illness in 1854-1858, as a kind of spiritual deepening of the A.R.T.: the chivalrous service of the Kingdom presupposes a total love of Christ. Fr. d'Alzon wanted to introduce the theme of the Kingdom into the Directory

, but found it preferable to deal with it separately and at greater length at some opportune moment. At the urging of the General Chapter of 1868, he dealt with it in a more intimate but no less profound fashion, by his "Letters to the Master of Novices."

CLOSING ADDRESS

TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER

September 17, 1868

"Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force" (Eph 4:3).

Fathers, my Sons, I joyfully borrow these words of the Apostle, because I find in them the summary of our work and of the precious meetings which we terminate today: a spirit more energetically united in principles more clearly expressed; the bond of charity grown stronger, more intimate, more fruitful, thanks to the fraternal exchanges in which we worked at giving to our minds and hearts the transparency of crystal, because we had nothing to hide, nothing to hush up. For this we will long be grateful to the Father of light, from whom all perfect gifts flow and from whom we have received such abundant favors during these blessed days.

As we take leave of one another, I want to entrust to you, if I may put it this way, the legacy of our common thoughts and of our common sentiments, by reminding you once again, and probably for the last time, on what foundation Assumption is built, and by what means we want more than ever to develop Assumption.

I will undoubtedly reveal nothing new to you. I will tell you nothing that you haven't already thought out better than I can express it. Still, my words can draw from the present ceremony a more imposing gravity. They can also borrow from our impending separation a character of sadness because we are parting, but also an accent of confidence in the bonds that unite us, because nothing so much as separation teaches brothers how much they can love one another.

I

THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH ASSUMPTION IS BUILT

Our spiritual life, our religious substance, our *raison d'être* as Augustinians of the Assumption, is to be found in our motto, "Thy Kingdom Come." The coming of the reign of God in our souls, by the practice of the Christian virtues and of the Evangelical Counsels in keeping with our vocation; the coming of the reign of God in the world by the fight against Satan and the conquest of the souls ransomed by Our Lord and yet still buried in the depths of error and sin. What could be more simple! What could be more ordinary than this form of the love of God! If to this basic love you add the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Blessed Virgin His Mother, and of the Church His Spouse, you will know under its briefest expression the spirit of Assumption.

But what is special, what is characteristic in this? Don't we have here something that any true

Christian can accept? What notion, beneath these basic ideas, can help distinguish us from other religious families? Do not religious and Christians repeat every day in the Lord's Prayer the cry that we want to make our battle cry: "Thy Kingdom Come"? Do not all Christians and religious have to love Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, the Church? Once again, why claim as special to us that which is the legacy of all?

First of all, we must recognize the first trait of our Institute: the simplicity of means. It is often said that the least common thing in the world is common sense. Would it be a paradox to say that in the Catholic world the rarest thing is Catholic common sense? That is why we seek to appropriate it to ourselves as an original trait. We are quite simply Catholic, but as Catholic as it is possible to be. We are Catholics all of one piece. And because in our times there are a lot of half Catholics, Catholics of their times, Catholics by accommodation, Catholics who think they are Catholics, we, who are frankly Catholics, Catholics before all else, completely Catholics, we pass, in the eyes of the crowd, for men set apart, perhaps even extraordinary. This is the first trait of our character as Augustinians of the Assumption.

Our character manifests itself even more if we speak of our love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Attacked upon all sides, this Divine Master is the great folly for the experts in modern science. And He is still a scandal for legalistic, sensual, brutal or refined Judaism.

Who wants Jesus Christ today? By whom is He not reproved? "This is the stone," said the Prince of the Apostles to the inhabitants of Jerusalem fifty days after the Savior's death, "this is the stone rejected by you the builders but which has become the corner-stone" (Act 4:11). Yes, it is always the same terrible stone of which the Savior himself said, "And he who falls on this stone will be dashed to pieces; anyone it falls on will be crushed" (Mt 21:44). Well, it is this stone on which, in the example of God, we want to build because it is the foundation of our faith, "Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection" (Heb 12:2). For us everything is renewed in Jesus Christ. This is our only preaching, "Here are we preaching a crucified Christ" (1 Cor 1:23), because He is our only science, "The only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about Him as the crucified Christ" (1 Cor 2:2). Through Him and only through Him we go to the Father, "No one can come to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6). And it is in Him that "all the jewels of wisdom and knowledge are hidden" (Col 2:3). In Him resides all the fullness of our perfection, "Because God wanted all perfection to be found in Him" (Col 1:19). We have seen Him full of grace and of truth: of truth, to dissipate our darkness; of grace, to free us from evil. We need listen to no other Master. He has the words of eternal life. "Lord, to whom would we go?"

Yes, we go to Jesus Christ. We affirm Jesus Christ against those who deny Him, or hate Him, or

abandon Him. The denial of the unbeliever, the hatred of the impious, the neglect of the indifferent or of the traitor, are for us as many motives to surround Jesus with a love which is more ardent, more active, more tender and more solemnly demonstrated. In Him, we love God. And, although we are unworthy, we proclaim His divinity. We love the man, i.e. the most perfect model and tenderest of friends. We love the God-man, i.e. the peace-maker of heaven and earth, the doctor of the true law, "*finis legis Christus*" (Rom 10:4). He initiates us to the supernatural world; and by cleansing us in His Blood, He transports us by His power and His mercy into the higher spheres which no one wants today because they are the true domain of the Sovereign whom no one wants today either, precisely because of His gifts. Yes, we love Him because He brings us to true light and true benefits. We love Him with the same kind of love as did the early Christians, because He still faces the same enemies He faced then. We love Him with the love that made the Apostle say, "If anyone does not love Jesus Christ, let him be cursed" (1 Cor 16:22). This may not be very tolerant, but you know that those who love much tolerate little. Properly speaking, the true nature of love is in the vigor of a noble and frank intolerance. In these days, when there is no energy for either love or hate, men do not see that their tolerance is just another form of their weakness. We take the stand of intolerance, because we draw our strength from our love of Jesus Christ. This is another distinction, clearly drawn, which separates us from many people.

The love of the Son leads us to the love of the Mother. Our tenderness for the Most Holy Virgin knows no limits, no more than does her tenderness for us. Jesus Christ is for us the most perfect of models, but Jesus Christ is God. Mary, a mere creature, is also a model for us, but if I may say so, she is less discouraging to our weakness because she is less than absolutely perfect herself. She is a model for imitation by her adopted sons who want to follow her along the way to holiness and in all the virtues inherent in sanctity. She is a model for all Christians, especially for those chosen souls tormented by the need for a more perfect, more pure, more self-sacrificing life, and who come to us for direction.

The life of Mary, lived out between the privileged beauty of her spotless conception and the almost divine transformation of her triumphal Assumption, shows us how high a creature can rise by humiliation, sacrifice, suffering, abandonment, and intense sufferings of the heart. This life teaches us how harshly God treats chosen souls. In this way, first of all, God brings down to our level the perfection, the delicateness, and the trials of the supernatural order. Then we must bring this same teaching to all those who want to see summed up in one soul all God's kindness toward His most beloved creature.

The incomparable innocence of Mary and her no less incomparable suffering give us in their apparent contradiction the key to a mystery the world cannot understand: that of the joy of demonstrating one's love by suffering and of the power of sacrifice rooted in love. Cannot Mary, the Mother of Jesus, also be a model for us in the mystery of the Incarnation? Yes, there again,

she will be a model for us by the ardor with which she inspires us and by the desire to give birth to souls for Jesus Christ and to give birth to Jesus Christ in souls: "My children! I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19). This is the cry of apostolic anguish which for us as for Mary begins at the crib and ends only at the cross. But this kind of piety can be very far from the kind of devotion which, pretending to be tender is soft, and fearing scandal lacks energy, and whose concessions and daily betrayals dare show the cross only surrounded with flowers and perfumes and Calvary hidden behind vague clouds of vapor.

What shall I say about our love for the Church? The Church is so admirable a thing that the expressions used by the sacred writers seem weak before her greatness, her riches, her power, her beauty, her glory. Listen to them tell you that the Church is the tabernacle of God among men, the column and the unshakable foundation of eternal truth; that she is the Mystical Body and the final perfection of Jesus Christ; and again, that she is his spotless bride, completely beautiful. For her, the Son of God came down to earth and united Himself to humanity. He wants to extend her influence. She is His city of predilection. She is the army by which He will crush His enemies. Of all these titles of the Church the most touching one for us is that of spouse. We love the Church because Jesus Christ loved her. And our love has a triple characteristic: it is supernatural, daring, and unselfish.

The supernatural order fills us with admiration for the Church. Everything has been done for the elect who subsist only in the Church. If ever the struggle between good and evil, truth and error, Jerusalem and Babylon, heaven and hell, the Church and the Revolution, has been made manifest, it is certainly today. Listen to man repeat after Satan, "I will not obey. I will rise to the skies and will be like the Most High" (Is 14:14). Man goes so far as to deny God, because he finds God a hindrance that imposes upon him the yoke of conscience, duty, and virtue. The only way man can break this yoke is to say, "God does not exist." Before such blasphemy, we can only say, with the chief of the Heavenly Hosts, "Who is like God?" Satan, in order to overthrow the Church, is trying his hand at overthrowing the entire social order. The fifty or sixty thrones that have fallen during the last century are the result of his latest efforts to overthrow the throne of the Vicar of Christ on earth, because Satan is powerless to overthrow the throne of Jesus Christ himself in heaven. "We do not want him to reign over us," cry out the infernal cohorts, and after them, the mob of unbelievers, the impious, men of all kinds of disorders and immorality. These are the slaves of the prostitute whom the Apostle [John] saw seated on the beast filled with blasphemies. She was dressed in purple; she was holding a gold wine-cup filled with the disgusting filth of her fornication; and on the forehead was written a name: "Mystery! Babylon the Great, mother...of all the filthy practices on earth" (Rev. 17:3-5).

Can you find a more prophetic, more exact picture of the Revolution? This is the great enemy of God and His Church. Our love for the Church will find its measure in the zeal we bring to

combating the Revolution. We love the Church because she holds all the treasures of the supernatural order which were entrusted to her by her Heavenly Spouse and which the Revolution hates. In her, we find the preaching of truth, the perfect law, and the seed of all virtue. In her, we find the true Kingdom of God on earth, the assembly of saints and disciples of Jesus Christ. In her, we contemplate stability in the midst of societies which are crumbling. Because of her, we have the divine hope of a happiness unattainable by man alone. Because of her, we experience the strength to fly from this earthly exile toward Heaven, our eternal and glorious home. But all this is beyond nature. All this belongs to the divine order, to which we are initiated by Christ only through His Church. It is for this reason that our love for the Church is, above all, supernatural.

Furthermore, our love for the Church is bold. When the perils are so pressing, when the pitfalls yawn so deep at our feet, when the hopes of Hell reveal themselves by the deadly cries of savage joy that we hear each day, it is more than cowardice to follow the prudent theories of the flesh, i.e., of human concerns and political schemes. It is treason; it is sacrilege. We are accused of taking too many chances, and this is to our glory. Oh prudent men! I suspect that you found Jesus Christ terribly foolhardy when He risked the life of the Church by dying on a cross. The martyrs were crazy too, and the Apostles insane, when they very courageously gave witness to the Resurrection of Christ, during the persecution by Jews and pagans. In our madness, we envy the boldness of the martyrs and the audacity of the Apostles. So it is with such boldness that we claim to love the Church, to serve it with all our might, not overly concerned with the contradictory judgments of men, but mindful especially that the world was saved by the folly of preaching and the imprudent boldness of the preachers.

This was the kind of love shared by the Prince of the Apostles and the great Doctor of the Nations. Needless to say, so bold a love is rare today. But, by the same token, it gives us an original character. It is an added reason for us to be what we want to be.

Finally, our love is unselfish. I don't dare say chivalrous, like that of all great religious institutions at their beginnings. It is sad to see how much man hurries to make his own the little bit of good he is capable of doing, how much he aspires to be the only one doing it, and to prevent others from doing it when he cannot do it himself. My Brothers, may this never be our temptation! Let us love the Church enough to rejoice about all the good her children do for her triumph. Let us exclude no form of holiness nor of charity. We cannot make them all our own. Let us love, admire, encourage in others what we ourselves are incapable of. May the general good be our sole preoccupation. Let us say like Moses, "If only the whole people of Yahweh were prophets!" (Num 11:29). The victories of the Church would be more numerous and our love for her more consoling, if we left aside mean and personal considerations and made the triumph of the Church the exclusive desire of our hearts. I cannot recommend enough to you this unselfish love. If you tell me that it is rare, I repeat that in possessing it in all its breadth and generosity

we will be more easily distinguished and recognizable on the road that we wish to walk.

Let us love the Church supernaturally, boldly, and generously, and you will see what blessings here below and what rewards in heaven God has prepared for our work. And if we are not found to be very clever, the way certain people are, at least we will not have to blush because of our motives.

II

THE MEANS TO DEVELOP MORE THAN EVER

THE WORK OF ASSUMPTION

Would you now permit me to tell you, in a very few words, the practical conclusions to be drawn from the fundamental ideas that I have presented to you?

From our motto, "Thy Kingdom Come," it follows evidently that we are an apostolic Institute. The zeal that we should have for God's rights and the salvation of souls is the essential embodiment of our charity. Abnegation and the forgetting of self are above all imposed upon us. We put to good use anything that comes our way, "as long as Christ is announced." We try to take no account of the causes of internal dissensions among the children of God which, under the guise of rights or of Christian dignity, divert our useful efforts from the battle against our common enemy and busy themselves rather with struggles among brothers. When Christians and their leaders no longer want us in one country, we shall move to another. That is the precept of Our Lord which, when honestly applied, will give us the necessary freedom that apostolic laborers require.

"I cannot desire what I don't know." To be loved, Jesus Christ must be known. We must study Him especially in the inspired books. Jesus Christ will be for us the prized treasure sought under the veil of the Sacred Letters. We shall strive to know Him as God, as man, and as the author of the supernatural gifts which reconcile us with the Father. Saint Augustine, our patriarch, will be our principal guide. His treatise on the Trinity and his admirable books, which

have won for him from the entire Church the title of Doctor of Grace, are the guidelines for our study on these important questions. We also add the "Letter to Volusian" in which he treats of the Incarnation; and as an introduction to true philosophy, the treatises "Against the Academicians," "On Free Will," and the "Letter to Dioscorus."

Jesus Christ known by us is the knowledge which we want above all to communicate, first, by preaching: "Here are we preaching a crucified Christ" (1 Cor 1:23). This is the distinctive characteristic that sets us apart from the stale, purely human, naturalistic preaching, in which one barely dares preach Christ, and especially dares not speak of his Cross. Our second means is education, teaching. If someone asks us what education means for us, we reply that education is the formation of Jesus Christ in souls, just as teaching is the enlightenment of souls by the splendor of Jesus Christ. This is the master thought in the schools that we establish; and if we ever get a Catholic university, we will inscribe on its facade, "May they know you, the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3).

The love of Jesus and Mary, his Mother, is for us the total science of the mystical life. The perfection of Jesus Christ as manifested in the New Testament, the virtues of Mary which reveal themselves to the innermost soul despite their veil of humility, are like two volumes where we meditate on the sanctity to which we are called.

Love of the Blessed Virgin inspires us with another love which is perpetuated in the world by the cult of the Mother of God. I speak of the love of purity and chastity. From the very beginning, it has been one of the outstanding traits of apostolic men, and Church historians tell us that the immediate cause of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul was the constant effort of these two apostles to form virgins in pagan Rome and even in Nero's palace.

We wish to help Mary, our Queen, bring many virgins to the immortal King of the ages. The feeling for beauty found in pure and chaste souls contributes to lifting us up, as on the wings of angels, toward the throne of the spotless Lamb. And if we are chided for favoring religious vocations too much, our answer should be that our sole regret is that we have not favored them enough.

Lastly, the love of the Church offers us, in present times, a new horizon. Cast your eyes about you. Do you not realize that the abyss is becoming deeper, the ruins are piling up, that catastrophes are on the way? In the midst of all these upheavals, the Church, stable upon its rock, sees the old world sink, as on the banks of Hippo Saint Augustine watched the Rome of

the Caesars submerged by the rushing waves of barbarians.

The City of God is for us like a second revelation, and the more we study it, the more we may find in it by analogy the secret of the future. What sadness and discouragement came from the immense ruins brought about by the sword and the torch of an Attila or a Genseric? Somehow it was God who was sweeping away a rotten society in order to prepare a new one. The bishops of Gaul did not mistake it. Let us have the intelligence of our forefathers. They welcomed and transformed feudal barbarism; let us welcome and transform democratic barbarism. No doubt, some regrets for vanished grandeur were felt by some of the ancient Gallo-Roman pontiffs. Nevertheless, they rebuilt France as bees rebuild a hive. Let us do the same. Without useless regret for the past, without too deceiving a hope concerning the future, let us keep on with our work as God proposes. Possibly it will become greater with re-Christianized peoples than with the barbarians torn from the grossness of a savage world.

At this juncture, two questions arise. Who will be our guide? What will our works be?

Who will be our guide? The Pope. It can be said that since Philip the Fair, politics has consisted in a massive conspiracy against the papacy. Kings wanted no Pope; today no one wants kings. Where are we going with this anti-monarchic hatred? But what difference does it make? Though power is necessary, it need not be concentrated in the hands of a king. God considered it an insult when the sons of Jacob requested a king. We need not discuss the matter further, but it is a fact that we cannot deny. It is evident that the democratic tide is rising every day and it is on the verge of spilling over into revolution. Who knows what minor incident will set the storm off? As for me, I consider the Church and what she has done in the past, and I wait.

I am neither excessively sad nor overly hopeful. The essential is to be confident in Jesus Christ, in Mary, in the Church, and to keep working. All the rest doesn't matter. But I am wrong. Who can say that our efforts will not bring joy, as long as they are intelligent efforts? And this brings me to the beginning of an answer to the second question I posed a while back: what works should we undertake?

Beyond those I have already mentioned, our works are all those by which people can be raised up again, and instructed, and learn about leading a good life, and whereby democracy itself can be made Christian. You can already imagine what possibilities are opened up for us in our visitation of the sick, the evangelization of the poor, the direction of orphanages, the dissemination of good books, and other works that I cannot enumerate because new

possibilities, arise daily. But we do all this under one condition: that the material charity we dispense be the means for providing spiritual alms. We tend the bodies of people so that we might have the right to penetrate as far as their souls. The few coins we place in a poor man's hand preview the great treasures of faith that can be poured into souls that thirst after truth, and for the lack of it have forgotten their great need.

Through this work with the poor, we reach the rich. Experience has shown that they can be reached more easily and in a manner more worthy of ourselves and of Our Lord if we meet on the common ground of charity.

Love of the Church stirs up another love in our hearts. The Apostles were commissioned to preach Christ's message not only in Jerusalem but to the ends of the earth. Yes, our ambition extends also to foreign missions. What providential grace has already given us so many missionaries when we are still in fact not very numerous? But besides ourselves, notice that we have called upon others to assist us. In the past, virgin women consecrated to the Lord were hidden behind the most severe cloisters. Today they are asked to travel even beyond the seas.

This has been a tremendous change, thanks to the mercy of God and the great devotion of these, his spouses, who want to sanctify themselves, as we do, in a great apostolic love for the Church. From that point of view, their spirit in a way deepens our own.

Certainly, all this is very serious. The issues that I have briefly discussed and that are intimately linked up with what is characteristic of our vocation could be very troublesome, if we did not see the head of the Church calling together the bishops from the four corners of the globe and inviting them to confront these same problems in a most solemn manner, problems that preoccupy all mankind, to which the Church alone can provide the last word.

We must wait for these important solutions, but imbued with the constant teaching of the Roman Pontiff, we need not hesitate in foreseeing in what direction the answers to these hard questions will go. There may be annoyances that crop up, but these should not worry us too much; simply make an effort to diminish the pain by being patient and charitable. Let everyone enjoy the freedom the Church grants, but remember to defend the doctrine she teaches, the truths she defines, the laws she promulgates, the condemnations she pronounces. The acts of the Church have always been for the life and happiness of people. Our glory should be in carrying out, even in our weakness, the work that the Church proposes, without worrying about obstacles that may arise, or enemies to be defeated, or the consequences to which we might be exposed because

of her cause. Thus we may accentuate a bit more the position that we want to take.

Now, Fathers and Brothers, our work is finished. Praise God for having inspired us with a common vision, and for the forceful resolutions we now promise to develop and maintain with fervor and good judgment. Let us always have for each other the affection of true religious, based upon respect and our need to remain strongly united. We must form but one body in the sincerity of our souls and the loyal frankness of our relations. May our indissoluble bond be Jesus Christ.

The Apostle said, "Though there are many of us, we form a single body, because we all have a share in this one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17). Let the altar be our center, because we find Jesus Christ there. It should also be for us the throne of our king. You have noticed that recently this most excellent Victim has received even more universal homage in the sacrament of his love. This is only fitting. Is it not good that when the throne of the king's representative appears shaken, the throne of the Sovereign himself be more resplendent with our praise? It is no mean honor for us that we have been able to contribute even if only slightly to the extension of this cult of reparation. There indeed we again find Jesus, our love, giving himself to us and teaching us to give ourselves to him and to the service of the Church for him. Let us pursue our goal with joy and confidence. In that way, after our efforts to build up the Kingdom of God on earth, we will be worthy of delighting in that same Kingdom of heaven for all eternity. Amen.

FOUR LETTERS TO THE MASTER OF NOVICES

These four letters were composed at the request of the General Chapter of 1868. The letter of introduction was written at Lavagnac and is dated October 8, 1868. The first two letters were received in Le Vigan, where the novitiate was then situated, on November 22, 1868. The third letter, which was certainly received at the novitiate, was not copied with the first two and was not included in the 1912 edition of Fr. d'Alzon's circulars. The fourth, which was found only in 1926, was begun in July, 1869, but it remained unfinished. From then on Fr. d'Alzon was totally taken up with the preparation for Vatican I.

These letters are complementary to our Directory, thanks to their different point of view. A spirit must be studied from several angles if it is to be grasped perfectly. The spirit of Assumption is presented in these pages in the light of our motto, "Thy Kingdom Come." The four letters constitute a valuable development on the theme of the Kingdom, which dates back to the origin of the Order.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

My very dear Brothers,

The General Chapter we have just held invited me to address to the novitiate a series of instructions in which I would summarize as well as I could the spirit of the Congregation. I will try to do this by outlining the different ideas on which our Society is founded. I have already established a few guidelines in the Directory, but it would perhaps be good to give them a further development. Furthermore, as the same ideas are presented over again from different vantage points, they can more easily reach the minds of those who probably did not understand them initially. It strikes me as useful therefore, to offer you a series of considerations which, I hope, will lead you to a truer notion of your duties as Augustinians of the Assumption.

I have chosen the letter as the form for these instructions because this will allow me a more direct rapport with you. Since I cannot speak with you, I can write to you and thereby have you more present to my mind and heart. What I have to say will probably have more life this way, and by the same token it will profit you more. I shall divide the work into four principal parts. Each of them will in turn be divided according to the scope and number of considerations required by the central ideas [\[xix\]](#) .

I shall begin by establishing the principles on which our spirit is founded. I shall then point out a few practices useful in acquiring it, and treat of the virtues that are particularly necessary for you. Finally, I shall examine the apostolates in which we must be engaged and the means by which we must exercise them.

I place this project under the protection of Our Lord, the Most Blessed Virgin, Saint Augustine and all our patron saints, so that my words may instruct, edify, and fire you with the desire to work for the glory of God, even as you strive more ardently for personal sanctification.

Lavagnac, October 8, 1868

ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CONGREGATION

FIRST LETTER

On the Coming of God's Kingdom within us

My very dear Brothers,

The principles of our Congregation are found, properly speaking, in our motto, "Thy Kingdom

Come.” These words from the Lord’s Prayer express for us the total perfection for which we must strive, the apostolic life in which we must be engaged, and the zeal we must bring to our relationships with our neighbor.

Today I would like to consider our personal sanctification.

I

“The Kingdom of God is within you,” the Apostle tells us (Lk 17:21). There is no need to seek it elsewhere. What then is the Kingdom of God? It is the state of intimate communication with God that we must attain, in accordance with the nature of God and with our own nature. But God, who is infinitely perfect, is immutable. It is not on his part that change can occur; it must be on ours. Insofar as we divest ourselves more and more each day of our faults and bad habits, we become less unworthy of the ineffable communications with which God by his grace does not disdain to bless those souls who sincerely and generously apply themselves to giving him absolute power over themselves.

As a soul purifies itself of its faults, Jesus Christ, the true light who enlightens all men coming into the world, manifests to it in a more admirable manner both the perfection of God and the soul’s debt in his regard. At the same time he gives it greater energy to accomplish its duties, which it now perceives more clearly. As it acquires a greater knowledge of God and his perfections, the soul wants to know him all the more. It is filled with a greater love. It proclaims more joyfully the rights of God. It surrenders more fully to his supreme power.

This work is accomplished more or less quickly according to the generosity of the soul, its promptness in responding to the call, its enthusiasm in obeying all that is commanded, and its courage in overcoming its trials. But if the soul advances, and if, in order to be closer to God, it detaches itself from creatures and from its own self, it senses God drawing closer and uniting himself to it in an ineffable way. It is then that the Kingdom of God is fulfilled, as much as it can be here below, in the most secret recesses of the heart and in the very depths of one’s being. Then the soul can say with Saint Francis of Assisi, “My God and my all.” But to reach that point one must struggle long and suffer much. We advance slowly. We sometimes think that we are not advancing at all. God seems to withdraw. Satan tries to discourage us. Resolutions taken in the ardor of the spirit are not always kept in the weakness of the flesh. Such is the cause of so many failings, more or less serious, that impede the interior growth of the Kingdom in souls that had nonetheless been most blessed by God’s sovereign goodness.

Also, my very dear Brothers, I could not possibly overemphasize the need for serious reflection before you undertake this work. If you feel called to perfection, do not hesitate. But remember that once you have put your hand to the plow you must not look back. Once you are enrolled in the army of Christ, to desert would be an eternal shame. All are not called to the same perfection, and I do not pretend that the Kingdom of God imposes the same obligations on all. There are many rooms in our heavenly Father's house, but the religious, who by the sanctity of his state of life is called to enter the secret chambers of the great King, must constantly remind himself that as long as he has not reached the summit of perfection he has done nothing. Let him also remember that he can reach the summit, because perfection is nothing but the perfect imitation of the virtues Our Lord exemplified for us during his earthly life.

II

The Kingdom of God within us is the most absolute dependence of our being and all our faculties on the intimate action of God. God is the master; we are the subjects: "I am your servant, the son of your handmaid" (Ps 116:16). If God is our king and has the right to command us to the extent of his power, his intelligence, and his love for us, we are here to obey him to the full extent of our gratitude for his blessings, our understanding of his rights and his gifts, and all the power for action he has given us. What do we have that does not belong to him? What do we possess that we ought not to consecrate freely and voluntarily to him? Since freedom is probably the most precious of all his gifts, and since he has a right to what is most excellent in us, it is above all by our freedom that we give him the greatest honor. Admirable mystery, in which God gives us ever greater freedom to the extent that we allow him to reign more perfectly over us and in which the perfection of our obedience is the source of the very perfection of our freedom.

Let us therefore seek this Kingdom of God, my very dear Brothers. Let us proclaim it with all the fullness of our freedom and love. God does not want to reign over slaves, but over free souls. He wants to reign over sons whom he is able to love with paternal tenderness and whom he can place on his throne to reign with him in his Kingdom.

As creatures of God, we are drawn from nothingness by his omnipotence and his infinite mercy. Everything in us, down to the smallest atom of our body, our most inaccessible thoughts, the most delicate sentiments of our heart—all belongs to him in an absolute and sovereign manner. As Christians redeemed by the blood of his Son, we owe him all the gratitude of which we are capable and the most devoted observance of the law he has revealed to us. As religious called

to evangelical perfection, we must not only carry out his orders but anticipate his very desires. Finally, as sons called to the glory of an incomprehensible and unending union with God, we must allow all our life to be transformed here below by dependence, adoration and love, so as to merit for all eternity a share in his Kingdom and his glory.

Such a goal is admirable. But what efforts and struggles are necessary to attain it! It is precisely the trial of our entire life. That is why we must work without ceasing and not lose a single moment.

SECOND LETTER

On the Coming of God's Kingdom around us.

My dear Brothers,

It is not only within us that we must struggle for the triumph of the reign of God. It is also by our action around us.

I

Opportuneness of Assumption

Note well that the existence of all religious families was justified at the time God called them forth. What justifies the foundation of our own Congregation? Who can deny that evil has made frightening advances in our day? Who can deny that God in his mercy always wants to erect

barriers to the inroads of evil, which continually reappear under new forms. When barbarians appeared in order to annihilate the Roman Empire, Saint Benedict fled with a group of religious to the solitude of the forest in order to preserve what remained of Christian perfection. When the Albigensians tried to bring back pagan ideas and ways, Saint Dominic and Saint Francis came forth to sustain the threatened Church and defend it by their preaching and holy detachment. Later, against the Reformation, God brought forth the great family of the Clerics Regular.

Today, it is with the Revolution that we must deal. God has been driven out of modern society by Satan, the head of the Revolution. One can scarcely recognize God under the form of some vague notion of Providence. But the idea of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is barely maintained at the top of some treaties worked out by diplomacy, whose agents, several of whom no longer believe in the Trinity, seem to invoke it only as if to prove that their international conventions are no more than a pack of lies.

It is becoming clearer each day that God is being driven out of governments, society, family life, and morality. Consequently, if the laws of Divine Providence have not changed, the most terrible retribution threatens us unless God in his mercy impresses upon the hearts and minds of the guilty a spirit of repentance and conversion.

From this point of view, if it is true that God calls us, as we believe it is, then our vocation is admirable, both by its timeliness and the greatness of its goal. It is important, however, to have a clear and exact vision of that goal. This will allow us to discern clearly the most efficacious means of attaining it without wasting our time on activities which might be useful and even excellent in themselves, but which in fact would distract us from the path we should walk, the efforts we should be making, the success we should be striving to attain with God's grace.

II

The requirements of our vocation

"As for us," Saint Peter said, "we shall consecrate ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

This freedom from preoccupations strikes us as indispensable. That is why we shall be neither mendicant friars like the sons of Saint Francis, nor fillers of the soil like the sons of Saint Benedict. Before all else, we shall be apostles. For that reason we shall aspire after the freedom and independence that come from the absence of material preoccupations. The words of our Constitutions on poverty are to be understood in this way. We shall love this virtue as one of the conditions of all moral freedom. The man who desires earthly goods is the slave of those who can satisfy him, while the man who wants nothing but his daily bread and shelter is very strong in the battle against obstacles and seductions. Apostolic poverty is for us the guarantee of greatness and dignity of character. The apostle who does not have a great and beautiful character will never be a true apostle, because he will lack the influence of unselfishness, without which there can be no conversions.

I implore you then, my dear Brothers, to flee from the love of wealth and thus protect against the tendency to material well-being which is one of the greatest degradations of our time and the destruction of all aspirations to Christian perfection and the supernatural order.

Instead of loving gold and silver, love souls. Hunger and thirst to conquer as many as you can for Our Lord Jesus Christ. Then you will deserve to be his apostles.

Do not deceive yourselves. If you want to extend the reign of God, you will have great deceptions, great persecutions, and great suffering. The apostle who has not suffered, what can he do? And the one who has not been tempted, what can he know? Courage is absolutely indispensable to you. And you must remember this: if you want to work for the Kingdom of God, you are to remain joyful in shame and in pain: "And so they (the Apostles) left the presence of the Sanhedrin glad to have the honor of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name" (Acts 5:41). Yes, joy in the midst of trials and humiliations, because this is the surest apostolic means you have of extending the Kingdom of God.

Preaching, teaching, spiritual direction, and charitable works will be our principal means of action. You will combine them so as best to obtain, by means of strongly united action, the final goal we have set for ourselves. You will strive to march like an army whose strength resides in the unity of its command and whose defeat is certain when each soldier fights according to his whim. May the beauty of the Kingdom of God enrapture you! Why was the world created, if not for the Kingdom of God? Why did Our Lord become man, if not to repair the ruins of this Kingdom, devastated by Satan?

This is certainly an unfathomable mystery. But it is a mystery full of divine inspiration for those who consider as worthless all passing things and whose ambition reaches out for something infinite like eternity and divine perfection.

THIRD LETTER

On the coming of the Kingdom of God

My very dear Brothers,

The goal that God seems to want for our little Congregation continues to define itself day after day by the variety of work that comes to us with no particular initiative on our part. Our activity is very diverse: a college in Nîmes, a residence in Paris, missions in the rural areas, preaching in the large cities, general Associations such as those promoting Sunday observance, nocturnal adoration, a school in Philippopolis, a seminary in Adrianople, missions in Australia, the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption, the Oblates, the Nurses of the Poor. Should we not fear that we are scattering our resources and weakening ourselves by doing so many things? Because of that I consider it important to remind you, in a more positive way, that our life is built upon a broad vision which must nourish our common life and serve as a bond to bring together all our various efforts.

I

The reign of the three persons of the Holy Trinity

Our motto, "Thy Kingdom Come," gives us this main idea. We want to cooperate as much as we can in any effort to extend the reign of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Thereby we will struggle against the three great errors of modern times. We want to help bring about:

1. The reign of God the Father. No one wants God anymore! His existence is denied. Personal morality is in vogue. Divine Providence is rejected. All this has shaken society. Our first task is to proclaim the rights of God and his sovereign dominion over all creation.
2. The reign of God the Son. God's Son became man and as man he is King of a regenerated society. His reign is that of revealed truth. His Kingdom is the Church, in which Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, lives among us in a threefold way: in the preaching of the truth, in the Blessed Sacrament, and in his Vicar, the Sovereign Pontiff. From these principles there follows for us another series of duties: the defense of revealed truth, the cult of the Eucharist, and dedication to the Holy See.
3. The reign of the Holy Spirit. By grace the Spirit introduces us to the supernatural world of sanctity and proposes to us the most perfect model of this sanctity in the Blessed Virgin his Spouse. From this flows a third series of duties we must assume if we want to be faithful to our motto: the proclamation of the supernatural order, the imitation of the Blessed Virgin's virtues, and ministry to the Congregations of women which request our help and support.

The reign of God the Father in the universe, the reign of God the Son in the Church, the reign of the Holy Spirit in souls; such is, it seems to me, the central idea which must inspire the Assumptionist family.

II

The position of the Church in today's world

To these general considerations, [\[xx\]](#) I shall add two others, which I shall continually stress: the position which the Church must take toward disappearing societies; and the initiative of the Church toward advancing democracy.

1. The Church's position concerning disappearing societies. The Church has always upheld the principle of authority. It is her fundamental principle and she cannot surrender it without ceasing to be what she is. She must not work for the ruin of anything. Rather, she must maintain what is established, even when she suffers from it. A careful study of the Books of the Maccabees gives us striking examples of this. There we see the Jews remain faithful even to the oaths they had sworn to the princes who had enslaved them. But when war broke their yoke, they either gave allegiance to the conqueror or kept their restored freedom.

This is what the Church does. She desires the downfall of no one. If upheavals do occur, however, she lets them take place and tries to profit from them. Here is an example. Revolutions are destroying the concordats in Italy, Austria, and Spain. Could it be that the Church is in any way responsible for this? Evidently not! However, when this change will have been accomplished without her and in spite of her, why should she not attempt to profit from it? After such a violent and revolutionary separation between herself and the State, why should she not attempt, through the use of freedom, to draw all the good she can from a State which will have become relatively better, though less good absolutely speaking?

In sum, the Church has not caused this divorce, but once it has taken place despite her efforts, why blame her if she profits from it? What will in fact happen? Corrupt societies will fall, the ties binding the Church to them will be loosened, and she will forge with younger societies new links adapted to their new forms. From this view a second remark flows logically.

2. The initiative of the Church toward advancing democracy. Kings have gone. Aristocracies have disappeared or are in the process of doing so. The middle class is very weak against the incoming tide. It is obvious that democracy is advancing more strongly and irresistibly each day and that it will continue to do so unless, in the plans of Divine Providence, it is crushed by some unheard of despotism. Must the Church despair of the future? No, a thousand times no. However, I cannot repeat it too often, my dear Brothers, we must be all things to all men. That is why we must make every effort to have as much contact as possible with the common people. And that is why it seems to me that we must do all we can to engage in apostolates to the common people. It is by the evangelization of the poor that the evangelization of the world began. In this respect let us be faithful to our vocation.

III

Our more particular goal

We can say this: each religious Order in the Church had a goal, and when this goal was reached, its mission seemed to end. Our goal is:

1. To help the Church, as much as we can, in her struggle against the satanic principle of the Revolution.

2. To let the old condemned societies fall; then, while respecting the reservations of the Syllabus on the great and unchanging principles of authority, to accept freedom straightforwardly and loyally for a period of undetermined length, and finally to point out to democracy all that Christianity has given the world from the point of view of fraternal and universal equality. For we must keep in mind that as Christians we possess an incomparable equality, one that political equality can never hope to equal: equality of birth, which those who deny the unity of race can never hope to enjoy; equality, no doubt, in original sin, but also equality in redemption; equality in adoption; equality in the nourishment of the Eucharist; equality in the call to perfection, since Our Lord declared this a question of personal decision. "If you want to be perfect," notice the words "If you want"; equality in hope; equality at the final judgment. There, it is true, will begin the eternal inequality based on merit.

These thoughts, my very dear Brothers, must encourage you to set your sights on the highest values. You have magnificent deeds to accomplish in working to extend the Kingdom of God according to your motto.

FOURTH LETTER

On our love for Our Lord

The letter on the extension of the Kingdom of God is finished. I begin here what I want to say on the love of our Lord [\[xxi\]](#) .

My very dear Brothers,

Because the love of Our Lord is a fundamental characteristic of our Congregation, it is important to inspire you with it by the most effective means.

I do not know of any more powerful way than the meditation of all he did for us during his earthly life.

The Assumptionist cannot have a more perfect model. The life of Jesus Christ is the living exemplar of his Rule. And he finds in every detail of this admirable life, along with the proof of Christ's love for him, the most fruitful motives to love him undividedly in return.

I shall focus on the principal circumstances of the mysteries of God's Son made man. I shall try to highlight very rapidly for you the most practical teachings on religious perfection that flow from those mysteries.

The Annunciation

The time has come. The angel of the Lord is sent to Mary. A God will become man in the womb of a virgin, a creature freed of all stain, including that of original sin—the highest of all the privileges ever conferred on the children of Adam.

An angel has also been sent to me. God has placed at my service one of those ministering spirits, commissioned to help me obtain salvation (Heb 1:14).

Moreover, he has given me a guide to train me in fidelity to my duty, to help me form Christ in me. He has purified me of the stain of original sin. He calls me on earth to the perfection of the angels.

Mary is greeted with these words, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Lk 1:28). Am I not also filled with heavenly graces, not only as a Christian, but also as a religious?

To be sure, the capacity of Mary's heart for grace is immeasurably greater than that of my own, but cannot my heart, by the action of this same grace, acquire incomparable proportions?

"The Lord is with you." To form Jesus Christ in me as perfectly as possible: is not this the whole mystery of religious life?

What is the time spent in novitiate, if not a period of time similar to that during which Jesus was being formed in Mary's womb? The Divine Master, in fact, chose to submit to the external laws of nature in order to be a model for me, even though he was a perfect man from the first instant of his conception.

Mary is troubled and pleads for enlightenment, and the adorable Trinity is revealed to her. I see the person of the Son made flesh, the action of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Father: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow" (Lk 1:35).

God the Son requests of Mary the means of acquiring a body, in order to come into the world through her. To accomplish such a wonder required infinite love and divine omnipotence working together. The same wonder is there for me.

Jesus Christ wants to be formed in my soul. In that consists all the perfection of the religious life. Jesus Christ wants to come into the world through me. That is, he wants to be manifested, preached, and proclaimed in all my actions and in all my words. In that lies the perfection of the apostle.

Divine love alone can be the source of this mystery. In fact, this love is placed at my disposal: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you."

Man is incapable of such a miracle, and so eternal power is also placed at my disposal: "And the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow."

Oh God, you give me your Son through your omnipotence. As a proof of your love which forms him in me, you also give me the power of the Father, the humiliations of the Son, and the love of the Holy Spirit. This is offered to me if I want to enter into this divine life by participating, as much as I am able, in the re-enactment of the mystery of the Incarnation in the depths of my soul.

But what is it that is communicated by the adorable Trinity reaching out to such a sinner as I, such a nothing? The angel announces a throne and an eternal kingdom for the Son of Mary. Jesus Christ will in fact be king and his Kingdom will be the Church. He comes to reign, and among all his creatures no one as much as Mary will help him take possession of his Kingdom.

Once again I find the meaning of my vocation. I am a Christian, but especially a religious and an Assumptionist, so that I may, in imitation of Mary, contribute to the reign of Jesus Christ in the world.

The power of the Father, the Incarnation of the Son, the love of the Holy Spirit: it is in these that the adorable Trinity of Heaven manifests itself.

Jesus, Mary, the Church: here is, I might say, the manifestation of another Trinity on earth. If this expression is not absolutely correct, it is nonetheless true that Mary and the Church are inexpressibly united in Jesus and are one with him. Mary, his Mother, gives her most pure blood

to form the humanity of Jesus; and the Church, the bride of Jesus Christ, is completely one with her spouse.

And this is what I must work at unceasingly: to form Jesus Christ in me, to form Jesus Christ in the Church. This is what is asked of me, just as Gabriel asked it of Mary.

What is Mary's answer? "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38), a word of obedience. Do I want to obey? Do I want to say "Yes" to this marvelous and tremendous work by which Jesus Christ will take possession of me and become my intimate life? Do I want to add, as Mary did: "Let what you have said be done to me"?

In other words, do I accept that all my spiritual formation be carried out under the direction of the guide who has been given to me?

The Visitation

1. Notice the good you can do in the simplest encounters. Mary's greeting to her cousin sanctifies John in Elizabeth's womb and prepares him to be one day the greatest of the children of men. It is the same with the simplest activities of a religious if they are edifying.

2. Mary's perfection and privileges are explained to us by Elizabeth: "Blessed is she who believed...." The spirit of faith will enable us to work wonders, will form Jesus Christ in us and will make apostles of us. When we are ready, our faith will allow God to fulfill all his promises in us. "Because what has been promised to you by the Lord will be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45).

3. Mary completes the explanation by pointing out to us in her answer, which the Church has made its most beautiful hymn, the goal of her life: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord." She also expresses her soul's rejoicing: "My spirit exults..."; the happiness of knowing she is nothing: "Because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid"; the divine plan in regard to the proud and his mercy toward his servants: "His mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him"; and all of this "forever" (Lk 1:46-55).

If I want to be perfect like Mary, I must work for God alone, direct all my aspirations toward him, rejoice in my nothingness, destroy all my pride, devote myself to those who serve God and his Church, and do it forever.

The Nativity of Jesus Christ

Let us listen. "The Word was made flesh" (Jn 1:14). There are two births of Jesus Christ. He first issues from his Mother's womb to go to the crib. He is also born in a more sublime way, according to Saint Ambrose: "Where is Christ born, in a higher sense, if not in your heart and your bosom?" (P.L. 15:1647).

It is to this deeper birth in my bosom and in my heart that I want to turn all my attention. I especially want to concentrate on its effects in me. For now, I would like to break these down into two.

Jesus Christ takes flesh in me in order to make of me a new man and to make of me a son of God.

1. He communicates his birth to me through Baptism. By being born in me, he forces me to be reborn to the whole supernatural order. In the words of Saint Leo: "Just as all the faithful who are born at the baptismal fonts are crucified with Christ in his Passion, raised up with him at Resurrection, and seated with him at the right hand of the Father at the Ascension, so are they born together with him at the Nativity" (P.L. 54:213).

This new birth obliges us to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord; "We are called Christians in vain, if we are not the imitators of Christ" (St. Leo P.L. 54:212).

2. He destroys sin in me. "For every man in his new birth, the water of Baptism is like the womb of the Virgin. The fountain is filled with the same Holy Spirit who filled the Virgin, and just as sin was abolished in view of Christ's holy conception, so it is removed here by the waters of

Baptism” (St. Leo, P.L. 54:206).

3. He makes me humble. The same God who abased himself in the crib now abases himself in all the misery and defilement of my heart. “Let him who begins to dwell in your hearts show you the grace of humility” (St. Augustine).

4. In changing the goal of life, he gives light and the strength to attain it: “All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men” (Jn 1:4).

What is supernatural life if not light, strength, conscience? It is light that shows us the goal; strength which gives us the means to attain it; and conscience which results from this light and this strength and which impresses on us a sense of the obligation we have of pursuing an infinite goal. As a man renewed, I become a child of God: “To all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God” (Jn 1:12).

How will this mystery come to be? God will send his Son to be born in us.

Since I have Jesus Christ in me, I am born of God: “born...of God himself” (Jn 1:13). God grants me the benefits of a divine birth. The eternal Word is in me. When god sees his Son in me, he accepts me as his son and gives me all of his Son.

He gives me all the rights of adoption: “If we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs of Christ” (Rom 8:17).

Fr. d’Alzon’s manuscript ends abruptly with this quotation.

Second Address

Fr. d'Alzon took an active though unofficial part in Vatican I. This, along with the troubles in France in 1870-71, the revival, starting in Prussia, or an anti-Christian struggle which will engulf the Church in France for many years, stirred up in the Founder a wealth of thoughts, projects, resolutions, and commitments which are to be found, distilled and brilliantly exposed, in his closing address to the General Chapter of 1873. After having presented a panoramic view of the situation of the Church and of France, Fr. d'Alzon concentrates on the works undertaken by the Assumptionists since the preceding Chapter, and he vigorously draws up a plan of external action and a more definitive program of internal organization for the Congregation.

CLOSING ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER

September 18, 1873

My very dear Brothers,

We have just had another precious meeting, where your religious life is enhanced, where your zeal is invigorated, where you become more imbued with the principles which are our *raison d'être*, where your goal appears more clearly, and where the means of attaining it become more precise. Strengthened by your cooperation, your knowledge, and the admirable unity of your

views and affection, I have given thanks to God that I am the father of a family, tiny to be sure, but in which a purification process has resulted in choice, select members, capable of an even greater good.

Now that we are about to go our separate ways and return to our various labors, give me leave to add some brief remarks to what I said to you five years ago. At that time, I spoke to you about the spirit of Assumption. Today I would like to say something about the activity which that spirit must produce, an activity to which what has taken place may serve as a sort of prelude.

I

A LOOK AT THE PAST

A — THE CHURCH AND ASSUMPTION SINCE 1868

At the time of the last General Chapter, we were mostly preoccupied with the democratic movement that was taking place and that seemed to dominate everything else. At the same time the Sovereign Pontiff convoked the bishops of the Catholic world to an Ecumenical Council. To him, the situation seemed grave indeed, and the troubles of the Church great, caused by infernal conspiracies cleverly hatched by declared enemies or by the false brethren. It seemed urgent to him that the plenitude of Truth confront the absolutism of negation, by which the Revolution, in all its forms, intends to crush the various affirmations of our faith. Already, preoccupied by this democratic invasion, you had found it useful to participate in what is basically a proletarian work, the orphanage at Arras. Its director, in joining us, brought along the wealth of his experience, of his labors, and of his initiative. He showed us how, by paternal affection, uncouth dispositions can be polished, rough characters can be rendered more manageable, and the most rebellious souls be sanctified. This was only a beginning, but a beginning which already points the long road to be followed, the royal way of love for the little ones, the poor, and all the neglected.

Meanwhile the bishops made their way to Rome and I had the honor of following my bishop. Like other leaders of young Congregations, I felt I had to go in order to find out what the Council would decide concerning their Congregations' existence. Events did not allow the Council to consider the questions dealing with religious families. Yet it was easy to see that Roman

wisdom, no matter what was said, did not want to endanger the status quo. Rather, the Council protected a movement like the one which modifies or improves, in war time, the tactics and the weapons of destruction, the discipline of armies, and creates a science out of the art of mutual slaughter. However, the comparable movement of the Church resulted from its experience in the struggles against enemies who were increasingly stubborn, ferocious, and clever. If the cohorts of the powers of evil were more numerous and better prepared, the Church wanted to have battalions that were more steadfast, more intelligent, more energetic. Consequently the newly organized recruits would surely be of help to the older monastic legions.

I was soon reassured and became concerned solely with the great pontifical question. What a source of emotions and anguish! What subtleties, more or less theological! What diplomatic stratagems, what menaces, what fear in timorous hearts! If, as Pius IX said, a Council has three phases: the stage of man, the stage of Satan, and the stage of God, you can believe that some feared that man and Satan were apparently about to have the upper hand. God was not about to appear, or so it seemed to our impatience. We do not yet know how the action of the Holy Spirit shapes the conscience of a genuine bishop, even though his natural feelings might incline him toward worldly views and too human decisions. Finally, your Father had the immense joy of attending that solemn session during which were proclaimed and commented, in all their richness, the words of the Savior: "You are Peter. I have prayed for you. Feed my sheep." At that moment he also saw the storm darken the dome and the vaults of St. Peter's. He heard the thunder that some likened to that of Mt. Sinai. These were the portent of easily foreseeable troubles which God permitted, after the great councils, as if to strengthen their decrees by the trial of temptation. In the past, every covenant required sacrifices. Each Ecumenical Council, which is a new covenant in truth between man's spirit and God's spirit, always claimed victims. Two months later, the Vatican Council had its mysterious immolation, and Assumption had the glory of offering the blood of one of its best sons.

Let us not forget it. Rome was a prisoner because France was vanquished. Assumption saw fit to show its fighting spirit by furnishing to this woeful war as many military chaplains as we could, and then some. Sedan, Metz, Mainz, Paris saw you devoting yourselves on the battlefields, in the sorrows of captivity, in the horrors of sieges, exposed to the assaults of the enemies of France and, sad to say, to the bullets of her children. You knew how to prove that you had religious courage. Still, under the bullets of the Prussians and of the army of Versailles, concerned Catholics asked themselves whether revolutionary plots might not be resisted and thwarted by a Catholic League.

B — SKETCH OF ASSUMPTION'S WORK SINCE 1870

The notion of a Catholic League, sprouted from the bloody slaughter of the Commune, grew with astonishing rapidity. The Catholic Committee of Paris saw similar committees spring up throughout France. The Christian sap rose again very actively, a sure sign of the powerful vitality of the tree and of the merciful dispensation of Providence even in the midst of our most painful humiliation.

Part of the gangrenous evil undoubtedly comes from education. We tried in *Revue de l'Enseignement Chretien*, by crying out "Carthage must be destroyed"; we tried to make people realize the urgent need for a prompt remedy. Despite the hesitations of a possibly too human prudence, we were able to hold an Educational Congress. The second Congress has not yet been held; but when it is held, we want to lay an even stronger foundation for the first developments of our future freedom. In the midst of the political preoccupations of the moment, we would have been unable to do this to the extent we desired and which such an important question legitimately requires.

While we tried, as much as our restricted means allowed, to fight with the pen, we also paid attention to other Catholic works: workers' clubs, social centers, youth centers. Did we do everything we could? Evidently not. We were too few. Yet many among you shared their experience and the result of their labors at the admirable meetings in which the membership of the Congress of Workers' Association rose from 60 to 300, and from 300 to 1,000.

We needed financial resources in order to help some of the workers' projects that were starting. We also needed prayer to allay God's wrath. Expiation by prayer, expiation by intelligent almsgiving—two ideas blended into one, expiation, which was at the origin of Our Lady of Salvation. The Association organized public prayers, so necessary for France, and invigorated a number of other works which had languished because of lack of funds. From its inception, the Association gave impetus to pilgrimages, which touched the heart of God. The Mother of God was, so to speak, forced to renew her miracles. The pilgrimages also made popular those public acts of faith which were no longer in style, so we were told. My Brothers, this is only a very sketchy outline of what you have accomplished, of the works in which, for five years, you have more or less directly been involved. You haven't been the only ones involved in these enterprises, but your cooperation, slight though it may have been, at least revealed your intention, fixed your direction, and characterized your spirit.

II

A PLAN OF ACTION

What are these first attempts compared to what you still have to do? “The journey will be long for you” I say to you as the angel did to Elijah (1 Kings 19:7). What vast horizons open up before us! Let us try to point out some glimpses, some kind of early plans. We will have summarized everything when we have said that our goal is the restoration of Catholic mores by faith in Christian principles.

A — EXTERNAL ACTION: THE RESTORATION OF CHRISTIAN MORAL ATTITUDES

Christian mores! They tended to disappear. Voltaire’s sarcasms, the press and its obscenities, the conceit of science, impatience with the weight of God and any other kind of burden, the need to believe in nothing in order to affirm the right to do anything: such are the basic principles upon which the new social order has pretended to build. To mock everything: gold, pleasure, power; by robbery, orgy, and revolutions. To proceed by hate, lying, and violence. Is this not a summary of these new rights? Either we must perish, or we must clamber out of the abyss toward which Europe seems to be rushing.

What needs be done? Purify the air, poisoned by the miasma of immorality. For this we commissioned steam locomotives to carry caravans of pilgrims to numerous sanctuaries. We sanctified these instruments of an often guilty industry and have used them to carry throughout France our repentance and our expiation. Such pilgrimages will obviously diminish in number, without ceasing entirely, whenever other kinds of manifestations prove more opportune. They are, after all, only immense processions, longer and more effective because they are more painful. By these pious journeys of her sons, the Church regains possession of the public domain and of the open air. We now affirm ourselves in full daylight. Christians who affirm themselves are very close to becoming triumphant Christians. Note that the troubles of France seem to have given the Catholics the privilege of needing merely to show themselves in order to conquer. So we showed ourselves in Paris, Lyons, Lourdes, La Salette, Marseilles and other places too numerous to mention. We showed ourselves in Grenoble and were insulted. But let us remember that insults and contradictions are also of value to Christians.

Now, after having affirmed our faith by these purifying journeys, after having proclaimed our right to emerge from our sacristies, is it not appropriate to re-enter our sanctuaries to offer greater adoration to the God who inhabits them and gives them life? The cult of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, nocturnal adoration, -frequent communion, are these not customs to

which we must return, because they bring weakened and exhausted souls back to the very core of the Church, to the divine principle of its life on earth?

I have already spoken about orphanages and agricultural schools. Oh, why do we lack workers! How many poor little souls there are to be rescued, who belong to the social class into which Jesus Christ himself was born. May God send many workers to labor in this section of the vineyard. When it will have been adequately tended, revolutions will have become impossible.

Another way to cause the ruins of hell is by popular meetings. A moment ago, I spoke about workers' clubs, and I now want to express certain reservations. Periodically gathering such groups of working men, without giving them strong direction, is very imprudent, in the eyes of those who do not want such groups to become simply a means of satisfying someone's ambition. Very soon leaders lose their popularity, or they keep it only by using means which they sooner or later regret. Experience shows that people band together in times of social unrest. Later on, the groups break up when they no longer need to protect themselves by uniting, or when they no longer serve some political party. It is at just such a time of group decomposition, which I think is not far off, that we must start a number of new works.

The reorganization of the army creates new obligations for the clergy. Each young generation must pass through the barracks. What evil or what good will come from such a situation, if we are faithful to our vocation! Those among you who have heard the confessions of from eight to ten thousand prisoners of war, on the average, know that the soldier is accessible to the priest who knows how to speak to him in language worthy of a soldier, and especially worthy of God. I repeat that we are too few to say that such a ministry will be ours. But the sympathy that you have inspired among those admirable officers who want to have not only a military command but also an apostolate will enable you to accomplish even more than you are able to do personally. As you know, an Assumptionist religious should be dissatisfied with himself unless he has accomplished a hundred times more than he can. His rest must consist of trying to find out how to do a thousand times more. I urge novices to ponder this basic maxim of our Association. Thus, being fewer than fifty, we might count as if we were one thousand.

Besides the military circles, to which I draw all your attention, I would like to see the creation of guilds, in order, sooner or later, that they might replace the workers' clubs. Are there any among you who have not heard about those admirable families of workers that, under the protection of a patron saint or of a great mystery, formed guilds? From apprentice to master craftsman, everyone found a place and an encouragement in such guilds. I know there were abuses. I know about their despotism, imposed upon them by too oppressive royal legislation. Still, workers' guilds must have had something excellent about them, because they became the

prime targets of revolutionary destroyers.

Why not restore them? Learning from past mistakes, avoiding abuses, adapting them to present requirements, why not permeate them with the divine element of faith, which cries out to God, "My Father!"; of hope, which counts above all on heavenly riches; of charity, which unites hearts against great social hate, of which Paris still witnesses the devastation?

One of us once mentioned that there are some things that we can do and others that we only suggest. We will form such guilds when we can. Advice may seem to be something very small indeed; but dropped upon an active soul, it can be a very fruitful seed.

The action I am proposing to you is based upon certain ideas: the principles of faith. I know that today such principles are excluded from society, and I need furnish no further proof than the shameful treatment of the Sovereign Pontiff. Jesus Christ, in the person of Pius IX, is a prisoner of the Revolution. Kings do not want to admit that, since the preaching of the Gospel, their rights rest upon divine justice. And the teaching of this truth, in its loftiest expression, is entrusted to the Apostolic See. The effort to which I invite you is based upon a number of Christian ideas, on a doctrine which only yesterday was the object of a great decision, which Prussia, unable to destroy it even after having vanquished France, has tried to persecute. Despite derision, despite persecution in the press, despite the bullets of the Commune, this doctrine seems to have grown because God seems to have said, "The hour of your triumph has come."

Such ideas must be disseminated and made accessible to everyone. To accomplish this, suitable means must be employed. One of us has successfully tried to give courses for workers. Let them be multiplied, by ourselves or by our friends. After the workers, will come the members of the middle class. Despite their greater vanity, they are no less ignorant of their religion. The workers were brought up by Brothers; the bourgeois were educated in some State-run school. We know well enough what the chaplains were able to teach them and what the professors then proceeded to unteach them. Therefore, if possible, you will begin classes for the middle class. Who knows? The fear they still have may cause them to rally round your word.

What can I say about education except that, more than ever, we must hold fast to the principles of Assumption and ward off with greatest care any false mentality that would refuse to accept our point of departure, our plans, our objective.

I might say the same about the publications that some of us have become involved in. Let us admit that the *Revue de l'Enseignement chretien* did not accomplish everything that it could have. I blame myself first, in order to have the right to blame others. Such a situation must cease, and for my part, I promise to do everything that I can. After all, there were some marvelous results. To the *Revue* we owe the first Congress, which posited some very Catholic principles, despite the liberal moderation of many. We hope that a second Congress will soon be held, possibly within a year. We will prepare it as well as we can. Maybe, if the religious movement corresponds to other movements, we can expect that its results will repay us for the vexations caused by a longer wait. When will the day come when these efforts result in a Catholic University? True, the obstacles are many and the opposition is strong. Yet it seems to me that we have overcome more than that since the beginning of the century.

In 1801, the Church was a captive. Suddenly there arose a man destined to crush the Revolution, although later he became its slave. But he reopened our churches and freed religion from a thousand vexations. Since then the Church of God has continually won greater freedom, has cast off many shackles, and it will cast off many more if only we will it. I have not yet mentioned our foreign missions. Although Australia is temporarily put to the side because certain contractual obligations have not been met, great good is being done in Bulgaria. There is an association of employers and apprentices, and a school with two hundred boys enrolled. Both have had lasting success. Our Oblate Sisters have helped us very effectively in a hospital, a clinic, a boarding school and other schools. All this is in its opening stage, but it is a valuable outpost against Greek and Russian schism. We will be accused of rashness. How puny we are compared to the giant that we are attacking!

The Church today has three enemies: the Revolution, Prussia, and Russia. And Russia is not the least formidable of them. Yet, what an immense field of endeavor it is for us! What Jesus said to his rude disciples I say to you: "The harvest is rich" (Mt 9:37). The disciples became apostles and conquered the world. Decide, my Brothers, whether you want to conquer Russia and bring its vast harvest into the granary of the Father. I tremble as I speak thus to you. Yet something within me cries out that, if Assumption wants to, it can reap the harvest, with God's help.

B – INTERNAL ACTION: A MORE DEFINITIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE INSTITUTE

I have just been speaking about external action and how we must prepare for it. But what preparation do we ourselves need? Like me, you have considered that the main objective of the Chapter was the establishment of an aristocracy of talent, knowledge, and virtue, placed at the

head of our religious family. It takes a lot of nerve to speak in such a way, when one is presiding such a group as this. But I do not speak of what exists, but rather of what must come to be.

Another point: the preparation of the members of the Congregation, accepted, if possible, already as youngsters. This thought, which was that of the Council of Trent when dealing with the question of the transformation of the clergy in those unhappy days, is obviously supported by such a precedent. We will receive in our alummates, from earliest youth, all those children whom our efforts and the charity of the faithful will allow us to welcome. How numerous these elect children would be, if only financial resources were as abundant as are the vocations!

Counting on Divine Providence we have already begun. God has blessed us. Our initial success invites us to continue. We will continue and thus be able to add our present boys to those who, from various locations and age groups, will knock at our door and ask for a place in our home. Carefully we will introduce them all to our house of testing: first, those who, before coming to us, gave themselves up to the occasionally bitter joy of experiencing storm or shipwreck; and then those who, solicitous to be a bit more like the younger brothers of the angels, did not believe that they had to stain their spotless robe in the world, at the risk of tasting later the tearful bread of repentance.

With every passing day, the formation of both types will become stronger, more consistent, more attentive, more severe. Experience has warned us, and we want to learn from its sad lessons. Today we are a family; tomorrow we will be a people. Such a transformation requires very energetic supervision. We have no doubt that the transformation will be a happy one, but it will be so only if it takes place in the same way as all truly religious developments do.

I have spoken of the need to revive Christian moral attitudes with the help of the great principles of faith. Therefore, we need saints, but saints enlightened by Catholic knowledge. Consequently, after novitiate, for those who have already completed their classical studies, we require many years of study of Sacred Scripture, of philosophy, and of theology, with frequent examinations. This will produce, we hope, men whom knowledge will not intoxicate, as sometimes happens, because they will have placed their knowledge under the protection of religious holiness.

CONCLUSIONS

I have summarized almost everything that we have done since the last Chapter; I have also indicated what we would like to do, which is practically infinite. Before I finish, let me give you three pieces of advice.

In a way, the first springs from the present situation. We are in full Christian crisis. We have already suffered much and now we see victory at hand. Let us take advantage of it and not drive away those who wish to come near us. I know of some men who are so convinced of the perfection of their own way of doing things that they condemn everything that does not conform to it. This is a kind of modern Puritanism which, by the process of elimination, will become an egocentric clique. As far as we are concerned, let us seek to attract, and avoid distrust which belittles. May confidence be one of our major means of bringing about the victory of the cause of truth. We are not the owners of truth; we are only its servants. Isn't the cause of truth the cause of God? And God's cause is His alone.

My second piece of advice is not to count too much on success. Open your history books. What do you see, if not victorious peoples promptly becoming decadent? As things are now, we can count on some successes. And I fear. Let us be watchful and remain always in the true light: "While you still have the light, believe in the light, and you will become sons of light" (Jn 12:36). The great evil of present times is darkness, is untruth. Let us remain in truth. Let us serve truth, witness to it, spread it. Then we will have done our job, and will not have succumbed to illusion.

My third piece of advice is that you slough off a certain prudence, which is often the refuge of shameful laziness. Prudent sometimes means faint-hearted. Now more than ever is the time to repeat Bossuet's saying, "Faith is daring." Let us have the boldness of faith, even though some might call it fool-hardiness. Real prudence is the queen of the moral virtues; and a queen commands, acts, and, if necessary, fights. Some have transformed prudence into a frightened old woman. Such prudence is in bed slippers and dressing-gown, with a cold, coughing a lot. Conventional prudence, I do not want. You must not heed such prudence. As far as I am concerned, I always want to trust madly in God's Providence, even though, abandoned by all, I end up dying in a hospital.

My young Brothers, I do not want to end these remarks without saying a few words to you. From what Assumption has already done, you can tell that, with God's grace, she can do still more. But that depends on you. Your elders have given you the example; you have to follow it. Why

can't you do what they have done? To be sure, they have more experience than you in doing good. But why can't you have their ardor? They will share their experience. Your ardor, placed at their disposition, will increase their strength and yours tenfold. Is there anything in this world more noble, more beautiful, more grand than the career to which they invite you? I have looked, but could find nothing.

So follow in their footsteps. If you outrun them, they will not be jealous. They have borne troubles that you seem destined not to experience. So what? God will reward us all. No matter how many the crowns, they will always be more than we can expect. God will make them beautiful and glorious, not like our merits, but like his mercy and his love.

THE FINAL MOMENTS OF FATHER D'ALZON

(Father Picard asked Father Emmanuel Bailly to write the following circular letter on the final moments of Father d'Alzon. It is important because it contains the last recommendations of our revered Founder).

Nîmes, November 16, 1880

My very dear Father,

Since yesterday evening, our beloved Father has weakened so much that we thought the time had come to gather all the religious around his bed to ask him for a final blessing.

Amid his weakness, and when allowed by the prostration that overcame him, he continued to show lucidity of mind and admirable serenity of soul. His patience, his sweet and calm resignation manifested themselves continually by words that he is at peace with God and belongs entirely to him.

—“Is there anything you want, Father?”

—“I want only God’s will.”

—“Do you have any desires that you would like to express?”

—“I desire only heaven.”

Today, at 1:30 P.M., all the religious were gathered in a room next to his. I approached him and said, “Father, the religious would like to see you for a moment. They are all gathered. May I let them come in?”

—“Yes, my friend, have them come in for a moment.”

The religious surrounded his bed. While they entered, he smiled kindly and, making an effort to keep his eyes open, he looked upon them tenderly. Fathers Hippolyte, Picard, Laurent, and I were on either side of his bed. The professed and novices filled the room, according to rank of precedence. After a moment of silence, Father, with his eyes closed and his arms outstretched on his bed, began to speak. His voice was weak and filled with emotion. We could barely hear him. He spoke very slowly and very calmly: “My dear Brothers, you know that after God and the Blessed Virgin, you are the ones I have most loved in this world...”

After a moment of silence, he continued, slowly emphasizing each word; “We are about to part!... Submission to God’s will! He is the Master!”

Emotion overwhelmed us all; we were hard put to restrain it. He seemed to notice. He opened his eyes, looked at us for a moment, and, closing his eyes again, calmly continued: "Many good religious are not here. My heart goes out to them!"

As Father again fell silent, Fr. Laurent thought it was time to ask for his blessing. Fr. Picard, trying his best to overcome his emotion, spoke to Father with a voice filled with tears: "Father, we beg your forgiveness for all the trouble we have given you."

Father instantly replied: "It is I who should kneel and ask forgiveness from all of you."

"Father," said Fr. Picard, "please give us your blessing."

Immediately we all fell to our knees, no longer able to control our emotions. Father lifted his arm and held it high in solemn benediction, with great effort and for several moments, as if he were blessing an immense throng. He gave us his final blessing.

Fr. Picard immediately said, "A blessing also, Father, for all our houses!" His voice turned into sobs.

"Yes," responded Father, "I am with them." His arm fell back upon the bed, as if caused by great fatigue after great effort.

"You will not forget us, Father," continued Fr. Picard, "You will be with us!"

—"I shall leave, but my heart will be with you."

—“You will protect us!”

—“As much as I can.”

While Fr. Picard kissed his hand, our Father was squeezing mine with great feeling. Each one, sobbing, approached, knelt, and kissed his hand. Deeply moved himself, he said, “Be good religious!”

Nothing can render completely the goodness and gravity with which Father spoke to us during these few moments which we will never forget. It was a heartrending scene, during which he alone seemed to dominate the emotion that we all felt. We had to leave, in order to weep a bit more easily. We also had to avoid prolonging the fatigue and the emotion that had obviously overcome him despite his efforts. Fr. Picard sent the religious to the chapel.

A few moments late, a telegram arrived from Rome. It was the answer to the one Fr. Picard sent yesterday, which had said:

“To Monsignor Macchi, Rome. Our Founder and Superior General, Fr. d’Alzon, is dying. I beg you to place him at the feet of His Holiness and ask for him a blessing. Picard.”

The response read: “His Holiness imparts the implored blessing.”

Fr. Picard, Fr. Hippolyte, Fr. Laurent and I immediately returned to see Father.

“Father,” said Fr. Picard, “the Pope sends you his blessing.”

Father opened his eyes, looked at the telegram in Fr. Picard’s hand, and said, “All the religious are in chapel?”

—“Yes, Father.” And Father, thinking of others more than of himself, continued, as if preoccupied, “Have you read it to them?”

—“No, Father, I insisted on telling you before anyone else.”

—“Thank you. You will read it to them.”

—“Yes, Father.” Then Fr. Picard made the sign of the cross in benediction. Slowly, unaided, Father then made a large sign of the cross.

It is after this sad yet consoling scene, and while the religious are still at prayer in chapel, that I write this to you.

Endnotes

[i] “Extending the reign of Jesus Christ in souls” is a very supernatural formula for apostolate. We no longer use the expression “in the world” as in Fr. d’Alzon’s note on the Order (E.S. , p. 645). It is not a question of the temporal triumph of Christ; the reign of Christ is not of this world, though it manifests itself in the world. We specify “reign of Christ” and not “Kingdom of God,” because it is not up to us to bring about the Kingdom of God and extend it. The Kingdom will come at the time determined by the Father, and when it comes, it will be in a perfect and

definitive form: it is eschatological. But we prepare ourselves for its coming by desiring it and working to extend the reign of Jesus Christ which prepares it.

[ii] By religious virtues, Fr. d'Alzon does not mean the virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience which religious vow to observe according to the evangelical counsels, but rather the Pauline triad: faith, hope, and love, three things that last, and the greatest of which is love (1 Cor 13:13). These three form the basis of Christian perfection and mark within us the coming of the reign of Jesus Christ. In them all disciples of Christ must exert themselves, even if they do so in different ways. They are so intimately linked to the unique goal which is the Kingdom that in turn they become the goal of our life. Fr. d'Alzon never ceased, from the earliest years of his priestly formation until his death, to insist upon the paramount dignity of the theological virtues which recreate us in the image of God.

[iii] "To hold earthly goods in contempt" is a very evangelical expression but it sounds at range to modern ears. It must be understood in the sense that the coming of the Kingdom relativizes, without negating, the value of earthly realities.

[iv] After "the love of the Church," Fr. d'Alzon inserted "the Mystical Body of the Savior," an idea which was very dear to him, coming as it did from his assiduous reading of St. Augustine, at a time when the expression was not very common. Vatican I expressly avoided such a title, but Vatican II gave it a prominent place among the images by which the Scriptures express the mystery of the Church (Lumen Gentium 1, 6-7).

[v] The list of apostolic works corresponds to the works already undertaken by the Congregation or projected, according to the goal and spirit of the Congregation: "colleges" at Nîmes and Clichy; school manuals with a greater Christian flavor; popular or scholarly publications, such as *Revue de l'Enseignement chrétien*, and an edition of the *Summa contra Gentes*; works of charity by students or others, for the benefit of such disadvantaged people as servants or even gypsies; retreats; foreign missions which some of the younger religious such as Francois Picard sought in 1850.

[vi] One of Fr. d'Alzon's great ideas was the restoration of unity to minds and hearts disturbed by modern relativism. In founding the Little Sisters of the Assumption, Fr. Etienne Pernet had the same goal in mind: unity of minds in truth; of hearts, in love. The young Assumption did not nostalgically yearn for a Christianity which had long ago disappeared. Rather, after the turmoil of the Revolution, it confidently sought the coming of a new humanity better attuned to the light and grace of Jesus Christ, who is the transcendent answer to the desires of the modern world for fraternity, equality, and liberty.

[vii] The Association for Good Books was trying, in Southern France, to offset the massive spread of anti-religious and anti-Catholic propaganda that had begun in 1820. Assumption tried to help. To get at the root of the evil, Fr. d'Alzon wanted to revamp the entire Christian educational system. Harking back to the University of Paris, he had notions of a great endeavor to restore unity of minds in truth. From Nîmes, he contributed by establishing a School for Higher Studies. Then the Bonne Presse was started. In his report on the Bonne Presse to the General Chapter of 1886, Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly stated that by the founding of the Revue de l'Enseignement Chretien "Our Father was only continuing with the earliest preoccupations of his zeal. " And the recording secretary added, "Notes dealing with his life reveal to us that since 1837 he had dreamed of founding an Order of tertiary religious printers..." (Pages d'Archives, third series, no. 7, October 1965, p. 507).

[viii] Already in 1845, Assumption tried to form an elite that would be conscious of its Christian and social responsibilities: solid, upright Christians, men of their times, citizens of their homeland. The Revolution of 1848 only emphasized the urgency of starting a Catholic democratic and social movement to forestall atheistic and revolutionary socialism which was expressed by Blanqui's "No God, no master!" and by the theories of Proudhon and Marx. The rich forgot the precept of brotherly love. Shocked churchmen saw irreligion rapidly spread among the lower classes, which, prior to the 1848 Revolution, had had no political rights and, despite the Revolution, still no civil rights. The selfishness of the rich needed to be shaken up; the undeserved misery of the working class, alleviated. Far-reaching structural reforms were not yet considered; charitable works were mentioned as a remedy to present ills. This was expressed in language that we must go beyond today, but which is a reminder of the Gospel message which it carries: love and respect for the suffering members of Jesus Christ. This mystical point of view led Fr. Pernet to find his vocation amid the Assumptionists (Pages d'Archives, fourth series, no. 1, April, 1966). Without evangelical love, social justice shrinks away and becomes only claim and counterclaim, and inexpiable strife. In our own day, we must live an evangelical love informed by faith, in order to work for a unity of minds in truth and a union of hearts in love, thus creating a better political, social, cultural life for people and nations (Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes).

[ix] “Schism” here means Anglicanism, and “heresy” means the Protestant Reformation.

[x] One of the goals of our colleges, as a sort of aim for our pedagogy, was the integration of the students into their dioceses and parishes. Speaking of the College, Fr. d’Alzon said, “The House of Assumption was chosen to prepare men capable of loving the Church, of being impassioned for the Church, of sacrificing themselves for the Church,” not in the abstract but in concrete ecclesial communities of priests and faithful. “Freedom of education” thus understood is a wide-open system of education and not “ghetto education” destined solely to preserve the students it already has.

[xi] This first disposition is basic. Those mentioned in the next four paragraphs assure fidelity to a life consecrated to God. Thus in 1868 at least, the triple love is constructed upon a love called “principal” of which God is the goal and which expresses itself in the service of the Kingdom. “If you add to this principal love the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Blessed Virgin, his Mother, and of the Church, his Spouse, you will know, in its simplest expression, the spirit of Assumption” (E.S. p. 131). Our Christocentricity comes from very traditional theocentricity: one God, but God is met only in Christ, sole mediator between God and mankind (Tm 2:5).

[xii] Two years of novitiate were specified in order not to rush the definitive commitment, which was made after just one year of vows.

[xiii] This paragraph must be understood in the context of 1885, when Assumption accepted lay Brothers totally lacking in education, even elementary, but who were perfectly disposed to consecrate themselves humbly to God’s service.

[xiv] According to the legislation of that time, simple vows were not juridically recognized as religious vows. Thus, the Superior who had received them could release from them, even in the case of perpetual vows, except for the vow of chastity, which was reserved to the Holy See.

[xv] Upon reading this passage, one might conclude that all the members of the Institute, choir religious, lay brothers, and brothers of the Third Order, pronounced the fourth vow of consecration to the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ. But according to the text of the profession formula in vigor until 1863, choir religious and lay brothers made three vows; only the choir religious made the fourth vow. Brothers of the third Order, who were only “secular Brothers,” made no vows but committed themselves “to extend the reign of Our Lord.”

[xvi] The presentation of the three religious vows follows the traditional order: poverty, chastity, obedience, even though the stress is placed on the perfection of obedience, according to the spirit of modern apostolic congregations. The Directory, linking religious virtues with the theological virtues, will successively treat of obedience after faith, of poverty after hope, and of chastity after charity. Besides, these 1855 Constitutions treat of the evangelical counsels in the spirit of solemn vows that engage not only the members but the Institute itself, as the chapter on poverty clearly shows.

[xvii] The 1885 Constitutions have no chapter on study. Study seemed obvious for religious whose first apostolate was teaching. But such apostolate has its dangers.

[xviii] In fact, these Constitutions never spelled out what these qualities should be.

[xix] Fr. d’Alzon has in mind a plan that he will only partially follow. The first letter considers only “what concerns our personal sanctification”; the second considers “the external action we must pursue”; the third considers “the means we must use in pursuing such actions. “The fourth letter began a new series on “the virtues which we especially need.”

[xx] Up to the words, “To these general considerations,” the text is transcribed by some unknown hand. All the rest, on the same page in a copybook passed to the Oblate Sisters in 1869, is in the handwriting of Fr. d’Alzon, who personally gave the letter its title.

[\[xxi\]](#) Fr. d'Alzon here refers to the desire of the General Chapter of 1868: "Very Reverend Father d'Alzon will write to the Master of Novices a letter in which he will express the principles of the Congregation and the methods to be followed to teach the novices the practice of mental prayer. " The first three letters are grouped under the title "Letter on the coming of God's Kingdom." Then, in a fourth letter, the Founder addresses the second topic. He deals first—other letters were undoubtedly to follow—with love of Our Lord, which urges us to work for the coming of the Kingdom, in us and around us, by all the means best suited to the times in which we live. As requested, he speaks of Our Lord in a way that can facilitate for the novices the practice of mental prayer.